



**NATIONAL QUALITY ASSESSMENT ADVISORY PANEL (NQAAP)
Microbiology**

Terms of Reference

1. Remit

The Microbiology NQAAP is responsible for monitoring participant performance in UK External Quality Assessment schemes in Microbiology (including Bacteriology, Virology, Parasitology, Mycology, Molecular Diagnosis and Antibiotic Assay). This remit is based on the Joint Working Group for Quality Assessment in Pathology terms of reference and conditions of participation for EQA Schemes and should be read in conjunction with those documents.

The NQAAP is responsible for promoting, coordinating and protecting high professional standards in EQA and encouraging the development of clinically relevant and appropriate EQA schemes.

The panel fulfils its remit by:

- (i) Reviewing and approving all UK EQA Schemes relating to the practice of microbiology. This will include agreeing criteria for performance standards and the management of persistent substandard performance in these schemes.
- (ii) Receiving information on persistently poorly performing laboratories from EQA Scheme organisers (within two weeks of a laboratory being identified as a persistent poor performer) and managing the referrals within an appropriate time scale.
- (iii) Agreeing with scheme organisers' mechanisms for resolution of persistent poor performance. Generally the scheme organiser will make contact with the laboratory in accordance with the scheme standard operating procedure and inform the Chair of the panel with the proposed remedial action to be taken including the timescale. If this does not lead to a resolution the Chair of the panel will offer advice to the laboratory and, if appropriate, will arrange a visit to the laboratory by a panel member or an agreed expert. If persistent poor performance remains unresolved the panel Chair will submit a report to the Chair of the Joint Working Group for Quality Assessment in Pathology
- (iv) Receiving and resolving complaints from scheme participants where these have not been resolved by the scheme organisers or steering committees.
- (v) Producing an annual report of its activities for the Royal College of Pathologists and the Joint Working Group for Quality Assessment in Pathology.



2. Accountability

The panel is accountable to the Joint Working Group for Quality Assessment in Pathology, which in turn is accountable to The Royal College of Pathologists, Professional Performance Panel.

3. Membership

The membership comprises:

- a chair appointed by the Royal College of Pathologists
- a nominee of the British Infection Association
- a nominee of the Association of Clinical Pathologists
- a nominee of the Society for General Microbiology
- a nominee of the Clinical Virology Network
- a nominee of the Institute of Biomedical Science
- a nominee of the Association of Clinical Biochemists (Microbiology).

In addition, one or two specialist advisers are co-opted to ensure appropriate expertise within the Panel. At present these consist of two co-opted virologists, with expertise in molecular diagnostics and clinical virology.

The panel also welcomes an observer from the Royal College of Physicians in Ireland. (Irish laboratory EQA performance is monitored through the UK Panel, and a separate Annual Report prepared).

One of the nominated members of the panel will be designated as Deputy Chair.

All members normally serve a three-year term of office and are eligible for one further term (with the exception of the Chair and Deputy Chair who may serve a maximum of three terms on the panel).

4. Operation

The Panel meets twice yearly, usually in May and November. Minutes of the meetings are produced and distributed to Panel members.

Meetings of the panel will be quorate when more than 30% of the nominated members are present.

The Panel produces an annual report which is submitted to Royal College of Pathologists and to the Joint Working Group for Quality Assessment in Pathology.

It is expected that a member of the Panel should be present at EQA Scheme Provider Steering Group meetings, at least annually.

Expenses of the Panel are claimed from the Royal College of Pathologists (from a fund created by a levy on EQA providers).