



How to Be Audited

Turn Your Next Accreditation Assessment into a Positive Experience!

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Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc.

About PJLA

Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc. (PJLA)

Established in 1999 by Mr. Perry L. Johnson

Headquartered in Troy, Michigan.

More than 2200 accreditations globally in 32 countries.

Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation NP, Inc. (PJLANP)

Michigan nonprofit organization established in 2016.



Perry L. Johnson

Member and signatory of APAC, ILAC MRAs



Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc.

PJLA's Global Network



Perry Johnson Laboratory Accreditation, Inc.

PJLA Accreditation Programs

ISO/IEC 17025

Testing/Calibration Labs

- FCC OET Equipment Authorization
- FDA ASCA
- ENERGY STAR
- Cannabis Testing
- Hemp Testing
- Horseracing Laboratories Program
- CPSC
- AS6171A Testing
- Food, Feeds, and Pharmaceutical:
AOAC, AAFCO, LAAF
- Environmental Testing: *TNI-NEFAP, DoD ELAP, DOEAP-AP, EPA NLLAP*
TNI-EL: MNELAP, CA ELAP, LELAP

ISO/IEC 17020 – Inspection Bodies

ISO/IEC 17065 – Product Certification Bodies

ISO/IEC 17043 – Proficiency Testing Providers

ISO 17034 – Reference Material Producers

ISO 15189 – Medical Laboratories

ISO/IEC 17024 – Personnel Certification Bodies

ASTM E2659– Training Providers



Introduction–Why This Webinar Matters

Even highly experienced MS Professionals still feel:

- Stress before the assessment/audit
- Pressure during assessment/audit interviews
- Fear of nonconformities
- Uncertainty about what auditors/assessors want
- Concern about “being judged”

This webinar exists because very few people are ever trained on how to be audited, yet everyone is eventually audited.



Auditor vs Assessor (Audit vs Assessment)

An **Auditor** operates at the certification level and evaluates whether an organization's management system conforms to the requirements of a specified standard (e.g. ISO 9001).

Auditors typically work for certification bodies or internal audit programs and provide findings that support a certification decision.

An **Assessor** operates at the accreditation level and evaluates technical competence of a CAB.

Assessors work for accreditation bodies and determine whether a CAB can produce valid and reliable results, supporting an accreditation decision.

BOTH focus on processes, implementation, control, and effectiveness.

NOTE: For the purpose of this webinar both terms will be used interchangeably.



What Makes Assessments Stressful?

- The presence of an “external authority”
- Fear of exposing weaknesses
- Lack of clarity about assessment flow
- Misunderstanding assessor expectations
- Organizational culture (blame vs learning)
- Past negative experiences with other ABs or CABs

The Real Purpose of the Assessment

To ensure:

- Competence
- Impartiality
- Consistency
- Technical validity of results
- Market confidence
- COMPLIANCE

It is NOT:

- Policing
- Punishment
- Perfection checking
- Consult
- Issue Non-Conformities
- A bureaucratic exercise

It is a trust-building mechanism.

How Assessors Actually Think

Assessors look for:

- Reliable processes
- Competent personnel
- Repeatable outcomes
- Objective decision-making
- Controlled documentation
- COMPLIANCE

Assessors do not look for:

- Blame
- Perfection
- Catch people out
- Personal weaknesses
- “Tricks” or surprises
- Prove assessor/auditor superiority

**Assessment exists to build confidence,
verify competence and strengthen trust.**

Step 1: Preparing Your Documentation

Documentation should tell a clear story:

Your system is:

- ✓ Under control
- ✓ Implemented
- ✓ Maintained
- ✓ Updated
- ✓ Understood by staff

Additional preparation tips:

- Use record-access shortcuts or digital folders
- Pre-stage key evidence (calibration, competence, internal audits)
- Ensure version control across all documents
- Double-check that obsolete documents are removed

Be well-prepared. Self-evaluate on AB/CB checklist (if available)

Step 2: Demonstrating Competence

Personnel should be able to answer:

- ✓ ***“What** are you doing?”*
- ✓ ***“Why** are you doing it this way?”*
- ✓ ***“What** standard or procedure requires this?”*
- ✓ ***“How** do you know that...?”*

Additional preparation tips:

- Be-prepared, mock questions
- Identify your weak points
- Perform “real” internal audits
- Demonstrating impartiality
- Awareness of risks

Understand your Processes. Modern Assessment is Process based!

Step 3: Handling Questions the Right Way

Do:

- ✓ Be concise
- ✓ Refer to documented evidence
- ✓ Admit when unsure
- ✓ Ask for clarification
- ✓ Stay calm and factual

Avoid:

- Guessing
- Over-explaining
- Getting defensive
- Talking too much
- Making promises on the spot
- Reply if not asked!
- Respond instead of others

Know Processes-Procedures-SOPs

Step 4: Why Nonconformities Are Not Failures

Nonconformities provide:

- Insight into system weaknesses
- Opportunities to strengthen process consistency
- Evidence of mature internal culture
- Risk reduction before clients notice issues

A good assessment does NOT necessarily mean zero NCs.

A good assessment ends with valuable insight.

Nonconformities = free expert consulting!



Hiding Nonconformities: The Silent Killer

Hiding issues leads to:

- Loss of trust
- Escalated findings later
- Misalignment with impartiality requirements
- Increased risk before regulators
- Negative impact on reputation

Transparency demonstrates:

- Professional maturity
- Strong culture
- Seriousness about improvement

Nonconformities = Improvement Opportunity

Step 5: Responding to NCs Professionally

When receiving a NC:

- Listen fully
- Ask for wording clarification
- Review evidence together with assessor
- Accept the finding if justified
- Avoid unnecessary debate
- Understand the appropriate root cause analysis
- Implement corrective actions

Invest time and effort in Root Cause Analysis

Step 6: Leadership's Critical Role

Top management expectations:

- Commitment, Commitment, Commitment!
- Understanding of system performance
- Presence at meetings
- Support for competence and resources
- A culture of honesty
- Dedication to improvement

Assessors can detect leadership disengagement instantly

Step 7: Assessment Day Optimization

Practical Considerations:

- Clean, organized workspace for assessors
- Pre-printed visitor badges & Wi-Fi access
- Structured and clear “evidence table”
- A liaison who coordinates smoothly
- A staff briefing held 24 hours before the assessment

Professionalism begins with logistics!



Step 7: Assessment Day Optimization/Evidence table

| ISO/IEC 17025 Clause | Process | Evidence Type | Evidence Description | Location / System | Responsible |
|----------------------|------------------------------|---------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 8.3 | Document control | Procedure | Procedure for control of documents | QMS-PR-01 (SharePoint) | Quality Manager |
| 7.7 | Assuring validity of results | Records | Internal QC charts (last 6 months) | LIMS → QC module | Technical Manager |
| 6.2 | Personnel competence | Records | Training matrix & competence evaluations | HR folder / LMS | HR Manager |
| 7.5 | Technical records | Records | Test worksheets & raw data | LIMS → Job files | Lab Supervisor |
| 8.8 | Internal audits | Records | Audit program, reports, NCs, actions | QMS-AUD folder | Lead Internal Auditor |
| 8.9 | Management review | Records | Minutes & action tracking | QMS-MR folder | Top Management |

Typical Mistakes Auditees Make

- ✗ Searching for documents in panic
- ✗ Letting unprepared staff respond
- ✗ Guessing answers
- ✗ Treating NCs as punishment
- ✗ Not asking for clarification
- ✗ Blaming past staff
- ✗ Over-defensive attitude
- ✗ Saying “this is how we’ve always done it”

Good Practices

- ✓ Clear answers
- ✓ Evidence ready
- ✓ Professional tone
- ✓ Transparency
- ✓ Active leadership
- ✓ Clean records
- ✓ Informed personnel
- ✓ Updated documentation
- ✓ Systemic thinking

The goal is NOT perfection.

The goal is:

- ✓ Confidence
- ✓ Trust
- ✓ Consistency
- ✓ Competence
- ✓ Improvement
- ✓ Professionalism

Assessment is a professional partnership, not a confrontation or debate opportunity



Final Thoughts

A successful assessment is built on:

- Preparation
- Clarity
- Transparency
- Strong culture
- Open communication
- Understanding
- Professionalism

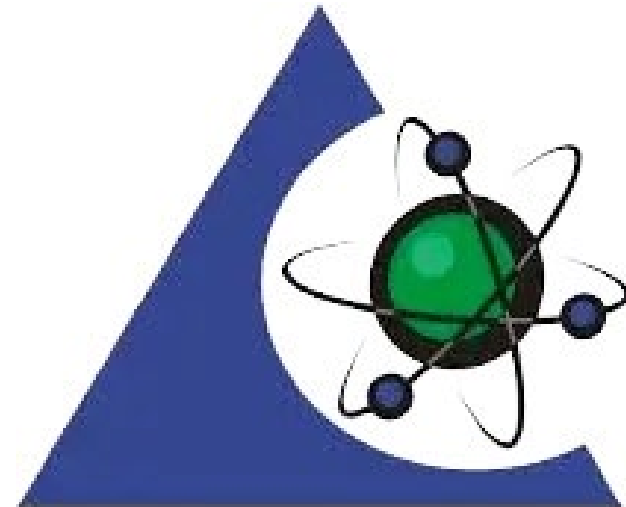
When approached correctly, the assessment becomes a solid improvement tool



Thank You!

- Questions
- Discussion

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