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General UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations questions

Why do we need UK SMIs?

UK SMIs ensure equivalence in the investigation process. By having a standard way of testing amongst different laboratories across the UK, testing strategies can be aligned, and this is essential for public health programmes and priorities.

How are UK SMIs used?

UK SMI documents are freely available online via the Royal College of Pathologists website for laboratories to use and/or adapt to the appropriate local arrangements if necessary. UK SMIs are intended for use as recommended procedures to support local methods.

What is the suggested citation?

We suggest the following citation when referencing a UK SMI:

UK Health Security Agency (Year of Issue). Title of UK SMI document. UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations. B/ID/TP/V/Q/S # Issue #
<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/publications/standards-for-microbiology-investigations.html>.

For example, the suggested citation for V 11 will be:

UK Health Security Agency. (2023). Laboratory diagnosis of HIV. UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations. V 11 Issue 5
<https://www.rcpath.org/profession/publications/standards-for-microbiology-investigations.html>.



About UK SMIs

[Why have the UK SMI webpages moved from the GOV.UK website?](#)

The decision to host UK SMIs on a new platform was mainly due to differences in document format preferences. Users of UK SMIs expressed a strong preference for PDFs while GOV.UK required HTML for document publication. Recognising the importance of our users' needs and considering all the options and implications, the decision was made to host these documents on the College website, as the College considers audience needs and usability when deciding on the format of documents. This solution allowed the Standards Unit to have full control over the content, format, and display of the UK SMIs in the preferred PDF format.

[How do I keep up to date with UK SMIs?](#)

You can subscribe to UK SMI updates if you have not done so already via <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKHPA/subscriber/new?preferences=true>. You can subscribe and filter UK SMI from the options using your email address. Once subscribed, you will receive alerts whenever a document is sent for consultation, published or any other news from us.

[May I request for a previous version of a UK SMI?](#)

Yes. All versions are archived for quality purposes and as such are available upon request. To request an older version of a UK SMI, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk with an explanation for your request. Older versions of UK SMI documents may contain information that is outdated and no longer relevant.

[Where can I find mycology documents?](#)

Currently we do not have a category for mycology documents. Mycology has been embedded where relevant in Bacteriology and Syndromic documents. For example: *UK SMI B 05: Investigation of nasal samples* contains both fungal and bacterial causes of rhinosinusitis.



UK SMI Processes

[What do the version numbers mean?](#)

Each UK SMI document has a version number reflecting the number of full reviews and the most recent point changes a document has undertaken. When a document has undergone a full review there will be a whole integer change in the issue number e.g., 1 to 2 or 4 to 5. If only minor changes are made, then the version number will only have a point change e.g., 1 to 1.1.

[What are withdrawn documents?](#)

Withdrawn documents are no longer fit for purpose and no further review is required. Reasons a document is withdrawn is recorded on the [Withdrawn and recalled documents \(rcpath.org\)](#) page. Documents can be withdrawn for a variety of reasons including, no longer relevant, no longer deemed in the scope of UK SMI documents or when incorporated into larger syndromic documents. To request a withdrawn document please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk, including a reason for the request.

[Who can take part in the consultation process?](#)

The consultation process is open to anyone with an interest in microbiology. Whilst we expect laboratory professionals and clinicians that work in this field to comment, the consultation is open to the public and we encourage any feedback that may be relevant to the document.

[How do I take part in the consultation process?](#)

The Standards Unit welcomes your feedback on UK SMI documents. The more support and comments on UK SMI documents, the stronger they become as they develop. The easiest way to take part in the consultation process is to subscribe to UK SMI (please see question above) to receive emails when a document is sent for consultation. Additionally, open consultations will be added to the [UK SMI Consultations \(rcpath.org\)](#) page.



[I have a comment I'd like to make on a UK SMI document, how do I do this?](#)

The Standards Unit welcomes comments on UK SMI documents. This is a crucial part in the development of UK SMIs. If you have comments on any particular UK SMI document, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk. The comment will then be considered when the document is next under review. If you have a comment for a document currently open for consultation, please fill in the relevant survey on the UK SMI consultation page and your comment will be discussed with the working group.



Making an Enquiry

[I have an enquiry about UK SMIs, who should I speak to?](#)

If your enquiry is regarding a particular UK SMI or its development, or you have an enquiry for the Standards Unit please contact standards@ukhsa.gov.uk. Please note if your enquiry is not related to UK SMIs or the Standards Unit but within the remit of the UKHSA the enquiry will be forwarded to the UKHSA enquiry team, but we would encourage for you to contact them directly on enquiries@ukhsa.gov.uk.

[I have an enquiry, but I am not sure if it is specifically related to UK SMIs, what should I do?](#)

If your enquiry is related to infectious diseases but if you cannot reference the enquiry to a particular UK SMI after seeing our list of documents, please contact enquiries@ukhsa.gov.uk. They will forward the enquiry to the relevant department.

[I have sent an enquiry to \[standards@ukhsa.gov.uk\]\(mailto:standards@ukhsa.gov.uk\) but I have not received a response, why is this?](#)

We ask all users to assess the content of their enquiry to the Standards Unit. As we do not operate out of hours, we handle many enquiries on a daily basis and as such the Standards Unit will only endeavour to respond to enquiries relating to UK SMIs. All other enquiries may have been forwarded to the UKHSA Enquiries team if within the remit of the UKHSA. Therefore, while we do not want to delay anyone's enquiry, we strongly recommend that users verify the nature of the enquiry before submitting it to the Standards Unit. So, if you do not hear from us, and your enquiry is within the remit of the UKHSA, please contact enquiries@ukhsa.gov.uk who will assist you further.



[May I request for an earlier version of an UK SMI?](#)

Yes. All versions are archived for Quality purposes and as such are available upon request. To request an older version of a UK SMI, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk with an explanation for your request. Older versions of UK SMI documents may contain information that is outdated and no longer relevant.

[How do I get access to withdrawn documents?](#)

If you would like access to a withdrawn UK SMI document, please contact standards@ukhsa.org.uk.

[What documents are no longer in the remit of UK SMIs?](#)

With the scope of UK SMIs constantly being reviewed and amended, documents will be withdrawn if they are no longer within the remit of UK SMIs. Examples of these include Protocol (P) documents and Guidance (G) documents. For more information on the withdrawal of these documents please see the [Withdrawn and recalled documents \(rcpath.org\)](http://rcpath.org) webpage. If you require more information regarding a withdrawn document, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk, clearly stating the name of the document that you are referring to. Please note that the development of these documents may not be NICE accredited.

[Can I request a document in a Word format?](#)

We understand that PDF documents may not be accessible to all users. If you would like to request a document as a Microsoft Word document instead, please email standards@ukhsa.gov.uk stating the document that you will need.