

## Re-registration 2024

Welcome to this re-registration newsletter for 2024. The participation year will run from April 2024 until the end of March 2025. We need to confirm your requirements for UK NEQAS services in the coming year and confirm your contact details. As in previous years, we will email your laboratory's main contact with a link to the re-registration information, including our distribution schedules and price lists for the year. Re-registration is online only, and the email will contain details of how to log-in. The re-registration website will open on or around February 14<sup>th</sup> 2024 for individual participants and close approximately three weeks later, on March 15<sup>th</sup> 2024. Participants who register through a central agent or distributor do not need to complete a re-registration entry, as this will be confirmed by your agent. If you have any questions or concerns, contact our Administration team on +44 (0)1923 587111.

## Staff changes in the UK NEQAS team

We welcomed Bhavika Tadvī and Nikhita Patel as Scheme scientists in 2023, to work alongside Rachel Godden. Andrea Teuchert has returned to her position as Morphology Lead Scientist from maternity leave and it is great to have her back. In the meantime, Bianca Olivier went on maternity leave in early January and has welcomed baby Robin to her family. Jack Toland has joined the team as an Associate Practitioner, replacing Jazmin Brooks. In our Admin team, we said goodbye to Nazia Hussain after nearly 7 years as our Business and Finance Manager, and her role has been taken by Isaac Barkah. Asmah Ahmed has joined Admin as a Senior Admin Assistant. We welcome our new colleagues and thank the team members they have replaced for their support and hard work.

## Automated Counting programmes

**Performance dashboards**, where quality or laboratory managers will be able to see a summary of the performance for all the instruments under their responsibility, regardless of location. The dashboard will provide an immediate summary of the number of non-compliance concerns and allow the participant to drill down to the performance report if necessary, rather than having to log in separately to each machine's report. This facility will be available, for automated counting programmes initially, from April.

**Return of EQA data through the Labgnostic NPex system**, which many laboratories will use for the return of patients' results and which some participants already use for EQA data for other UK NEQAS Schemes in Chemistry and Immunology. There have been some technical challenges in Haematology arising from the use alternative analysis modes for fixed EQA material but we are hopeful that these are close to resolution. We will keep you updated, as this development will reduce the amount of manual data entry required for EQA result return.

**POCT Haematology programme**, for new technologies in POCT full blood counting. The first module of this programme to be launched is designed for the Pixcell Hemoscreen but modules for other technologies will follow. This programme is not included in our scope of accreditation at the time of writing but will be added as soon as practicable. If you are interested, please contact [haem@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:haem@ukneqas.org.uk).

**Reticulocyte Haemoglobin pilot programme**, which has offered two pilot distributions in the past year. This pilot has shown encouraging results and is available to participants in the UK only initially. A small charge, to cover postage and packing, will be applied from April 2024 and two distributions are planned this year.

**Body fluid counting EQA** has been suggested by a number of participants and our Scheme advisors and we are asking participants for expressions of interest at re-registration.

**Have you seen the ICSH review of internal quality control policy for blood cell counters?**

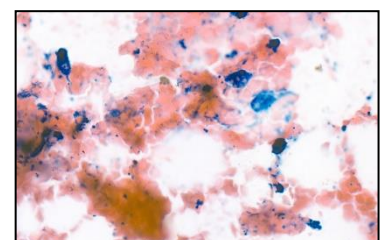
Published in January 2024 and available as a free access paper in the International Journal of Laboratory Haematology (DOI - <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijlh.14220>).

## Morphology programmes

**Performance scoring for Blood Film Morphology** has been in operation on a shadow basis for more than a year, which has given us a good overview of how it has been working. Thank you to all participants who have given us feedback, which was discussed at a recent meeting of our Morphology Scientific Advisory Group. The review focused mostly on the use of the 'expert flag' scoring and it was agreed that we would ask our commentators to provide additional information on the rationale for the features selected and we would also consider whether it is possible to provide alternative, equivalent flags. The next steps are to decide whether it is possible to set acceptable performance standards for morphology scoring or if the scores are best provided as a performance guide to the participating laboratory, for their internal management.

**Automated Cell Identification System** (e.g., CellaVision) data can be accommodated in the manual differential module. We have noted participants' comments on the direction of slide spreading (apologies!) and the type of slide used. This may improve the success rate in obtaining data from our slides.. If you are interested in learning more or taking part, please contact [haem@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:haem@ukneqas.org.uk). We also urge those who are registered to return data!

**Bone marrow hemosiderin assessment** using virtual images continues to develop, alternated with a non-bone marrow glass slide for the assessment of iron staining technique. The best option for this second arm of the programme is the use of a peripheral blood film with Pappenheimer bodies. Participants are reminded that these slides are peripheral blood and not a particulate bone marrow. The instruction sheet describes the material used. We are also investigating the use of full



slide images for the haemosiderin assessment, with input from the company that supports the EQATE platform.

**The Case Interpretation** module for medical and advanced practitioners has been tested with a group of participants and we are currently developing case content. The cases will include the interpretation of morphology and other laboratory results and will be suitable for practitioners who are responsible for reporting haematology results.

## Digital morphology for Continuing Professional Development

**The Digital Morphology for CPD programme** has over 4,000 individual registrations and offers 6 cases per year. The programme is open to laboratory scientists worldwide and is wholly educational. Cases in 2023 included HbA+HbE+Hb Barts, acute promyelocytic leukaemia, Zieve's syndrome, TTP with HIV infection, Pelger-Huet anomaly and beta thalassaemia major. We thank Dr John Burthem and Dr Michelle Brereton for their support of this programme. Work on the cell identification module has progressed well and should be available to participants this year.

## Morphology champions

We could not operate without the Morphology Champions, who supply specimens for the Blood Films for Morphology programme. This year thanks go to Queen Elizabeth Hospital (Woolwich), Watford General Hospital, Hereford County Hospital and Ipswich Hospital. We are interested in any cases that offer educational interest in blood film morphology. These do not have to be rare conditions and cases that are seen regularly in the lab are always needed. Contact [haem@ukneqas.org.uk](mailto:haem@ukneqas.org.uk) if you would like to know more. Like everything else, the rewards are small but you will be contributing to the service and we send chocolates!

## Haemoglobinopathy programmes

UK NEQAS Haematology provides a comprehensive range of programmes for haemoglobinopathy EQA, including adult screening, newborn screening and molecular programmes, as well as red cell enzymopathy EQA for G6PD screening and quantitative assay.

The main areas of development have been the transfer of the molecular DNA Diagnostics for Haemoglobinopathies to online operation, the introduction of DNA from cultured cell lines as survey material in the same programme, the amendment of the Hb S% scoring algorithm (finalised following discussion with our advisors last June) and the first pilot of scoring interpretation in the adult haemoglobinopathy programme.

## Steering Committee and Scientific Advisory Group changes

Christina Abeynayake, Chris Robson, Sallyann Ridsdale, Ketkee Kothadia, Mansi Patel and Dr Melanie Proven joined us as advisors in 2023 and we are grateful for their support. We have also had a number of recent applications from haematologists in training, which will be reviewed in

March 2024. Although our advisory groups are relatively well supported at the time of writing, we are keen to hear from any participant interested in joining us. We ask for a CV and a covering letter outlining what you consider you could contribute, which will be reviewed with the chairs of the Steering Committee and SAGs.

Dr Will Lester, Ian Mellors and Dr Gavin Knight stepped down as Scheme advisors in 2023. We thank them for their support and work and wish them well for the future.

## Annual meeting and webinars

We held our 24th Annual Participants' Meeting at York Racecourse in October 2023, with an audience of approximately 250 laboratory managers, scientists and clinicians. The audience enjoyed presentations on a variety of topics, including from Martin Stearn from UKAS, from Dr Debbie Nolder on the malaria diagnostics and a series of special haemoglobinopathy case studies.

The 25th Annual Participants' Meeting will be held in Birmingham, at the Birmingham Conference and Exhibition Centre close to Birmingham New Street station. The date is Tuesday October 8th and the programme will be published in the next couple of months. You can book places at the 2024 meeting via your re-registration and we look forward to seeing you at this leading national meeting for haematology laboratory scientists.

A second, successful and well-attended webinar was held for participants in the DNA Haemoglobinopathies programme in November 2023, to update this largely international group of participants on programme developments and performance. A third dedicated DNA Haemoglobinopathies webinar will be held in November 2024.

General webinars are planned for March, June and September 2024 and the webinar schedule will be announced on [www.ukneqash.org](http://www.ukneqash.org). These webinars are open to all and free of charge to attend.

## ISO17043 accreditation

The UK NEQAS Haematology and Transfusion scope of accreditation is available for review at <https://www.ukas.com/> under centre number 7805.

**Contact us if you have any questions about re-registration or if you would like any further information about our services**

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