

DoD Environmental Data Quality Workgroup Fact Sheet

Subject: QSM Version 6.0 Accreditation/Implementation

Guidance Update July 21, 2024



Bottom Line Up Front:

All ELAP Laboratories must be accredited to QSM 6.0 by June 30, 2026. While the EDQW does not believe that data defensibility is significantly impacted by the changes from QSM 5.4 to 6.0, there are many changes which simplify requirements, streamline processes, and provide better consistency with other accreditation standards and underlying method requirements for analysis. The EDQW recommends laboratories compare the requirements of QSM 5.4 and 6.0 to determine the benefits of moving to QSM 6.0 during the laboratory's routine accreditation cycle or earlier.

The DoD Environmental Data Quality Workgroup (EDQW) released the DoD/DOE Quality Systems Manual for Environmental Laboratories (QSM) Version 6.0 on December 13, 2023. The QSM provides requirements for accreditation to the DoD Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (ELAP). Laboratories are required to comply with the requirements of the appropriate version of the QSM as a part of their routine accreditation cycle. All laboratories must be accredited to QSM Version 6.0 by June 30, 2026. Any laboratory that is not accredited to QSM Version 6.0 by June 30, 2026, will lose their DoD ELAP accreditation status. The DENIX database will be updated to include the identification of the QSM version to which a laboratory is accredited to facilitate identification of laboratories accredited to Version 6.0.

Although QSM Version 6.0 is a significant rewrite of QSM requirements, the EDQW believes data quality and defensibility to be comparable. Projects are encouraged to evaluate the need to require the "latest version" of the QSM when developing Performance Work Statements (PWS) or Statements of Work (SOW). Many of the QSM Version 6.0 changes are a result of a reorganization of the document to incorporate the latest version of the underlying ISO/IEC 17025 Standard. The bulk of the remaining edits removed language that was redundant or not assessable. Updated technical requirements include changes to the procedure for determining, maintaining, and reporting sensitivity limits. These changes are intended to better reflect laboratory analytical performance, allow for a less burdensome data collection process for the laboratory, and provide more clarity to the data users. Additionally, specific method requirements have been updated, in large part to align with updates to underlying EPA methods and advancements in analytical technology.

The EDQW has determined changes to these baseline requirements for laboratory performance are not likely to affect overall data quality for most projects. However, individual projects must determine appropriate technical requirements for decision making during project planning and document those requirements in the Quality Assurance Project Plan or Sampling and Analysis Plan. The EDQW recommends that a PWS/SOW require maintaining DoD ELAP accreditation for laboratory testing rather than accreditation to a specific version of the QSM. The EDQW also recommends communicating to prime contractors that ELAP accreditation to the QSM Version 6.0 is not an inherent advantage and that laboratory accreditation is not a substitute for developing and documenting project technical requirements as part of the systematic planning process.

The following is a suggested statement for inclusion in the PWS/SOW: Laboratories performing environmental testing shall be accredited under the DoD ELAP for the method used for testing and the matrix and analyte tested.

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For Open Publication

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