

## UK NEQAS for H&I Newsletter March 2021

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#### 1. News

This Newsletter contains important information about registration and changes to schemes for 2021-22. Please make sure you make all staff involved in testing EQA samples aware of the changes. Full details of all schemes are available in the 2021-22 Participant Manual which is available to download from our website [www.uknegashandi.org.uk](http://www.uknegashandi.org.uk).

Please visit <https://uknegas.org.uk/news/> to view updates from the NEQAS Consortium on our response to BREXIT. The Consortium will also continue to update their response to the COVID-19 situation, the latest information can be viewed at <https://uknegas.org.uk/>.

#### Financial Year Operation in 2020-21

UK NEQAS for H&I continue to work to a financial year (April – March) in order to align our services with Participant's Finance Departments and to allow us to improve our invoicing service.

#### 2021-22 Registration Now Open

The registration process can now be completed online using the Participant's Portal. Please log on to the system and complete your registration for 2021-22 as soon as possible. The first distribution in 2021-22 will be Scheme 2B on the 27<sup>th</sup> April 2021.



#### UK NEQAS for H&I

**Director:** Dr Tracey Rees

**Deputy Director:** Deborah Pritchard

**Operations Manager:** Amy De'Ath

**Deputy Manager:** Melanie Bartley

**Healthcare Scientist Practitioner:** Geraint Clarke

**QA Officer:** Jack Jefferies

**MLA:** Owain Seldon



Pictured above taken prior to the pandemic (left to right): Geraint Clarke, Melanie Bartley, Amy De'Ath, and Deborah Pritchard

**Email:** [uknegashandi@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:uknegashandi@wales.nhs.uk)

**Website:** [www.uknegashandi.org.uk](http://www.uknegashandi.org.uk)

### Scheme Fees for 2020-21

The majority of Scheme fees have been held at 2020-21 prices. A slight increase in the fee for Scheme 10 has been made in line with an increase in operating costs for this scheme. We would like to reiterate to our customers that we operate on a not-for-profit basis, and as such will always provide our services at the lowest price we can offer to maintain operations.

Please remember that all invoices must be paid in **UK STERLING (GBP - £) AND FREE OF ALL BANK CHARGES.** We are experiencing more invoices being paid in a foreign currency resulting in outstanding balances being left on accounts. Please also ensure that if your laboratory is not subject to UK VAT, that a valid VAT number is recorded during the registration process. Registrations without this information will be charged UK VAT as standard. An administration fee will be payable if invoices have to be re-issued. Outstanding balances will result in suspension from all services until your account balance is cleared.

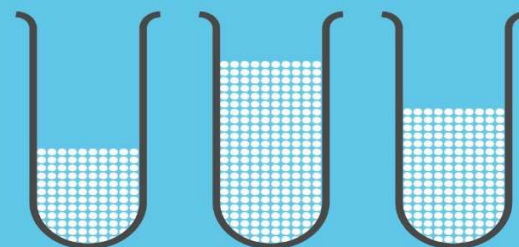
### Distribution Timetables 2021-22

Distribution and result deadline timetables are available in the Participant Manual and on the UK NEQAS for H&I Website.

### Personnel

Deborah Pritchard and Amy De'Ath will be continuing their current roles as Deputy Director and Operations Manager respectively. Dr Tracey Rees remains as Director.

We would like to welcome Jack Jefferies, QA Technical Officer and Owain Seldon, Medical Laboratory Assistant who have both started with the team in 2021. NEQAS would also like to bid a fond farewell and give our thanks for all his hard work and dedication over the last 10 years to Luke Gardner who has left the team. Fortunately we will be seeing him again soon in his new role as a Senior Internal Auditor!



## EFI/BSHI Conference 2021

The NEQAS team will be attending the joint BSHI and EFI Conference, which will be held virtually, as exhibitors to promote the service.



The conference will be held from the **21<sup>st</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021.**

Please come and visit us at our virtual booth!



For more details please visit <https://www.efi2020.org.uk/>

### Report Improvements

You will notice a number of improvements to assessment reports have been made in 2021-22. These developments should make the reports more informative and easier to interpret. You will also be able to compare your performance with other participants in a scheme.

## 2. Scheme Updates for 2021-22

### Scheme 5A, 7 and 8 Sample Distribution Frequency

The frequency of sample distribution for Scheme 5A – HFE Typing, Scheme 7 – HLA\*B57:01 Typing for Drug Hypersensitivity and Scheme 8 – HLA Genotyping for Coeliac and Other HLA Diseases will continue to be distributed for assessment three times a year. The first distribution will contain three samples, the second distribution will contain four samples and the final distribution will contain three samples. This is to ensure EQA samples are representative of laboratory performance by sampling laboratory testing more regularly.

### Scheme 3 – HLA Antibody Specificity Analysis

Following a survey asking Participants of Scheme 3 if they would like to be able to submit antibody results for assessment at HLA-DQA and HLA-DPA there will now be the option to select whether you would like to be assessed for antibody definition at HLA-DQA and / or HLA-DPA.

Participants are encouraged to submit antibody results at HLA-DQA and HLA-DPA. Please note these results will not be formally assessed in 2021-22. Instead, data will be collected and analysed to inform whether formal assessment in 2022-23 will be introduced.

### Scheme 8 – HLA Genotyping for Coeliac and Other HLA Diseases

New for 2020-21, participants may select to be assessed for the detection of HLA-B\*58:01 to support hypersensitivity testing to Allopurinol. After a trial period this may be moved to form part of Scheme 7 – HLA-B\*57:01 Typing for Drug Hypersensitivity.

## 3. BREXIT

We are continuing to adapt our working practices in line with

the new BREXIT regulations. The full ramifications of BREXIT are still being realised so while we are in this transition process we encourage you to report any problems you might have, particularly with sample delivery, so we can investigate and resolve any issues.

## 4. The Participant's Portal

The UK NEQAS for H&I Participant Portal allows users to manage their EQA Scheme participation.

A link to the system can be found on the UK NEQAS for H&I webpage <https://negas.welsh-blood.org.uk/> or by typing <https://uknegashandi.nagoda.cloud> into an internet browser.



User guides are available for laboratory users and agents to guide you through the system and the functionality it offers. These guides appear on our website, and as links in the footer at the bottom of the Participant's Portal site.

Please register for the 2021-22 distribution year by logging on to the website and selecting **Registration>Scheme Registration**.

### System Improvements for 2021-22

NEQAS continue to invest in the Portal to improve functionality. Many of the improvements will not be visible to Participants but some of the ones you will notice include:

- **Making the navigation of performance tables easier**
- **Improving the format of Method table downloads**
- **Easier access to the iED scenarios, directly from the Portal**
- **Improvements in the format of assessment reports**

## 4. Questions and Answers

Answers to some commonly asked questions:

**R: What do I do if I want to add additional Schemes to my registration mid-way through the year?**

A: Primary Users can amend the lab registration at any point in the year by clicking the appropriate year in the Annual Registration section. This will open up the registration screens where you can view and amend what Schemes your lab will participate in. If you add an additional Scheme part way through the year you will only be billed for upcoming samples.

**R: My laboratory has two different analysers – can I register both for EQA?**

A: Given that there is only one 'correct' result for each test, we recommend that laboratories do not have two separate registrations. We recommend that you subject one analyser to EQA and use daily IQC to assure that both are giving the same results. Alternatively, where the two analysers employ different processes, the EQA exercises can be alternated between the two, or half the samples tested on the first analyser and the other half on the second.

**R: How do I amend the details of lab staff?**

A: To make any changes to staff you need to be registered as a Primary User. Primary Users can simply click on the Staff option in the menu bar. This is bring up a list of all users for you lab and you can add, delete or change staff roles as required.

If you need any assistance please contact the NEQAS office at [UKNEQASHandI@Wales.NHS.UK](mailto:UKNEQASHandI@Wales.NHS.UK).

## Good News Stories

NEQAS have a responsibility to ensure the quality of laboratory testing. We do this in many ways but one of which is our ability to report Manufacturers whose diagnostic kits are not performing in line with other technologies (and who fail to engage with direct communication from NEQAS) to the UK Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency for further investigation.



This has directly resulted in improvements to a kit used for testing for HLA alleles associated with Coeliac Disease. These improvements will assist in the interpretation of the results produced by the kit. This is especially important to assist laboratories who do not specialise in Histocompatibility and Immunogenetics but are still required to support testing for HLA in relation to defining susceptibility to Coeliac Disease.

NEQAS are also pleased to report that despite the many challenges of 2020 and 2021 they have been able to provide a complete EQA cycle with no reduction in samples or services!

*We would like to invite your comments. Please email all comments to [ukneqashandi@wales.nhs.uk](mailto:ukneqashandi@wales.nhs.uk)*

**UK NEQAS**  
Histocompatibility  
& Immunogenetics

## Annual Participants Meeting

Please make a note in your diaries that the UK NEQAS for H&I Annual Participant Meeting, reviewing 2020-21 scheme results, will be held on **12<sup>th</sup> May 2021**. The meeting will be held virtually and open to all our participants globally free of charge.

Further details including how to register will be sent to Participants soon!