UK NEQAS CODE OF PRACTICE (RULES)

Revised in accordance with the Charity's 2016 Articles of Association

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The Code of Practice (Rules) set out the standards of professional conduct and practice expected of Members of the Charity and shall be binding on all Members.

These rules should be read and applied in conjunction with the Articles of Association.

1. DEFINED TERMS

1.1 "**Charity":** means the legal entity known as United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Service (UK NEQAS). A company limited by guarantee (Company Number: 3012351) and a registered Charity in England and Wales (Charity Number: 1044013).

1.2 **"Board of Trustees":** subject to the Articles, the Board of Trustees are responsible for the management of the Charity's business, for which purpose they may exercise all the powers of the Charity.

1.3 **"Member":** is an external quality assessment (EQA) Scheme recognised by the Board of Trustees as a United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Scheme in the United Kingdom in accordance with such criteria and such procedures as may be decided upon by the Board of Trustees.

1.4 **"Scheme":** recognised by the Board of Trustees as a United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Scheme in the United Kingdom in accordance with such criteria and such procedures as may be decided upon by the Board of Trustees from time to time.

1.5 "**Scheme Organiser":** each Scheme, being an unincorporated organisation, shall be a Member of the Charity through the person of its nominated representative (Scheme Director is recognised as an accepted alternative to Scheme Organiser).

1.6 **"Module":** is used to describe an EQA covering an investigation or a group of related investigations.

2. GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

2.1 The Charity expects each Member to ensure that all individuals holding office with that Member comply with and support these Rules.

2.2 Entry into Membership of the Charity is conditional upon the complete and absolute adherence to these Rules and any subsequent Rules made by the Charity.

2.3 No Rule shall be inconsistent with or shall affect or repeal anything contained in the Companies Acts, the Charity's Articles of Association or any rule of law. In the event of any conflict or ambiguity between the Articles of Association and these Rules, the Articles shall prevail.

2.4 The business of the Charity shall be conducted by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the charitable objectives of the Charity. The Board of Trustees is accountable to the Members for implementation of the strategy of the Charity.

2.5 The Board of Trustees are responsible for complying with all UK Company Law and Charity Law in England and Wales, as both directors and trustees of the Charity.

2.6 Scheme participants may be individuals, laboratories or other service providers.

2.7 The Scheme Organiser is responsible for the design and direction of the Member Scheme and accountable to the Board of Trustees for its compliance with the Code of Practice.

3. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE

3.1 This Code of Practice governs the behaviour of and provides guidance to Members, the Charity, and the Board of Trustees as to best practice and standards and governs the conduct of behaviour between the parties.

3.2 This Code of Practice operates and is applicable in relation to the Charity's Members (all classes) and the Board of Trustees.

3.3 In examining an individual's or Member's behaviour against this Code of Practice, account shall also be taken of the Charity's Articles of Association.

3.4 This Code of Practice should be read in conjunction with guidance issued from Companies House and the Charity Commission that covers the statutory responsibilities of the persons on the Board of Trustees as Company Directors and Charity Trustees.

3.5 Members shall receive a copy of the Code of Practice and Articles of Association upon admission as a Member of the Charity. Scheme Organisers acting on behalf of Members shall be expected to re-affirm their observance of these Rules on an annual basis through the annual declaration of interest procedure (*see APPENDIX 1: Declaration of Interest Form*).

3.6 An undertaking to abide by this Code of Practice is mandatory to all Members, Scheme Organisers and members of the Board of Trustees. It operates as a contract between the Charity and its Members.

3.7 This Code of Practice may be revised to ensure its effectiveness, compatibility with the Charity's ethos, and adherence and compatibility with the Charity's Articles of Association.

4. MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURES

4.1 Schemes shall be admitted to membership of the Charity when approved by the Board of Trustees in accordance with the Articles of Association of the Charity.

4.2 An application for membership shall be made to the Board of Trustees on an approved application form available from the Charity's Central Office (*see APPENDIX 2: Membership Application Form*). The application shall be accompanied by a signed statement from the Scheme Organiser that the applicant complies with the Code of Practice and the Charity's Articles of Association.

4.3 A Scheme may be admitted as a Member, an Associate Member, or an Affiliate Member (*see APPENDIX 3: Membership Classes*).

4.4 The Board of Trustees shall decline to admit to membership any applicant that fails to fulfil the criteria of this Code of Practice or Articles of Association.

4.5 Only those Schemes that are admitted as Members or Associate Members shall be entitled to use the service mark "UK NEQAS" and the associated logo. Use of the UK NEQAS service mark and logo by Member Schemes and third parties is regulated and governed by prescribed guidelines (*see APPENDIX 4: Use of the UK NEQAS service mark and logo).*

5. SCHEME MANAGEMENT

5.1 The Scheme Organiser shall ensure that the Scheme complies with this Code of Practice and the Articles of Association.

5.2 The Scheme shall be open to all UK providers offering a clinical service for investigations covered by the Scheme. Other participants may be accepted at the discretion of the Scheme Organiser.

5.3 Investigations covered by the Scheme should be selected on the basis of their clinical relevance.

5.4 The Scheme shall be free of any conflict of interest or any perception of the same between the Scheme and its Host organisation.

5.5 The Scheme shall be independent of any manufacturing and marketing interests in equipment and reagents in the field in which it operates

5.6 Any interests in the provision of analytical or other services shall be declared.

5.7 Scheme Organisers shall be qualified to the professional standards appropriate to their job role and proof of such qualifications should be provided.

5.8 The Scheme Organiser shall liaise with a UK NEQAS Steering Committee and/or Specialist Advisory Group comprising appropriate experts, participants and clinical advisers.

5.9 The Scheme Organiser shall be responsible for copying lists of attendees at Steering Committee/Specialist Advisory Group Meetings to the Charity's Central Office.

5.10 The Scheme Organiser shall monitor those participants failing to maintain acceptable levels of performance.

5.11 The Scheme Organiser shall be responsible for ensuring any unsatisfactory performance in EQA submissions from UK Clinical laboratories are reported according to the relevant oversight and governance processes currently agreed within the UK, and if appropriate for overseas participants.

5.12 The full, realistically calculated costs of operating the Scheme shall be fully recovered from participants' subscriptions.

5.13 The Scheme shall operate on a not-for-profit basis. Any operating surplus shall be reinvested in the Scheme.

5.14 There should be no cross-subsidy between host and Scheme in accordance with Department of Health guidelines.

5.15 The Scheme Organiser shall ensure that there are adequate business continuity arrangements in place to ensure the supply of services to participants.

6. SCHEME DESIGN

Member Schemes shall be accredited to ISO 17043 and shall maintain that accreditation. Operating procedures described here should be regarded as minimum standards for the design of Associate or Affiliate Schemes that have not yet achieved accreditation to ISO17043.

6.1 The Scheme's aim shall be to promote optimal patient care by facilitating the availability of reliable laboratory investigations, through provision of objective information on participant performance and professional advice and assistance where appropriate.

6.2 The Scheme shall establish performance criteria to enable the timely detection of inadequate performance by participants. Participants who are out of consensus with these performance criteria should be encouraged to improve.

6.3 The Scheme shall aim to improve laboratory performance by education and support for participants and governance structures or stakeholders, to promote continuous improvement and patient safety.

6.4 Material for investigation shall be distributed regularly at an appropriate frequency and in appropriate numbers, guided by advice from Steering Committees or Specialist Advisory Groups.

6.5 Evidence shall be available to demonstrate the appropriateness, stability and uniformity (homogeneity) of the material distributed.

6.6 Target results should be identified and an appropriate (usually quantitative) evaluation of results be presented to allow comparison of individual participants' results with overall results.

6.7 The Scheme shall provide a clinically appropriate turnaround of results and performance data to participants that enables them to take timely and appropriate action.

6.8 Report format should, as a minimum ensure the following:

6.8.1 A unique Participant Identifier Code is clearly stated on all individual reports;

6.8.2 The performance scores are clearly stated on all participant reports;

6.8.3 The performance criteria for each investigation are clearly stated or shown within the report or point to a website or other published reference.

6.9 The Scheme shall conform to relevant safety standards and transport regulations.

6.10 Confidentiality of individual participants' results and performance data shall be maintained except under circumstances specified in the Joint Working Group for Quality Assurance (JWGQA) Conditions of Participation for UK clinical laboratories.

7. NOTIFICATION OF A PROPOSED UK NEQAS PILOT MODULE

For Governance reasons with the aim of preventing duplication of work and direct competition by Schemes a formal mechanism is in place to notify the UK NEQAS Board of Trustees of proposed pilot Modules. This does not include one-off surveys or 'pre-pilot' activities.

7.1 Notification

7.1.1 Once approval for a Pilot Module has been given by the appropriate Steering Committee/Specialist Advisory Group, an application shall be made to the Charity's Central Office using the appropriate documentation (*see APPENDIX 5a: Pilot Module Proposal Form*). The Scheme Organiser shall fully complete the form and provide any supporting documentation.

7.1.2 The Proposal Form and any related correspondence shall then be circulated to the members of the Charity with a *Review of Pilot Programme form* (*APPENDIX*5b: Review of Pilot Module proposal form) at least 1 month

before the date of the next Board meeting. This form should be completed by all centres and returned to Central Office no later than 2 weeks before the Board meeting.

7.1.3 Any objections should include a statement explaining the reasons for the objection and where possible evidence of direct competition with an existing UK NEQAS programme.

7.1.4 Lack of a response from any centre shall be taken as approval of the application

7.1.5 At the subsequent Board of Trustees meeting, the application shall be reviewed, together with any objections and a decision made as to the granting or rejection of pilot status.

7.2 **Decision.**

7.2.1 If the Board of Trustees rejects the application, it shall state the reason(s) for the decision.

7.2.2 The Charity's Central Office shall notify the Scheme Organiser of the outcome.

7.2.3 Where approval is given, the Charity's Central Office shall inform all members of the outcome.

8. OBLIGATIONS OF MEMBERS THROUGH THEIR SCHEME ORGANISERS

8.1 When appointing a Scheme Organiser, a Scheme shall comply with the Charity's published guidance (*see APPENDIX 6: Guidance on the Appointment of Scheme Organiser).*

8.2 The Scheme Organiser shall keep the Charity informed of significant changes in Scheme's details and activities that affect repertoire, hosting or service delivery.

8.3 The Scheme shall contribute to the operating costs of the Charity's Central Office and the costs of the services provided by the trading subsidiary of the Charity named Pathology Quality Assessment (PQA), through the payment of a precept, as determined by the Board of Trustees.

8.4 The Scheme Organiser shall have reporting duties which shall include the submission of a Financial Return for the purpose of Precept calculations.

8.5 The Scheme Organiser shall submit financial returns including annual accounts as required to the Board of Trustees. These shall be in a standard format and validated by appropriate supporting documentation indicating agreement and acknowledgement by the budget holder. All sources of Scheme incomes shall be disclosed, including any additional income which supports the viability of the Scheme.

8.6 The Scheme Organiser shall ensure that changes to scheme details and other information for publication (e.g. enhancement of services and notice of participants meetings) are made promptly to the Charity's Central Office.

8.7 The Scheme Organiser shall co-operate fully with the development and maintenance of a unified participant identification code database. Information in the database shall not be used by a Member Scheme to the detriment of another Member Scheme.

8.8 The Scheme Organiser shall uphold, support and promote the underlying principles of the Charity as embodied in the Articles of Association and Code of Practice. Scheme Organisers shall play a full part in ensuring that the Charity is a harmonised,

participant-responsible and patient-focussed service, and shall not damage the reputation of the Charity as a whole through inappropriate action or inaction.

8.9 The Scheme Organiser shall maintain accreditation to ISO17043 (or standards of recognised equivalence) for any Member Scheme they represent.

8.10 All aspects of the work of a Scheme shall be open to audit conducted by or on behalf of the Charity. The purpose of any such audit shall be to assess the management of the Scheme in its ability to provide a service that complies with the Charity's aims as stated in its Articles of Association and this Code of Practice.

8.11 Where the Scheme Organiser also operates other services including non-UK NEQAS services, the other services shall be financially independent of the Member Scheme. This excludes 'pro-bono' services and works undertaken to support improvement of laboratory medicine quality in for example, resource-poor countries.

8.12 The Scheme Organiser and staff members of Schemes to include members of Steering Committees and Specialist Advisory Groups, shall neither operate nor advise any EQA schemes which are in direct competition with the Charity's Schemes.

8.13 In the event of a Module being developed/provided in collaboration between two or more Schemes, the Scheme Organisers shall have a mechanism to ensure that the results of all participants are reviewed, as a minimum, on an annual basis. Combined performance data shall be presented to the relevant authorities and/or advisory groups.

APPENDICES

1. Declaration of Interest Form;
    a. Policy
2. Membership Application Form;
3. Guidance on Membership Classes:
    a. Associate,
    b. Affiliate;
4. Guidance on use of the UK NEQAS Service Mark and Logo;
5. Pilot Modules:
    a. Proposal Form,
    b. Review of Pilot Module proposal;
6. Guidance on the Appointment of Scheme Organiser.

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Appendix 1

Declaration of interests form and declaration of adherence to the UK NEQAS Code of Practice by UK NEQAS designated representative or alternates (Organisers/directors)

I declare that the interests recorded below include each and every interest, in my role as UK NEQAS designated representative or alternate. I declare complete adherence to the UK NEQAS Code of Practice on behalf of the member scheme.

Name:

Signature:

Date:

Please record your interests under the appropriate heading in the table below.

1. Direct or indirect personal benefit to self or connected persons through activities linked directly or indirectly to UK NEQAS activities (other than salaries and reimbursement of out of pocket expenses) **Note: Financial benefit includes receipt of dividends and ownership of property, companies or chattels.**

Appendix 1

2.	**Provision of EQA, clinical, advisory or consultancy services in the field of diagnostics or quality assurance, which might give the appearance of a conflict of interest (the directors/trustees must consider and authorise if required).**
3.	**Any activity which might be expected to influence or conflict with the delivery of the UK NEQAS service (e.g. provision of other EQA activities or the provision of diagnostic services who are participants of UK NEQAS)**

4.	**Substantial shareholding or financial ties (grants, bursaries, honoraria, sponsorship, gifts and payments) with diagnostic companies in your area of EQA** **Note: suggest > £1000 per item and > £20,000 or 5% of issued share capital**

UK NEQAS Declaration of Interest Policy: Guidance for Implementation for designated representatives and alternates (organiser/directors)

The Declaration of Interest Policy is to guide UK NEQAS designated representatives and alternates on the declaration and management of potential conflicts that should be identified and managed, and is the minimum recommended practice required for membership of UK NEQAS.

UK NEQAS designated representatives and alternates are accountable to the director/trustees as per the UK NEQAS Code of Practice (COP) and are expected to ensure the COP is adhered to by their schemes and staff.

The overriding principles are transparency and avoidance of financial, operational or reputational risk to the organisation by demonstrating adherence to the spirit and letter of the COP and demonstrating adherence to the principles of good governance.

The declaration of interest and COP apply to all activities directly and indirectly connected with the delivery of UK NEQAS services worldwide.

Core Principles;

1. *UK NEQAS schemes must be constructed and do business with third parties to advance the charitable purpose and meet the COP with respect to not-for-profit overall operation.*
2. *This applies to all UK NEQAS services and materials distributed worldwide*
3. *Any personal benefit must be incidental to the advancement of the charitable purpose.*
4. *Organisers are responsible for ensuring that their schemes operate in a way consistent with these principles.*

In order to ensure good governance UK NEQAS requires an annual declaration of compliance with the COP and declaration of any current interests.

Types of Potential Conflict of Interest include:

1. Direct or indirect personal financial benefit to self or connected persons through activities linked directly or indirectly to UK NEQAS activities (other than salaries and re-imbursement of out-of-pocket expenses)

    1.1 Financial benefit includes receipt of dividends, ownership of property, companies and chattels

2. Provision of EQA, clinical, advisory or consultancy services in the field of diagnostics or quality assurance which might give the appearance of a conflict of interest (the Director/Trustees must consider and authorise if required, as good practice).

3. Any activity which might be expected to influence or conflict with the delivery of the UK NEQAS service (e.g. provision of other EQA activities outside the UK NEQAS service)

    3.1 Provision of diagnostic services which use UK NEQAS services

4. Substantial shareholding or financial ties (grants, bursaries, honoraria, sponsorships, gifts and payments) with diagnostic companies in your area of EQA activity) Note: suggest > £1,000 per item and > £20,000 or 5% of issued share capital

A connected person may be a child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, brother, sister, spouse or civil partner of the designated representative or alternate or any other person living with the designated representatives or alternates.

Where a COI is determined by the Directors/Trustees to be unimportant and appropriately managed the Directors/Trustees will authorise it on an annual basis subject to good governance and will record the decision and rationale in the minutes. The Directors/Trustees may revisit this as required, if circumstances change in-year.

Where a COI is determined to be material, but manageable, the Directors/Trustees will authorise and record the rationale and any monitoring conditions in the minutes in accordance with good practice and the COP. The Directors/Trustees reserve the right to ask for appropriate written guarantees where necessary.

Where a COI is determined to be substantive and unable to be authorised because it cannot be effectively managed (either due to lack of required transparency to allow due diligence or because no effective management strategy can be found) the Director/Trustees will record the decision, communicate their decision and reasons. If the conflicted individual or the scheme Organiser/Director cannot resolve the COI or demonstrate that the COP has not and will not be breached as a result of the COI then the appropriate procedures in the COP and M&A will be invoked.

The overriding principle is transparency. Failure to respond to the reasonable requests of the Director/Trustees to provide them with sufficient traceable information to demonstrate the presence or extent of COI will be treated as though the COI is substantive and unmanageable, as due diligence cannot take place and compliance with the spirit of the COP is not demonstrated.

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Appendix 2

Full Membership of United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Service (UK NEQAS)

Name of Scheme ……
(attach a separate list if required)
Scheme/s Address ……

……

……

Email Address ……

Authorised Representative † ……

Authorised Alternate ‡

……

Name of Legal Entity ……

Legal Entity Address ……

……

……

I have read the UK NEQAS Articles of Association and the UK NEQAS Code of Practice and confirm that the Scheme/s currently complies with this Memorandum and Articles of Association and the Code of Practice and Appendices 1,2,3a,3b,4 5a, 5b and 6. I understand that non-conformity with either the Memorandum and Articles or Code of Practice may result in expulsion of the Scheme from Full membership.

Signed by ……
(Scheme/ Organiser/Director)

Date ……

† this is usually the Scheme Director/Organiser
‡ this is usually the Scheme Manager

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Appendix 3a

Associates and Affiliates of United Kingdom National External Quality Assessment Service (UK NEQAS)

Associates

Eligibility

1. Organising centres not operating fully accredited UK NEQAS schemes but operating pilot Schemes only are eligible to apply for Associate status with UK NEQAS.

2. Such Schemes cannot yet fulfil all the requirements of the UK NEQAS Code of Practice (or the JWG recognition/accreditation criteria which formed its basis) simply because they are pilot Schemes, but would derive advantage in their operation and development from a formal association with the full UK NEQAS organisation.

3. Such schemes should be termed "Pilot UK NEQAS for XXX" or "UK NEQAS XXX Survey", as used for exploratory activity by many UK NEQAS centres, to make their status clear.

4. Procedures for application and granting and cessation of Associate status are as described in section 3 of the 'Code of Practice'.

5. Associates must inform the Central Office when they fulfil the requirements for full membership so that their application can be considered.

6. Associate status is granted on a 3 year renewable basis. Schemes must re-apply every three years, but associate status is regarded as an interim measure while working towards full membership.

Benefits

1. To receive information from and Minutes of Executive Committee meetings.

2. To benefit from the publicity and promotion activities of the Association.

3. To use the UK NEQAS logo.

4. To obtain advice and support from the UK NEQAS Steering Committee system.

5. To obtain advice and support from other UK NEQAS organising centres.

6. To use the Executive Committee and the Association's Office for liaison with other organisations (eg NQAAP, JWG, CPA/UKAS).

7. To attend the Association's Annual Conference.

8. To attend the Association's AGM as a non-voting observer.

Appendix 3a

Conditions, obligations and responsibilities

1. To adopt and promote the UK NEQAS ethos and philosophy.

2. To uphold, support and promote the underlying principles of the Company as embodied in the memorandum, articles of association, Code of Practice (Rules) agreed by the Members at Annual General Meetings and Conferences. Associates shall play a full part in ensuring that the Company is a harmonised, participant-responsible service and shall not damage the reputation of the Company as a whole through inappropriate action or inaction.

3. To abide by the Association's Code of Practice in all those respects which are applicable to a pilot Scheme, and to work towards full compliance and full membership status.

4. The Organiser shall present an account of activities as requested to the Association's Office for inclusion in the UK NEQAS Report and Directory.

5. Financial, including annual, accounts must be submitted as required to the Executive Committee.

6. The Scheme shall contribute to the operating costs of the Association and the costs of the services provided by the Office, as determined by the Association and administered by the Executive Committee.

Affiliates

Eligibility

1. This status is applicable to schemes originally recognised (1992) by the Department of Health when official DH oversight of EQA schemes ceased. No new affiliate members can be created.

2. Such Schemes cannot fulfil all the requirements of the UK NEQAS Code of Practice (or the JWG recognition/ accreditation criteria which formed its basis) but it would be in the interests of patients and the quality of operation to retain a formal association with the UK NEQAS organisation.

3. Procedures for cessation of Affiliate status are as described in section 3 of the 'Code of Practice'.

4. Affiliate status is granted on a 3 year renewable basis.

Benefits

1. To receive information from and Minutes of Executive Committee meetings.

2. To benefit from the publicity and promotion activities of the Association.

3. To obtain advice and support from the UK NEQAS Steering Committee system. Attendance is on a self financing basis.

4. To obtain advice and support from other UK NEQAS organising centres.

5. To use the Executive Committee and the Association's Office for liaison with other organisations (eg NQAAP, JWG, UKAS)

6. To attend the Association's Annual Conference. Attendance is at their own expense.

Conditions, obligations and responsibilities

1. To adopt and promote the UK NEQAS ethos and philosophy.

2. To uphold, support and promote the underlying principles of the Company as embodied in the memorandum, articles of association, Code of Practice (Rules) agreed by the Members at Annual General Meetings and Conferences. Affiliates play a full part in ensuring that the Company is a harmonised, participant-responsible service and shall not damage the reputation of the Company as a whole through inappropriate action or inaction.

THE UK NEQAS SERVICE MARK AND LOGO

Revision date: February, 2019

GENERAL

This document is intended to provide guidance for the use of the UK NEQAS service mark and logo by UK NEQAS Charity Member Schemes, Associate UK NEQAS Schemes and recognised distributors of UK NEQAS services.

The UK NEQAS service mark and logo are both registered with the Trade Marks Registry at the UK Patent Office.

The service mark and logo are the property of the UK NEQAS Charity. Their use by a Scheme shall cease if the Scheme ceases to be a Member of the UK NEQAS Charity.

1. **Guidance for use by UK NEQAS Members**

   1.1 Members Schemes shall use the UK NEQAS name and logo on all documents issued.

   1.2 The name and logo shall only be associated with UK NEQAS activities.

   1.3 The name and logo to be used shall be in the following format (see example below).

UK NEQAS
Leucocyte Immunophenotyping

2. **Guidance for use by officially recognised distributors of UK NEQAS services**

   2.1 Only distributors contracted to market UK NEQAS services for and behalf of a UK NEQAS Charity Member Scheme, Associate UK NEQAS Scheme or the UK NEQAS charitable company may use the UK NEQAS service mark and logo.

   2.2 The distributor shall only use the service mark and logo on stationery associated with the promotion of UK NEQAS services.

   2.3 The distributor shall not use the service mark and logo as an explicit or implied endorsement of any product or services that they supply other than UK NEQAS services.

   2.4 Failure to apply these guidelines will result in permission to use the service mark and logo being revoked.

3. **Guidance for use by host organisation**

3.1 UK NEQAS Schemes are independent of the host organisation and conflicts of interest, or perception of conflicts of interest must be avoided.

3.2 The host shall not use the UK NEQAS service mark and logo without the agreement of the Scheme Organiser.

3.3 The host shall not use the service mark and logo as an explicit or implied endorsement of any services that they supply.

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Appendix 5a

Pilot Scheme Proposal Form
(For Completion by Requesting Centre)

Please complete form and send to UK NEQAS Central Office (centraloffice@ukneqas.org)

Centre name: _____

Scheme Organiser: _____

Proposed pilot scheme name: _____

Analytes or Clinical application covered by the scheme: _____

_____

Material type to be distributed: _____

_____

Is the material sourced from NHSBT? YES ☐ NO ☐

If yes have they been notified of the quantities required? YES ☐ NO ☐

Numbers of expected distributions per annum: _____

Number of expected specimens per distribution: _____

Description of aspects of performance assessed: _____

Why is the pilot scheme being initiated? _____

Competition	Planned development with SC/SAG input	Other, please state
☐	☐	_____

Have any other UK NEQAS centres been approached to discuss the feasibility for the proposed pilot scheme and/ or to ensure there is no internal 'competition' within the organisation? YES ☐ NO ☐

If Yes please provide further details:

Centre Name	Contact Name	Date	Support the	
			YES	NO

Has the appropriate Steering Committee/Specialist Advisory Group approved the proposal for the pilot scheme?

YES ☐ NO ☐

When was approval agreed ? Date: _____

Expected timescales of full scheme status being reached: _____

Appendix 5a

Date the pilot scheme was proposed to UK NEQAS Board: _____

Acceptance of the proposal for the pilot scheme by UK NEQAS Board: YES ☐ NO ☐

If No please outline further work required:

_____

_____

Guidelines on notification of proposed UK NEQAS pilot scheme

Introduction

For Governance reasons and to prevent duplication of work and direct competition by Schemes a formal mechanism is in place to notify the UK NEQAS Board of Trustees of proposed pilot Modules. This does not include one-off surveys or 'pre-pilot' activities. This does not include one off surveys or 'pre- pilot' activity (these should be reported to the membership via the newsletter)

Notification

1. Once approval for a Pilot Module has been given by the appropriate Steering Committee/Specialist Advisory Group, an application shall be made to the Charity's Central Office using the appropriate documentation (*see APPENDIX 5: Pilot Module Proposal Form*). The Scheme Organiser shall fully complete the form and provide any supporting documentation.
2. The Proposal Form and any related correspondence will then be circulated to the members of the Charity with a *Review of Pilot Programme form* (APPENDIX 6) at least 1 month before the date of the next Board meeting. This form should be completed by all centres and returned to Central Office no later than 2 weeks before the Board meeting.
3. Any objections should include a statement explaining the reasons for the objection and where possible evidence of direct competition with an existing UK NEQAS programme.
4. At the subsequent Board of Trustees meeting, the application will be reviewed, together with any objections and a decision made as to the granting or rejection of pilot status.

Decision

1. If the Board of Trustees rejects the application, it shall state the reason(s) for the decision.
2. The Charity's Central Office shall notify the Scheme Organiser of the outcome.
3. Where approval is given the Charity Central Office will inform all members of the outcome

Completed by:_____
Position: _____ Date: _____

Review of Pilot Scheme Proposal
(For Completion by All Centres)

Dear Colleague,

We have received a request for approval of a pilot programme from a Member of the UK NEQAS Consortium, details of which are provided below. We would be grateful if you could review these proposals and return to Central Office within 2 weeks of the date of issue whether you approve or object to this programme being granted a UK NEQAS Pilot Programme status.

This proposal together with documentation from all centres will then be reviewed at the next available Board meeting, where a decision of approval or rejection will be made.

Please complete form and send to UK NEQAS Central Office (centraloffice@ukneqas.org)

Proposed Programme Details

Centre name: [completed by Central Office]

Scheme Organiser: [completed by Central Office]

Proposed pilot scheme name: [completed by Central Office]

Analytes or Clinical application covered by the scheme: [completed by Central Office]

Please indicate below whether you approve or reject the proposal to approve this application

Centre name:

Scheme Organiser:

Approve / Reject *(delete as required)* granting of pilot programme status for the above proposed programme

If you believe the proposal should be rejected, please supply reasons for your decision with particular focus on how the proposed programme directly competes with existing UK NEQAS programmes operated by your centre (all evidence will be reviewed by the Board as part of the final decision making proc

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Guidance on the Appointments of UK NEQAS Scheme Organisers

Who can use this Guidance?

- UK NEQAS Scheme Organisers
- UK NEQAS Scheme Managers
- Managers and Clinical Directors of the Host Institution
- UK NEQAS Board, Steering Groups and Committees

When to use this Guidance?

- For planning succession arrangements or replacement of UK NEQAS Organisers
- To facilitate co-operation between the Host institution and UK NEQAS for mutual benefit and to ensure continuity of Scheme provision to the NHS

How do we get a new Organiser?

It is the responsibility of the UK NEQAS Organiser (or in their absence the Scheme Manager is responsible) to facilitate and document succession planning and disaster recovery arrangements by initiating contact and facilitating liaison between the UK NEQAS Board and the Host institution. The Scheme Organisers may take advice from the Steering Committees. The Steering committees may communicate advice and recommendations directly to the Board if they so wish, but only the UK NEQAS Board is the Authoritative Body to confirm or validate arrangements on behalf of the UK NEQAS Organisation.

Why do we get a new Organiser?

Expected – Succession Planning

- Resignation
- New scheme application
- UK NEQAS Board withdraws designation as a result of failure to meet code of Practice

In order to facilitate the process the UK NEQAS Scheme should initiate discussion between the UK NEQAS Board and the Host institution as far a possible in advance to enable smooth transition arrangements to be agreed

Unexpected

- Death
- Retirement
- Dismissal

Each scheme should already have disaster recovery plans in place, and a nominated individual to assume the role of scheme organizer on a temporary basis until the advertisement and appointment of an individual to the substantive replacement post. This individual arrangement must be agreed between the host institution and the UK NEQAS Board in advance. *Communication between Host institution and Executive should be conducted via the Scheme organiser and the President of the UK NEQAS Board.*

Why does it matter?

- **UK NEQAS Schemes are hosted in heterogeneous organisations and there are several stakeholders**
    - Variable management relationship and accountability to host organisation
    - University, NHS Trust, private company
    - Multiple stakeholders
    - Usually host organisation acts as the employer

- **UK NEQAS must manage potential conflicts of interest**
- **UK NEQAS must ensure the continuity and quality of EQA provision for the good of the NHS**
- **UK NEQAS is the only competent authority to designate organisers of UK NEQAS schemes**
- **Host institutions are the employer, with all the rights and obligations that that entails**
- **The organiser is accountable to UK NEQAS for adherence to the consortium code of practice and the operation of the schemes, but to the host for all other employment obligations or contractual arrangements**
- **Organisers are eligible to be directors of the UK NEQAS charity and sit on the UK NEQAS Board and to act in the interests of the UK NEQAS Charity**
- **The Organiser is usually an employee of an NHS Trust or university with duties and obligations to the host institution**

There is a clear need for:

- **Better communication between stakeholders**
- **Planned succession**
- **Balancing the needs of all stakeholders**

It is therefore imperative that working relationships and respective duties are clear to all parties in advance, and that these arrangements have the full support of both UK NEQAS and the host institution and are free from conflicts of interest, for the good of the NHS quality assurance schemes

Key Steps to achieving involvement of all stakeholders

- **Job description/person specification**
- **Appointments committee with UK NEQAS representation**
- **Designation of organiser by UK NEQAS Board**

To achieve this the UK NEQAS Board will need to have input into and approve the following in advance of advertisement of the post.

Essential Criterion for approval of JD/Person Spec by UK NEQAS Board

- The UK NEQAS Board will review the job description to ensure consistency with UK NEQAS objectives and standards and lack of unacceptable conflicts of Interest which might damage the UK NEQAS organisation
- UK NEQAS Board must be represented on appointments committees
- The UK NEQAS Board must approve the EQA-specific components of the person specification to ensure that individuals with the necessary personal attributes to promote and benefit the development of the UK NEQAS organisation are appointed.
- The UK NEQAS Board will validate that internal management arrangements are acceptable to UK NEQAS and deliver all the necessary accountabilities, safeguards and functions (even if many delegated within organisation) to achieve the aims detailed above.
- The UK NEQAS Board will also assess whether sufficient time is available in JD to fulfill requirements depending on the local situation (full time, part time EQA vs. virtual supervision or hod supervision etc.)

In order to prevent delays in approval of Job Descriptions the Host institution should ensure that the job description and personal specification encompasses the following specific components:

The Organiser must:

- Ensure adherence to UK NEQAS code of practice and DOH Guidance
- Provide professional governance of scheme
- Hold responsibility for EQA unit budget (may delegate)
- Have responsibility for clinical governance of unit
- Have sufficient managerial control to be able to ensure the unit complies with the UK NEQAS code of practice

The Person Specification and Job Description must:

- Ensure lack of unacceptable conflicts of interest
    - Unacceptable conflicts of interest might include:
        - Employment by or ownership of commercial company providing diagnostic assays or EQA Scheme in same field, employment by CPA-UK or its predecessor ,)
- Define internal and external working relationships on behalf of EQA (SC/SAC, NQAAP, JWGQA, Host etc.)
- Have sufficient time, resource and support to maintain and develop scheme(s) and meet obligations to UK NEQAS

- Define accountabilities to UK NEQAS and Host institution
- Define management arrangements within unit and its relationships to that of the host institution where applicable
- Define disaster recovery and continuity arrangements (incorporated into policy documentation) in event of death, retirement, resignation etc.
- Define succession arrangements (even if candidate not available)
- Ensure that sufficient managerial control vested in organiser to be able to ensure the unit complies with the UK NEQAS code of practice
- Adhere to DOH Guidance for operation of EQA schemes
- Adhere to prEN 14136, IFCC Fundamentals and CPA/ACALS practice by using title scheme organiser for official UK NEQAS events and documentation

Local Director/Deputy Director titles are acceptable provided they are clearly distinct and differentiated from disaster recovery process and must be incorporated into local management structure where appropriate

A Member of the UK NEQAS Board should be present on the interview committee.

At the interview, the Board member will need to assess on an individual basis:

- Relevant experience (EQA, Scientific or Clinical)
- Professional credibility/status as EQA organiser
- Professionally active in areas of interest
- Commitment to EQA
- JD incorporates all necessary internal and external working relationships
- Working arrangements compliant with Code of practice

It is hoped that this guidance will clarify and facilitate useful co-operation between host organisations in the process of appointing scheme organisers.

UK NEQAS Executive 2004