EQA Governance and Assurance Framework

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1. Defined terms

See Glossary of EQA terms (document WS20202) for details of all defined terms within this document.

2. Introduction and scope

The External Quality Assessment (EQA) Governance and Assurance Framework is a multi-stakeholder undertaking between professional bodies (e.g. the Institute of Biomedical Scientists [IBMS], the Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine [ACB]), United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS), the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPath) and external quality assessment (EQA) providers, to provide an independent monitor of the performance of clinical laboratories within the UK and improve patient safety.

The EQA Governance and Assurance Framework defines the operation of the established, discipline specific National Quality Assurance Advisory Panels (NQAAPs) and the multidisciplinary Quality Assurance in Pathology Committee (QAPC). The QAPC is accountable to RCPath for the oversight of performance of UK clinical laboratories in EQA and is bound to report unresolved laboratory performance concerns to the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

EQA providers within the UK that engage with the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework will, as part of their duty of care, report of persistent poor performance (PPP) to the relevant NQAAPs for support in resolving performance concerns.

3. Responsibilities

The structure and relationships of the different groups within the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework are shown in Figure 1. The roles and responsibilities of the individual stakeholder organisations within the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework are outlined in

Appendix 1.

a) EQA Governance and Assurance Framework member organisations

EQA Governance and Assurance Framework members shall support the aims of the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework and work with other stakeholders to improve patient safety.

All stakeholders in the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework will provide representatives to ensure the effective operation of NQAAP, QAPC, EQA Stakeholder and EQA Oversight Board meetings, as appropriate to the role of the organisations within the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework. The representatives will be responsible for performing the relevant roles and obligations held by the stakeholder they represent.

b) Organisational representative

It is acknowledged that stakeholder representatives may not be authorised to make policy decisions on behalf of their organisation. Their role is to act as a conduit to the stakeholder they represent in issues that require organisational commitment and to provide informed comment on EQA Governance and Assurance Framework business.

A nominated representative is expected to:

- attend the majority of meetings and to give apologies for absence in advance when not attending. Absence from 2 consecutive meetings may lead to the chair contacting the stakeholder organisation to request a different representative.
- complete any action points or outputs from meetings by the agreed deadlines or to advise the chair of the meeting where this cannot be achieved.

Where multiple members of the same organisation are present at a EQA Governance and Assurance Framework meeting (NQAAP, QAPC, EQA stakeholder and EQA Oversight Board meetings) the senior member (as determined by the stakeholder organisation) will hold the responsibilities as outlined above.

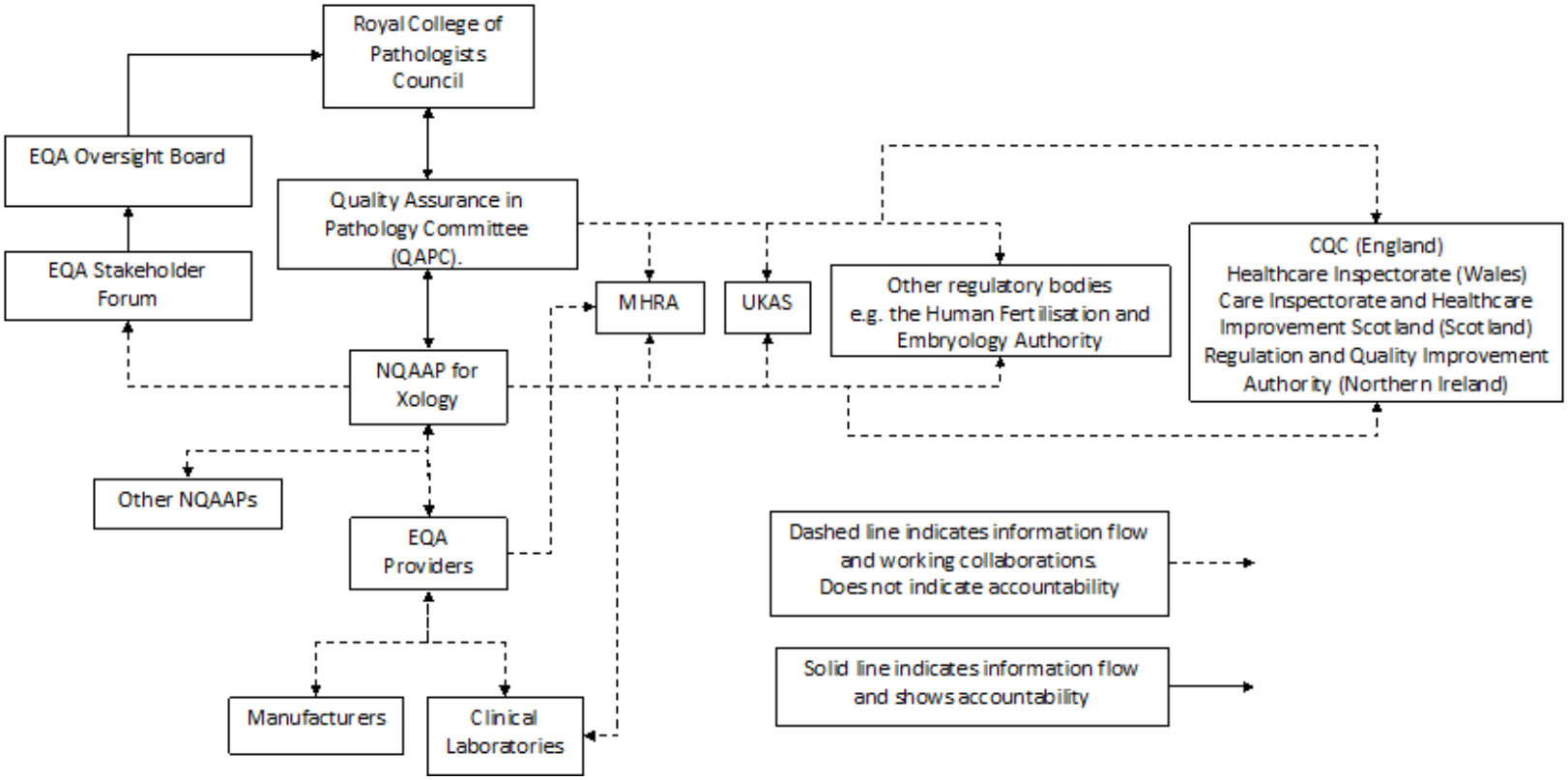
4. Procedures

4.1 Aims and objectives of the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework

To improve patient safety by:

- implementing and maintaining of a robust multi-stakeholder governance and assurance framework that supports the provision of all clinical laboratory EQA programmes
- working with EQA and diagnostic testing providers to define EQA performance standards that map to key performance indicators (KPIs) and support patient safety
- working with EQA and diagnostic testing providers to develop EQA programmes for emerging areas of clinical significance
- working with NQAAPs to ensure each analyte covered by EQA is reported within the NQAAP system
- implementing a consistent approach to define, identify and respond to PPP
- publishing and maintaining documents for the operation of the NQAAPs and QAPC
- ensuring information identified through EQA is shared to improve patient safety and advance the effectiveness of patient care
- strengthening and formalising collaboration with partners across health services in the UK
- publishing standardised performance reviews on a periodic basis.

Figure 1: Organisational relationships organogram.



Appendix 1: Roles and responsibilities

Table 1: Roles and responsibilities.

Group	Responsibilities	Accountable to	Collaborates with	Reports to	Groups responsible for
QAPC	Oversight of performance in EQA schemes and monitoring of EQA performance of clinical laboratories in the UK. For full details please see the QAPC Terms of reference.	RCPath EQA providers funding the NQAAPS	UKAS Poorly performing clinical laboratories EQA providers Other relevant stakeholders	Hospitals/CEOs Appropriate regulators	NQAAPs

Representation at QAPC					
Representatives from external organisations such as MHRA, UKAS and CQC	The MHRA representative is responsible for: • using professional and speciality knowledge and expertise to contribute to the work of the QAPC • providing relevant 2-way communication with the host organisation on issues relevant to quality assurance in pathology. For full details please see the QAPC Terms of reference.	Host organisation	QAPC EQA providers Manufacturers	N/A	N/A

NQAAP chair	The NQAAP chair is responsible for ensuring the operation of the relevant NQAAP. For full details please see the NQAAP terms of reference (document WS10904).	QAPC	NQAAP members Other NQAAP chairs QAPC EQA providers Other relevant stakeholders	QAPC MHRA Appropriate regulators	N/A
Group	**Responsibilities**	**Accountable to**	**Collaborates with**	**Reports to**	**Groups responsible for**
NQAAPs	NQAAPs are responsible for monitoring EQA schemes included in the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework, in	QAPC	EQA providers	QAPC	N/A

	each of the disciplines in pathology, and through them the performance of UK laboratories participating in those schemes. The NQAAPs support patient safety by promoting high professional standards in technical EQA and encouraging development of appropriate technical EQA schemes, with an emphasis on shared learning and continuous quality improvement. For full details please see the NQAAP terms of reference (document WS10904).		Professional bodies Appropriate regulators Poorly performing clinical laboratories Other relevant stakeholders		
Representation at NQAAPs					
RCPath admin support	To support the function of the NQAAPs. For full details please see the NQAAP terms of reference (document WS10904).	RCPath	NQAAP members NQAAP chair	NQAAP chair	N/A

			QAPC EQA providers Other relevant stakeholders		
EQA providers	EQA providers that are part of the EQA Governance and Assurance Framework have a responsibility for operating EQA programmes in their area of knowledge/expertise and liaising with the relevant NQAAPs in areas of performance concern and patient safety. For full details please see the NQAAP terms of reference (WS10904).	N/A	NQAAP NQAAP chair QAPC Medical laboratories Manufacturers	NQAAP chair NQAAP MHRA Medical laboratories	Steering committees

			MHRA Steering committees Other relevant stakeholders		
Professional body representatives (such as IBMS, ACB)	NQAAP members are made up of representatives nominated by and representing stakeholder groups, such as professional bodies working in the field covered by the NQAAP. For full details please see the NQAAP terms of reference (document WS10904).	Professional body	NQAAP EQA providers	N/A	N/A
Group	**Remit/responsibilities**	**Accountable to**	**Collaborates with**	**Reports to**	**Groups responsible for**

Clinical laboratories	Clinical laboratories are responsible for: Selecting and participating in appropriate EQA schemes for the analytes covered in the laboratory.	Parent organisations	EQA providers Manufacturers NQAAP chairs	EQA providers	N/A