

BTLP Newsletter 2020

Re-registration 2020/21

It's time to re-register so that we can make sure that you receive the EQA services you require without interruption and that the invoice for our services is accurate.

All documents relating to re-registration have been distributed electronically, so the only notification you will receive is the email with instructions for logging-in and details for re-registering.

The web-pages will allow you to create, deactivate, or change details for key contacts. It is essential that we have a single main contact and an invoice contact; a consultant contact is also required for clinical laboratories in the UK. The main contact address is used for delivery of samples so please ensure this is correct. You can also add other contacts so that lab staff receive notification emails when samples are despatched (trial contact) or when reports are issued (report contact). Please ensure you inactivate contacts who no longer work for your organisation, otherwise they may still be able enter data and access your reports.

Even if there are no changes, please take a few moments to check that your details are correct. A change to the delivery (main contact) address will be applied from the first distribution of the 2020/21 schedule, but all other contact detail changes will take effect immediately.

You will need to check that you are registered for the appropriate tests, and contact the scheme by email if you require any changes to be made.

You can register on the same page for all BTLP schemes for which you are the main contact, including Pre-transfusion Testing (E and R exercises), FMH, ABO Titration, DAT, Red Cell Genotyping (RCG), and the pilot schemes for Extended Red Cell Phenotyping (ERP) and Antenatal Titration (ANT), and also for TACT and annual meeting places. This will give you a single quote and a single invoice.

There has been a small increase to the prices (around 3%) for 2020/21 for the full schemes to cover inflation and increasing overheads; the DAT and Red Cell Genotyping (RCG) schemes have seen a greater increase as part of their transition from pilot to full schemes, whilst the cost of the remaining pilot schemes remains at that for 2019/20. To offset some of these increases we are keeping our courier prices at the 2019/20 level.

We appreciate your participation in our schemes, and if you need any assistance with the re-registration process or information on our services, please contact our Administration Team by phone on +44 1923 217933 or email using btlpadmin@ukneqas.org.uk.

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Update on BTLP Staffing

In 2019 the decision was taken to move the Scheme from being overseen by a part-time medical director to a full-time scientific director in line with other UK NEQAS Schemes. This change was approved by the UK NEQAS board and the Trust following the resignation of Dr. Megan Rowley, Director for the last 15 years. Megan continues to support the Scheme as a member of the Steering Committee. Jenny White was appointed as Director in March 2019, but will be leaving us in March 2020, after more than 20 years at UK NEQAS, to take up a new role with the International Society of Blood Transfusion (ISBT). In August 2019 Richard Haggas was appointed as Co-Director as part of a succession plan, which also saw Katy Veale taking over as Operations Manager in October. Dipika Shah will be joining the BTLP team as a Senior EQA Scientist in March 2020.

Update on BTLP Schemes

BTLP successfully maintained ISO 17043 accreditation at our full UKAS visit in July 2019

Pre-transfusion Testing (PTT)

The phenotyping element of the PTT 'R' exercises (one blood group system with each exercise) has changed to assess Rh and K each time, with extended phenotyping for other red cell antigens now available through the ERP pilot scheme.

The data entry pages associated with UI submissions have been updated so that the section for indicating antibodies that cannot be positively identified is unavailable until 'UI' is ticked and a UI submission made. This should reduce the number of penalties incurred by laboratories not making a UI submission through a misunderstanding of the process.

Fetomaternal Haemorrhage (FMH)

The most interesting FMH sample in 2019 was 1901F Patient 1 which was created to simulate a large FMH (>100ml). We were interested to know how laboratories would report this sample and it was good to see that all laboratories performing quantification were able to report a bleed volume.

Following this exercise we sent a 'Diagnostic Kleihauer' questionnaire, looking at how laboratories handle FMH requests where using flow cytometry with an anti-D marker cannot be performed (e.g. D positive maternal samples); our thanks to all those who completed it.

The information gained from both the exercise and questionnaire have been used to assess the need for a 'Diagnostic Kleihauer' scheme in the future and we will work further on this in 2020

Katy Veale presented the findings at the BBTS Conference in Harrogate in September 2019 and sought additional feedback from the audience.

ABO Titration (ABOT)

The ABOT Scheme now includes A₁ typing routinely with each distribution, rather than just once per year. This change has been made to support any future UK initiative to use kidneys from A₂ donors for transplant to B recipients.

Direct Antiglobulin Test (DAT)

In 2019 bespoke software for data entry and reporting was further developed to allow assessment of a DAT interpretation, rather than just reaction grades.

In 2020 the DAT scheme will transition from a pilot scheme to a full scheme and will include scoring and performance monitoring for UK laboratories.

Red cell Genotyping (RCG)

The RCG scheme assesses genotype and predicted phenotype for a range of blood groups four times a year. Two 'patient' whole blood samples are provided for D C,c,E,e, Kk, Fy^a Fy^b, Fy Jk^a Jk^b, MN, Ss, Do^a, Do^b typing.

In 2020 the RCG scheme will transition from a pilot scheme to a full scheme and will include scoring and performance monitoring for UK laboratories.

Point of Care Testing - D typing

UK NEQAS BTLP runs a D typing scheme for users performing D typing in non-laboratory areas where the results are used to determine whether anti-D prophylaxis Ig is indicated. There are four exercises per year and each exercise includes three whole blood samples for D typing. For more information about the scheme see <https://www.ukneqasbtlp.org/btlp.php>

Late results

From 01/04/2020 onwards, the BTLP scheme will no longer be routinely accepting late results for the Pre-Transfusion testing or FMH scheme.

This will:

- bring all BTLP schemes in line with each other
- reduce the potential for error due to manual entry of results by the BTLP scheme on behalf of participants
 - reflect in EQA the need for timely submission of results for patients

Please let us know on btlp@ukneqas.org.uk if you have any comments on this change

BTLP Pilot Schemes

Data entry and issue of reports for all BTLP pilot schemes is now via our website.

All reports include overall and individual results, and where appropriate further analysis and comment.

Antenatal Antibody Titration (ANT)

There are 4 exercises per year, distributed with 4 of the 6 PTT 'E' exercises. One 'patient' plasma sample is provided for titration each time, and extra information collected on the follow-up undertaken if similar result were to be obtained in clinical practice.

<https://www.ukneqasbtlp.org/btlp.php>

Extended Red Cell Phenotyping (ERP)

The ERP pilot scheme assesses phenotyping for a range of common antigens four times a year.

Two 'patient' red cell samples (in Alsever's) are provided for D C,c,E,e, Kk, Fy^a Fy^b, Jk^a Jk^b, MN, Ss phenotyping.

<https://www.ukneqasbtlp.org/btlp.php>

All pilot schemes are open to UK and non-UK laboratories; it is easy to join during on-line re-registration.

For more details of these pilots, go to www.ukneqasbtlp.org or contact us via btlp@ukneqas.org.uk

Other updates

Changing automation / technology

We are often contacted by participants when they are making changes to the technology they use. Please note, that whilst other schemes such as Haematology do require notification of automation changes, it is not necessary to notify BTLP changes, as this information is gathered as part of the data entered with each exercise.

Exercise instructions

Our exercise instructions are currently available as a paper copy, sent with the exercise material, and as a link in the data entry pages for each exercise. As part of an attempt to reduce the amount of paper we use, we are considering whether we can move to on-line instructions only. Please contact us at btlp@ukneqas.org.uk if you have any feedback regarding this.

Exercise numbering

From April 2020 we are changing the exercise numbering system for the ABOT, RCG, DAT, ERP and ANT exercises. These exercises are currently numbered from April to March (e.g. 1920DAT4), and will change to a calendar year numbering system, matching the PTT and FMH exercises (e.g. 20DAT1). At the same time we are changing the letter(s) used to mark the red cell genotyping exercises from G to RCG (e.g. current numbering system 1920G4, changes to system 20G1).

As any exercises sent between January and March 2020 will use the old numbering system, the first exercises after April 2020 will be 20ABOT2, 20DAT2, 20RCG2, 20ERP and 20ANT3.

Training Assessment and Competency Tool (TACT)

The continuing aim of this system is to provide laboratory staff and managers with an interactive knowledge-based training and competency assessment tool; helping to monitor theoretical knowledge of Biomedical Scientists working in blood transfusion laboratories. Currently, TACT features a single scenario, based on routine request handling, representing a typical request received in a hospital blood transfusion laboratory, but we have plans to expand upon the current system iteration to bring you a second scenario type.

During 2019 new features were added including:-

- Username alias – following subscriber feedback to make the usernames more memorable
- Performance dashboard upgrade – following subscriber feedback, the dashboard now contains two new tabs, showing the number of participations completed and the number passed by month, and a yearly tally
- Alterations to the title and name displayed for members
- A 'filter and sort' feature in the dashboard for subscriptions with large numbers of members
- Small bug fixes

The significant development that began in 2018 continued into 2019 - the 'behind the scenes' re-engineering of the system to automate logic for scenario generation. Validation of this development is proceeding, and is anticipated to be completed early 2020.

Further developments scheduled for 2020 include introduction of plasma components, a group-check sample, crossmatching, and abbreviated blood grouping.

The internationalisation project proceeded during 2019. An abstract was submitted to ISBT and accepted for a poster presentation, following a piece of work to assess the differences between overseas and UK pre-transfusion compatibility testing guidelines. Guidelines from Italy, Greece and Australia were compared with UK guidelines, focussing on the scored elements of TACT.


Comprehensive user guide at:-
<http://www.ukneqasbtlp.org>

Subscribe at any time at:-
<http://tact.ukneqasbtlp.org.uk>

If you would like the fees for TACT membership to be added to your BTLP re-registration fees, the re-registration website has a field for you to enter how many staff TACT memberships and how many managerial memberships you would like for the next financial year.

There are updates, announcements and requests for feedback on TACT by email and on our Facebook page and Twitter feed, so please make sure you 'like' and follow!

www.facebook.com/btlp.tact 

Twitter: @btlp_tact 

UK NEQAS BTLP TACT Award



In June 2019, the BTLP team won an RCPATH Excellence Award for the TACT system, in the category 'Innovation in Pathology Practice'. The citation indicated:

"The UK NEQAS (External Quality Assessment Services) for Blood Transfusion Laboratory Practice has, for many years, served the UK and the wider transfusion community with state-of-the-art EQA Services including a very strong element of training and education. UK NEQAS activities cut to the very centre of patient safety and best practice. The Training Assessment and Competence Tool (TACT) developed by UK NEQAS BTLP exemplifies this by improving knowledge and assessing competency."

Scheme committees and meetings

BTLP Steering Committee

The UK NEQAS Steering Committee for BTLP is a professional group that advises the schemes, and operates according to guidelines and terms of reference produced by the UK NEQAS organisation. The composition of this committee reflects the different professional groups and national organisations involved in delivering blood transfusion services to patients in the UK.

Members serve for 3 years and travel expenses are reimbursed by the UK NEQAS organisation. The Committee meets 3 times a year usually in London, and the committee helps to plan and organise the annual participants' meeting.

The Steering Committee has an overview of all the BTLP schemes and pilot schemes, but the main focus is on the PTT scheme as the other schemes and pilots have scientific advisory groups. Issues such as supply of material for EQA, the relevance and design of the schemes in the context of new national initiatives / guidelines are covered, and proposed new developments are reviewed. Changes in local practice that committee members may be aware of are discussed, and the committee advises the scheme on issues raised by participants.

Scientific Advisory Groups

Scientific Advisory Groups (SAGs) are in place to monitor and advise the other BTLP schemes. There are three SAGs overseeing FMH, ABOT / ANT and RCG / ERP, and all report to the BTLP Steering Committee, so if you have expertise and a special interest in any of these areas...

Getting involved....

We really appreciate the work of our committee members, and it is a great way to get involved, so if you are interested in joining the Steering Committee or SAGs please contact either Richard Haggas (Scheme Director) or Katy Veale (Operational Manager) to discuss informally.

If you do decide to apply we'll need a CV, a supporting letter from a professional referee and a supporting statement from the employer agreeing to release the applicant to attend meetings.

Replacement of Steering Committee and SAG members is a continuous but informal process and a vacancy that matches the expertise, professional group and UK region may not be immediately available, but we will keep all applications on record.

Annual Meetings 2019 and 2020

The 2019 meeting was held at the NEC in November and attended by ~300 delegates.

The four sessions were based on current hot topics and requests from previous attendees: Future proofing hospital transfusion, Genotyping and serology, Transfusion reactions, and Making quality and regulation work for us.

The presentations from the 2019 meeting are available on our website <https://www.ukneqash.org/documents.php>

Date for the diary....

We will be holding an annual meeting with the BBTS BBT SIG in the West Midlands again at the NEC Birmingham on 24 November - preliminary programme to follow.



UK laboratories can register one or two delegates at a discounted rate as part of the UK NEQAS subscription for BTLP and the fees will be added to the annual invoice for EQA subscription. However, please note that if you take up this option but are unable to send any delegates we regret that we will be unable to offer a refund once the full price has been set and the BBTS website is open for registration in July 2020.

We realise that not everyone has the opportunity to attend the meeting due to cost and work pressures, and if you would like us to take part in a local 'technical discussion group' meeting to give a presentation or just be there to answer questions related to the BTLP EQA schemes and issues highlighted by the exercises, please contact us and we will do our best to be there.