UK NEQAS
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Histocompatibility & Immunogenetics

UK NEQAS for H&I Newsletter March 2026

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1. News

This Newsletter contains important information about registration and changes to schemes for 2026-27. Please make sure all staff involved in testing EQA samples are aware of relevant changes. Full details of all schemes are available in the 2026-27 Participant Manual which is available to download from our website www.ukneqashandi.org.uk.

Annual Re-Registration is Open

The registration process can now be completed online using the new Participants' Portal. Please create a log on to the new system and complete your registration for 2026-27 as soon as possible at: https://ukneqas-vunhst.wales.nhs.uk/

The distribution timetable is available on our website: https://ukneqas.org.uk/calendar.

Service Improvement

The UK NEQAS team are proud of the service improvement initiatives they have made in the last year resulting in a Gold Award.

Pictured left: Melanie Bartley

Service Improvement
Gold Level Department
September - December 2025

UK NEQAS for H&I

Director: Deborah Pritchard

Operations Manager: Amy De'Ath

Deputy Manager: Melanie Bartley

Healthcare Scientist Practitioner: Geraint Clarke

QA Officer: Jack Jefferies

MLA: Susan Davies

Pictured above *(left to right)*: Jack Jefferies, Amy De'Ath, Deborah Pritchard, Geraint Clarke and Sue Davies

Email: ukneqashandi@wales.nhs.uk

Website: www.ukneqashandi.org.uk

Scheme Fees for 2026-27

There will be a slight increase in fees for this distribution cycle. We are facing higher inflation and increased costs. We strive to provide a high-quality service with additional benefits that participant's value, including free educational schemes, webinars and access to experts in the field whilst operating in economically challenging conditions. UK NEQAS for H&I has absorbed some price increasing costs by making savings elsewhere using various improvement initiatives and sourcing competitive pricing for consumables.

UK NEQAS
Histocompatibility & Immunogenetics

We would like to reiterate to our customers that *we operate on a not-for profit basis* and will always provide our services at the lowest price we can whilst maintaining operations.

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. An administration fee will be payable if invoices must be re-issued. Outstanding balances will result in suspension from all services until your account balance is cleared.

Follow us on social media for the latest updates and news!

www.linkedin.com/in/uk-neqas-handi

UK NEQAS for H&I will be attending the 39th EFI/BSHI Conference from the **21st-24th April 2026 in Edinburgh, Scotland**. The theme for the conference is *from genes to grafts: where innovation meets medicine*.

Deb and Amy will be available throughout the Conference, including at the Poster Presentation session.

Please come and say hello!

Annual Participants' Meeting

This annual meeting allows us to feedback on performance, highlight issues or trends and inform participants of any changes for the upcoming year. We also encourage interaction so participants can raise concerns or give ideas for improvements.

Join us on the **11th May 2026 at Aston Conference Centre in Birmingham, UK.** We will also be providing a second meeting for rest of world-based labs using an online format (date to be confirmed). This meeting will be recorded and made available on our website.

2. Scheme Updates for 2026-27

Please refer to the Participant Manual for full scheme information. It is available to download from our website www.ukneqashandi.org.uk.

New for 2026-27

Scheme 1A – HLA Phenotyping pre-prepared cells will no longer be offered. All participants will receive whole blood.

Scheme 10 - HPA Genotyping for option to report at HPA-9 has been added.

Scheme 12 – HNA Genotyping will progress from a pilot to a fully assessed scheme. 10 samples will be sent in two distributions.

Scheme 13 – HNA Antibody Detection/Specification will progress from a pilot to a fully assessed scheme. 4 samples will be sent in two distributions.

Scheme 3 Reminder

Laboratories can report complement fixing antibodies in Scheme 3. There is a field titled "Complement Fixing Antibodies" in the results entry page. A small number of laboratories report in this manner which may allow you to perform a comparison.

If your laboratory uses extended testing panels you can report additional antibodies or allele-specific antibodies in the comments box.

Scheme 5A – HFE Genotyping for Hereditary Haemochromatosis

The result deadline for Scheme 5A has been extended from 14 to 42 days to more accurately reflect laboratory practice. This change was the direct result of feedback received from our participant survey.

Pilot Schemes

UK NEQAS for H&I will be continuing to offer pilot schemes in 2026-27 ***free of charge***.

Scheme 8 Coeliac Disease: Interpretative Comments – it is currently optional whether to include interpretative comments alongside the HLA type in Coeliac Disease (CD). Following a trial in 2025-26 we will continue a pilot assessment of these comments. All labs are encouraged to submit their clinical interpretation which should include an interpretation of the risk of susceptibility to CD and any diagnostic limitations. Participants will receive a summary of the pilot assessment.

Future Schemes

Donor derived cell free DNA (dd-cfDNA)

Cell-free DNA are short, extracellular fragments of DNA released into the circulation. Dd-cfDNA can be used to detect potential rejection episodes post-transplant: during both cellular and antibody mediated rejection, a greater amount of dd-cfDNA is released in the blood from the damaged graft indicating organ rejection.

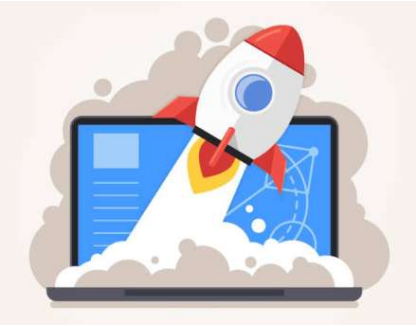
Apolipoprotein L1 (APOL1) Genotyping

The presence of high-risk variants is associated with an increased risk of chronic kidney disease and kidney failure. These variants are found almost exclusively in people of African or Caribbean heritage: https://bts.org.uk/apol1-testing-in-potential-living-kidney-donors/

Register your interest here or tell us about other services you would like us to provide: https://forms.office.com/e/31aFbSFZpu

3. New IT System

UK NEQAS for H&I are excited to announce that we have developed a bespoke new Portal which will be introduced for the 2026-27 distribution year.



The new EQA IT system brings many benefits:

- More secure, protecting your data
- Easier to use using a familiar Microsoft platform
- Owned and operated by UK NEQAS for H&I

The system has been developed specifically for UK NEQAS for H&I. It is owned and run by us which brings significant savings compared to the cost of a commercial product all of which means we can keep our fees as low as possible. It also means we can tailor the system to your needs and grow the system with service developments.

Log on to the new system now at:
https://ukneqas-vunhst.wales.nhs.uk/

There will be lots more functionality appearing in the system after the initial registration process and more developments in the upcoming months including a participant dashboard to monitor your tasks and performance.

Your feedback is important to us. Please let us know your thoughts on the system by emailing ukneqashandi@wales.nhs.uk

We will be at APHIA 2026 in Japan from the 25-28th May 2026
Find us in the Exhibitors Hall.

4. Feedback from Participant Questionnaire

NEQAS sent a survey to its users in October 2025 asking for feedback on its services.

The survey highlighted what was going well such as:

- Overall service provision
- Communication
- Portal
- Participant Manual availability and content
- Scheme Design
- Provision of Educational Schemes
- Report content and style
- Sample quality
- Website
- Participant engagement: meetings and webinars

It also showed that courier services and our invoicing process could be improved. We are actively working with our courier, DHL, to address and resolve shipping delays as they arise. Some of these issues are outside of our control but where an improvement can be made in, especially in terms of custom requirements, we are committed to implement these actions swiftly.

The new EQA IT system will allow us to improve the invoicing process and we hope you will see the benefit of these improvements in the 2026-27 year and beyond.