

6.2 Management Requirements

Changes to the laboratory's organisational structure would have to be made by the department. This may mean creating a position for a laboratory/technical manager to oversee the day-to-day operations of the laboratory. The manager can concentrate on technical and quality initiatives while the financial aspects are left with the departmental executive member. The laboratory manager will also help with writing proposals for new equipment funding and laboratory upgrades. Another option would be to train technicians on ISO standards and make them responsible for the technical aspects of the laboratory and ISO standards interpretation and implementation. This may be a lengthy process but it has long term benefits for both the technicians and the department.

From literature and the conducted interviews, it was established that ISO/IEC 17025 implementation is a costly exercise. There is no doubt that ISO/IEC 17025 implementation will benefit the laboratory immensely but laboratory management will need to conduct a proper cost-estimation and ROI analysis. Abdel-Fatah (2010) states that it is not advisable to pursue implementation of ISO/IEC 17025 unless there are significant gains counteracting the cost of establishing the system, gaining accreditation and maintaining the standard.

6.3 Process Improvement

In an attempt to align its processes with ISO/IEC 17025 requirements, the thin section laboratory will have to improve its thin section-making process. The tests conducted in this study showed that there are changes that can be made to the preparation procedure to improve the quality of the thin sections. As the laboratory validates its methods, more improvement opportunities will be identified. Implementing ISO/IEC 17025 helps identify process improvement opportunities with corrective and preventative actions. The move towards implementation will also provide such opportunities as the review of the current processes is conducted. The laboratory technicians should conduct tests to determine the standard methods and validate them. Senior researchers can also be invited to give input on how to streamline the process to make it more efficient.

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Biography

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