

Issue Status

Issue	Issue Date	Page	Amendments	Authorised By
21	03.01.23	4	5a Clarification on what types of samples will be supplied in rounds	MJ

Note: Latest issue supersedes all previous issues.



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1. Purpose of the Scheme

The Asbestos in Materials Scheme (AIMS) is an international inter-laboratory proficiency testing (PT) scheme, intended to assess and improve the performance of laboratories analysing different materials for asbestos content. The scheme provides an externally verified indication of performance that analysts can use to satisfy themselves, their organisation, and their clients that their analyses are of the appropriate standard and level of quality.

Laboratories in the UK offering the identification of asbestos as a service are required to participate in such a proficiency testing scheme to gain accreditation from the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

The scheme is intended to be self-regulatory so that initiatives for improving analytical performance are taken by the individual laboratory and not imposed by an outside body. As the scheme alone cannot ensure day-to-day quality, each laboratory should devise its own internal quality system which will take into account other factors not included in the scheme, such as the choice of sampling location, the sampling method used and test method used, any of which may also affect the outcome of the test result.

2. Management of the Scheme

AIMS is managed by the Science Division of the Health and Safety Executive (SD HSE). The Fibre Proficiency Testing Steering Committee (FPTSC) oversees the operation of AIMS and acts as an appeal panel in cases of dispute. The FPTSC committee has representatives from laboratories in the industry specialising in asbestos analysis, independent experts, HSE and UKAS. In order to ensure confidentiality, each laboratory is identified by a code known only to them and to the scheme administrators (PT Laboratory number). Participation in AIMS does not constitute recognition or approval of a laboratory by HSE.

There are three areas where the PT scheme are subcontracted to external bodies, these are:

- Sample Distribution
- PT Software design, maintenance and development
- Sample Validation

3. Overview

There are 3 rounds of AIMS every year with each round consisting of 4 samples. The deadline for results submission is given on the Asbestos PT Scheme Schedule available on the website. Laboratories have approximately **20 working days** to analyse the samples and submit their results using the online data entry system. Access to the online data entry for submitting results will be closed at midnight on the deadline date. Following the deadline, results from participants are processed by the PT Team and the individual and group reports are then produced. The individual and group reports are released to participants within approximately 1 month after the results deadline. Laboratories receive three feedback scores following the analysis of samples; a 'Round Score' (the score for the individual current AIMS round), a 'Performance Score' (the overall performance of a laboratory assessed once they have participated in three consecutive rounds) and a 'Performance Classification' (either; Good, Acceptable, Unsatisfactory or Unclassified).

4. Membership

AIMS is open to any laboratory involved in the identification of asbestos, using any method. The membership fee covers 1 year (financial year April to March) and includes 3 rounds. New participants joining the scheme part way through the year pay only for the remaining rounds in that year on a pro rata basis. Participants may withdraw from the scheme at any time by informing the PT Team scheme administrator in writing.

The membership fee is non-refundable. Current participants are required to submit a subscription form via the PT Online Data Entry System before the end of each financial year. It is the participants' responsibility to ensure all details are filled in correctly on the subscription form and that payment is promptly made in full.

Failure to pay scheme fees may result in samples and reports being withheld, and ultimately exclusion from scheme participation.

5. Operation of the Scheme

a. Samples

Samples are despatched to participants by courier service according to the schedule published on the website; this may be subject to change at the discretion of the PT Team. Participants should contact the PT Team if they have not received their samples within 10 days of the published despatch date.

The AIMS samples are packaged in 2 sealed plastic bags, labelled and then placed inside a heat-sealed foil bag that is packaged inside a foam lined cardboard box. It is recommended that the foil bag should be opened in a fume cupboard fitted with a HEPA filter. The samples themselves should only be handled in a HEPA filtered fume cupboard.

The AIMS samples are a mixture of commercial samples (e.g. taken from removal operations) and those prepared by the PT Team in the laboratory environment. An AIMS round consists of 4 different samples. At least once every 3 rounds, subject to availability, a sample will contain one of the more rare forms of asbestos.

Where appropriate, all of the samples are visually examined by the PT Team to assess homogeneity e.g. colour, shape, size etc. All samples go through a preparation, screening and validation process and at least 10% of the prepared samples are fully analysed and validated by a team of experienced analysts (some from overseas labs and some from UK labs) using various microscopy techniques.

The scheme cannot guarantee total homogeneity for samples containing trace level amounts of asbestos, therefore samples used in AIMS will only contain amounts of asbestos (if asbestos is present) at **significant levels above that of trace** as defined in HSG248, namely, *“It is recommended ‘asbestos not detected’ is reported when no asbestos fibre is found after careful searching of the sample under the stereo microscope for around 10 minutes and searching a minimum of two preparations mounted in suitable RI liquid at high magnification by PLM/PCM for a further 5 minutes. If during the search of the two “pinch” samples by PLM only 1 or 2 fibre bundles are seen and identified as asbestos, the term ‘trace asbestos identified’ may be used.”* The PT Team reserves the right to withdraw AIMS samples, change sample scores or to not score a sample following investigation at any time.

b. Analysis

AIMS samples should be analysed in the same manner as any other routine laboratory bulk asbestos samples. No specific test method is specified for the analysis of the AIMS samples, although in the UK it is recommended that the method is based on the HSE publication HSG248 ‘Asbestos: The Analysts’ Guide’.

Samples used in AIMS that are known to contain asbestos will have significant levels of asbestos fibres present. It is not the intention of the scheme to have any samples with asbestos fibres present at or very near the level described as ‘trace’ as outlined above. Following full analysis (careful searching of the sample under the stereo-microscope for 10 minutes and searching a minimum of 2 preparations mounted in suitable RI liquid at high magnification by PLM/PCM for a further 5 minutes) a judgement of the asbestos content of an AIMS sample may be reached. **Should a laboratory detect any fibres present at or below trace level this may be recorded in the comments box on the online data entry results screen, but should not be formally reported in the tick box section of the screen.**

In practice, the asbestos type(s) present should be easily detected using the strategy in HSG 248, (that is extraction of fibre components by stereo zoom and/or the taking of pinch samples for fine fibres, which are not easily observed in the stereo-zoom).

The HSG 248 method is a qualitative method and does not allow reporting of the amount of asbestos present. Therefore unless samples have been manufactured by the PT Team and the asbestos content is known, there will be no references made to the amount or percentage of asbestos in the AIMS samples.

Definition of Asbestos

The current HSE publication (L143), 'Work with materials containing asbestos, Control of Asbestos Regulations' defines 'Asbestos' as follows,

'Asbestos is the general term for the fibrous silicates listed in the definition in regulation 2. Any mixture which contains one or more of these fibrous silicates at more than trace amounts as defined in HSG248 *Asbestos: The Analysts' Guide* is within the definition.

c. Reporting of Results

Laboratories have approximately **20 working days** to analyse the samples and report the results. Participants are only required to report qualitative results. Results will not be processed for laboratories reporting fewer than the four results required in each AIMS round. Only one set of results are processed and reported for each laboratory subscription.

AIMS results are submitted using PT online data entry system (PT ODES). A unique user name and password is issued to each participating laboratory, along with a web link to the AIMS webpage (via the PT ODES). Laboratories should enter their results as indicated on screen for each sample. It is the participants' responsibility to submit their results correctly and to ensure their details are **fully** completed. It is important to note that for any one sample if all the asbestos type boxes are ticked, the score will default to 32. Any incomplete results will not be processed and the round for that participant will be shown as 'void'. Participants who have paid subscriptions and have been assigned to a round of AIMS, but do not submit any results, will receive a 'void' marking for that particular round. It is participants' responsibility to inform the PT Team if they wish to miss a round before the AIMS round deadline. Participants are able to miss one round in three; however should inform the PT Team and also their accreditation body if they wish to do so. Participants may change or amend their results up to the date of the deadline indicated on the results entry screen. Following the deadline date, the round automatically shuts down and no further results or amendments can be made by participants. **Please note: deadline dates will be strictly adhered to and extensions will only be granted in exceptional circumstances at the PT Team's discretion.**

Any queries regarding reporting of results should be sent in writing to the following email address; proficiency.testing@hse.gov.uk

d. Processing of Results

Analytical results from laboratories are automatically processed as entered by the participant into the AIMS section of the PT ODES. If a participant is unable to enter their own results (for example, if they encounter problems with computer access) data can be entered or amended by the PT Team on their behalf. This will only be carried out with written (email) consent from the participant affected. No changes can be made to the results submitted and received after the deadline date has passed, unless there is a technical accessibility or technical data processing problem. In this instance PT Team will inform the AIMS participants by email.

Participant performance is assessed as described in section 12 and Annex 1 'AIMS Scoring System'. Essentially, laboratories receive a score for each analytical error, for each sample analysed. At the end of each round, participating laboratories will receive a round score and also a cumulative performance score. The cumulative score is the sum of errors over the last 3 rounds undertaken. The cumulative performance score determines the participant's performance category. There are four possible performance categories –

- '**Good**' - 'Good' performance is awarded when the cumulative score from three rounds of AIMS is 7 or less.
- '**Acceptable**' - 'Acceptable' performance is awarded when the cumulative score from three rounds of AIMS is between 8 and 32.
- '**Unsatisfactory**' - 'Unsatisfactory' performance is awarded when a laboratory's cumulative score from three rounds is 33 or more.

'Unclassified' - 'Unclassified' is reserved for participants who have not completed three rounds of AIMS. A participating laboratory, which misses more than one round in three, will be given an, 'Unclassified' performance category marking.

6. Records and Confidentiality

Paper and computer records are maintained and include information such as laboratory name, laboratory contact name, accounts contact name, e-mail address, postal address, and telephone numbers. It is the responsibility of the participant to notify the PT Team scheme administrators of any changes to contact details. This also includes any changes which may be required regarding online data entry user names and passwords. Participants requiring change of contact details should contact the PT Team who will administer a **'Change of Contact Details Form'**, which should be fully completed and promptly returned to the PT Team.

Results and participant details are submitted to the PT Team in confidence and are not revealed to any third party except where required to do so by law, for example in association with a criminal prosecution or where accreditation bodies are informed of unsatisfactory performance.

Participant performance will be published on the website. Participants agree to this by joining AIMS and undertaking the completion of the subscription form. A list of laboratories with current cumulative scores of 'Good' or 'Acceptable' performance will be released after each round of AIMS, the information published will only indicate the relevant laboratories under the headings of 'Good' or 'Acceptable'. **Participant laboratory numbers or passwords will not be published by the PT Team at any time**; this information is held confidentially by the PT Team and the participant.

7. Collusion and Falsification of Results

Laboratories must not submit results, which are false reflections of the performances of those laboratories' individual analysts, whether by collusion within or between laboratories, or by any other means. Falsification of results is regarded as an extremely serious matter. The following disciplinary procedures may be applied whenever there is clear documentary evidence of falsification of results or improper collusion.

- The relevant accreditation body will be informed
- The laboratory will revert to unclassified
- The membership of the laboratory may be suspended, subject to review by FPTSC.

Reinstatement after suspension for falsifying results

Lab must satisfy UKAS, or the relevant accreditation body, that appropriate corrective and preventive actions have been put in place to prevent recurrence. Evidence must be supplied to the PT Team, which will be reviewed by FPTSC.

Upon reinstatement, the laboratory will be treated as a new participant (i.e. they will be categorised as unclassified until the relevant numbers of rounds have been completed).

8. Queries

If participants have routine administrative or PT ODES entry queries these should be directed to the PT Team. To ensure a prompt response the preferred method of enquiry is by email, however enquiries may also be submitted by telephone or letter format. **Participants must quote their 'PT laboratory number' in all correspondence to ensure a prompt and efficient response.**

Queries of a non-administrative nature (which may affect a laboratory's participation or performance in the scheme) must be written, either in email or letter format and should be sent to the email/postal address given in annex 3 Contacts & Advice.

Any query regarding round scores for AIMS must be received by the PT Team administrator within **10 working days** of the date of issue of participants individual round reports. Queries received after this **will not be accepted**. All queries will be dealt with on an individual basis and will be considered and acted upon in the first instance by the PT Team. If the PT Team is unable to resolve the query it will be forwarded to the FPTSC. For example some of the different categories of queries are outlined below:

a. Query about Asbestos Content / Contamination of Samples and the Resulting Scoring

Any query concerning the asbestos content of a sample, after the results have been published, should be sent in the appropriate format as outlined above. Initial investigations following receipt of written queries will be carried out by the PT Team. Appeals against penalty scores are investigated in the first instance by the PT Team and an acknowledgement response sent in writing by email to the participant. To fully investigate a sample query regarding asbestos contents, the sample **must** be returned to the PT Team at the participants own cost. Instructions will be sent to participants who query asbestos sample content, including the relevant documentation to be completed in order to initiate the sample return and investigation process. It is **strongly recommended** that any samples returned for investigation are sent using a courier that is licensed to carry hazardous materials.

Examples of asbestos content queries are:

False Negative – Non-identification of a component that is present.

False Positive - Identification of a component that is not present.

The outcome of all investigations will be brought before the FPTSC. Any decisions regarding participant scores will be sent to the relevant participant(s) as appropriate.

b. Accreditation

Any query regarding participant accreditation; i.e. status of performance and related scores; good / acceptable / unsatisfactory / unclassified, or 'missing a round' should be taken up with the participants appropriate accreditation body.

c. Extensions

Extensions will not normally be considered. If samples are despatched later than published, then the same approximately 20 working day reporting period will be used and all participants will be contacted by email and given the revised deadline date. The website will also be amended to display the revised deadline date.

d. Sample Despatch/Delivery

It is the participants' responsibility to provide the PT Team administrator with an up-to-date receipt location/address and contact details, and to inform whoever receives their samples when the AIMS samples are expected. If participants wish to change contact or company details, a request should be sent by email to the PT Team administrator. A 'Change of Contact Details Form' will be issued which must be fully completed and promptly returned.

Where necessary, participants must ensure any required paperwork is in place to allow transit of AIMS samples through customs. Any additional charges incurred from couriers will be passed onto the participant. If samples are returned to the AIMS PT administrator by the courier and have to be re-despatched to a different address to that originally given on the order form or on a 'Change of Contact Details Form', then a charge may be levied.

e. Return of Samples/Charges

Any samples returned to the PT Team for investigation regarding asbestos content, contamination or penalty scores **must** be sent via a courier, at the participants own expense. It is **strongly recommended** that any

courier used is licensed to carry hazardous materials. Samples returned for investigation will be despatched back to participants with the next available round of AIMS samples. The process is summarised below;

- (i) Contact PT Team
- (ii) Form Sent to Participant to Complete
- (iii) Courier Sample & Request Form Back to the PT Team
- (iv) Investigation Undertaken
- (v) Outcome Delivered
- (vi) Sample Returned to Participant

f. Timescales for Queries & Appeals

Sample Scoring Query

The PT Team must be advised of the query, by email, within 10 working days from the issue date on the individual report. If the sample is to be returned to the PT Team for further investigation, this must be received within 20 working days from the issue date on the individual report (see section 8a).

Appeal to FPTSC

If an appeal (see section 8) to the final decision of the PT Team is requested, participants have 10 working days from the date of the PT Team's final decision to notify the PT Team by email.

If no further communication from the participant has been received by the PT Team within the agreed timescales, the matter will be deemed completed.

g. Re-issue of Reports

From round 48 onwards, all individual and group reports are accessible via the PT ODES.

Reports that are re-issued following replacement rounds undertaken by participants will not incur any further charge; this will be undertaken as part of the replacement round QC process. The replacement round will be clearly shown on the report and there will be a revised issue date and report number.

If a report is re-issued the online report will be labelled as a re-issue with a re-issue date, a unique reference number and will be signed by the AIMS Coordinator or their deputy.

9. Complaints and Appeals Procedure

Complaints **must** be in writing and will be forwarded to and considered by the FPTSC. The complaint will be acknowledged and the participant informed of receipt and date for consideration. The decision of the FPTSC will be sent to the participant as soon as possible.

If the participant wishes to appeal following a sample query investigation, then this also must be in writing and should be sent to the PT Team administrator. The appeal will then be considered at the next meeting of the FPTSC or during a convening of FPTSC members by email/teleconference at the discretion of the FPTSC chairperson. The participant will be informed of the outcome by the chairperson of the FPTSC.

10. Advertising by Participants

It is recommended that any publicity and advertising material should describe the laboratory undertaking AIMS as an, 'AIMS Participant'. Participants may wish to describe their level of performance but should state the year in which they achieved this status.

Individual and Group Reports are accessed via the PT ODES and are uncontrolled once printed. Participants are responsible for ensuring the most recent reports are used when describing their performance. Reports must not be amended by the participant under any circumstance.

11. Quality Control and Training Products

a. Replacement Rounds

Participants may purchase an extra AIMS sample set, which can be used to improve their cumulative AIMS score. This service can only be used by participants having a current cumulative score (obtained by completing at least three previous rounds of AIMS). A 'replacement round' may be used to replace the last most recent round score of AIMS, this service may only be used once in any AIMS PT year. The 'replacement round' will be available to participants after the results from each main AIMS round have been issued. Participants purchasing the 'replacement round' will be issued with a deadline date by which to submit their results electronically. Like any main AIMS round the results will be reported online and in the case of replacement rounds, will automatically replace the previous AIMS round undertaken and also the previous score, this will be shown on the participants' new report.

b. New Participants

New participants joining AIMS have the option to purchase a maximum of two AIMS QC sample sets. This enables laboratories to work towards establishing a cumulative score more quickly than waiting to complete three full rounds of AIMS (which may take up to one year). It is strongly recommended that new participants seek advice from and work with their accreditation body when using this service. Results (from the QC sample sets) will be submitted online using the PT ODES and participants results will also be issued via the online system.

c. Other Products

AIMS participants may also purchase extra AIMS QC samples, for training purposes or to add to internal quality control sample stock. AIMS QC samples will be supplied as a set of four (to 'simulate' an AIMS round) or as individual samples subject to availability. The PT Team are also able to provide a wide range of other asbestos QC and training products/materials, information on which can be found on the website.

Please contact the PT Team to order any of the QC or training services.

12. AIMS Scoring System

The AIMS scoring system is designed to meet the requirements of the UK HSE asbestos guidance and is orientated towards assessing the seriousness of each analytical error.

Both types of error, false positives (identification of an asbestos type that was not present) and false negatives (non-identification of an asbestos type that was present), are assessed and the scores are additive.

The proficiency of participants is assessed by round and also on the cumulative score of 3 rolling (consecutive) rounds.

a. Types of Error

Points are allocated to a participant for each analytical error made and the magnitude of the score is dependent on the seriousness of the error. For example, the failure to identify the asbestos component in a 'single asbestos matrix' would score higher, than incorrectly identifying the asbestos type in a sample where one asbestos type is present. 3 types of error are considered:

A supercritical error- An error which is analytically unacceptable and which would have serious consequences if committed in reality; such an error might be the failure to detect a single asbestos component in a matrix **scores 20 points**.

A critical error- an error which is analytically unacceptable but which might not have significant consequences if committed in reality; such an error might be a failure to detect one asbestos component in the presence of an already detected asbestos, **scores 12 points**.

A non-critical error- an error which is analytically unacceptable but would have no significant consequences if committed in reality; such an error might be a false positive identification of one or more asbestos types in the presence of an already detected asbestos component, or the identification of Tremolite or Anthophyllite as Actinolite, or vice versa, **scores 7 points**.

NB – the identification of Tremolite as Anthophyllite, or vice versa, **scores 0 points**

The scoring system is described in more detail in Annex 1.

b. Performance Scores

The maximum score that is possible from one individual AIMS sample is 32 points.

There are four possible performance categories –

‘Good’ - ‘Good’ performance is awarded when the cumulative score from three rounds of AIMS is 7 or less.

‘Acceptable’ - ‘Acceptable’ performance is awarded when the cumulative score from three rounds of AIMS is between 8 and 32.

‘Unsatisfactory’ - ‘Unsatisfactory’ performance is awarded when a laboratory’s cumulative score from three rounds of AIMS is 33 or more.

‘Unclassified’ - ‘Unclassified’ is reserved for participants who have not completed three rounds of AIMS. A participating laboratory, which misses more than one round in three, will be given an ‘Unclassified’ performance category marking.

Participants are permitted to miss one round in a three round period without it affecting their performance score; however it is advisable that this should only be undertaken in extenuating circumstances and the relevant accreditation body should be informed. If participants miss more than one round in a three round period the performance rating will revert to ‘Unclassified’. It is the participants’ responsibility to contact and seek advice from the relevant accreditation body in the event of obtaining an unsatisfactory performance score. A list of United Kingdom, Republic of Ireland and Finnish laboratories achieving a good or acceptable performance score will be published after each AIMS round on the website.

c. Participant Reports

Participant’s round results and reports are available by accessing the PT ODES. Previous and current reports can be accessed from the first screen following logon. Hard copies of AIMS round reports can be printed off following the accessing of each individual round. Results can only be obtained when rounds have been scored and the results released by the PT Team. Failure to pay scheme fees will result in access to results and reports being withdrawn until fees have been paid in full.

Annex 1
AIMS Scoring System

Sample Score	No Asbestos	1 Asbestos Type	2 Asbestos Types	3 Asbestos Types
0	No Asbestos Reported	Correct type reported	Both correct types reported	All correct types reported
7		Correct type reported + one or more types not present reported*	Both correct types reported + one or more types not present reported	All correct types reported + one or more types not present reported
12		Correct type not reported + one type not present reported	One correct type reported	Two correct types reported
14		Correct type not reported + where Actinolite is reported as Tremolite/ Anthophyllite (or vice versa) + one or more types not present reported	One correct type reported correctly + Actinolite is reported as Tremolite/ Anthophyllite (or vice versa) + one or more types not present reported	Two correct types reported correctly + Actinolite is reported as Tremolite/ Anthophyllite (or vice versa) + one or more types not present reported
19		Correct type not reported + 2 or more types not present reported	One correct type reported + one or more types not present reported	Two correct types reported + one or more types not present reported
20	Asbestos Reported	No Asbestos Reported		
24				One correct type reported
26			No correct type reported + Actinolite reported as Tremolite/ Anthophyllite (or vice versa) + one or more types not present reported	One type reported correctly + Actinolite reported as Tremolite/ Anthophyllite (or vice versa)
31				One correct type reported + one or more types not present reported
32	Ticked all asbestos types	Ticked all asbestos types	No Asbestos Reported OR No correct types reported OR Ticked all asbestos types	No Asbestos Reported OR No correct types reported OR Ticked all asbestos types

* Note that the identification of Tremolite or Anthophyllite as Actinolite, or vice versa, **scores 7 points**. Also see Section 12a.

Annex 2

Analyst Hints & Tips

Layered samples

In samples which contain obvious layers each layer should be analysed separately. Initial observation of the sample with the stereozoom microscope may help to identify these layers. Fibres within paint layers can be spotted at this stage as the fibre outline can often be seen within the paint. Careful scraping with tweezers can uncover any fibres to be identified. Once extracted and identified the remaining sample layers can be analysed.

Textured coating samples

The asbestos contained within commercial textured coating was often unevenly spread and with shorter length fibres. The peaks on the surface are a good starting point for analysis as these often contained fibres. Dilute hydrochloric acid is useful to dissolve the textured coating matrix leaving any asbestos. Commercial textured coating samples contained chrysotile asbestos but bear in mind manufactured AIMS samples may contain any of the six asbestos types although the principles of analysis remain the same.

Bitumen samples

Similar to layered paint samples the outline of any asbestos fibres within bitumen on felt or floor tiles may be observed through the stereozoom microscope and can be extracted and identified before proceeding to analyse the remaining part(s) of the sample. Use of various solvents or RI liquid to dissolve the bitumen can help in extracting and cleaning any asbestos fibres.

Annex 3

Contacts and Advice

For all AIMS enquiries please contact:

By email: proficiency.testing@hse.gov.uk

By Telephone: 00 44 (0) 203 028 3382

By Post:

Proficiency Testing Team

HSE Science & Research Centre

Harpur Hill

Buxton

Derbyshire

SK17 9JN

AIMS Website page:

<http://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/aims>

PT on-line data entry (PT ODES) web link;

<https://xnet.hsl.gov.uk/aims/>

Annex 4

Glossary of Terms

AIMS – Asbestos In Materials Scheme

Cumulative Score – 3 round rolling total score (the total of the last 3 rounds participated in)

Despatch Day – The working day that samples or reports are despatched by the PT Team

False Positive – Identification of a component that is not present

False Negative – Non-identification of a component that is present

FPTSC – Fibre Proficiency Testing Steering Committee

HEPA – High Efficiency Particulate Air

HSE – Health & Safety Executive

PT Laboratory Number – Laboratory identification number (unique and applied across all individual HSE asbestos PT schemes, formerly known as QuAD number)

Performance Score – Laboratory score calculated over three continuous rounds of AIMS

PLM – Polarised Light Microscopy

PT – Proficiency Testing

PT ODES – Proficiency Testing Online Data Entry System

QC – Quality Control

Round Score – Laboratory score for one round of AIMS

Sample Score – Individual sample score for one sample in a round of AIMS

UKAS – United Kingdom Accreditation Service

Working Day – A day other than a public holiday in the UK or a Saturday or Sunday

Annex 5

Responsibilities, Terms & Conditions

HSE will operate the Proficiency Testing (PT) schemes in accordance with its obligations as set out in the relevant Scheme Information Book for Participants, available on our website.

Participants must abide by the rules and responsibilities of the scheme set out in the information book and in particular as detailed below.

Participants should comply with the HSE's standard conditions of business, a copy of which is available upon request.

Participant Responsibilities

Participant responsibilities are outlined below:

- Your PT Laboratory Number **must be quoted in all correspondence**.
- All queries should be directed to the proficiency testing email address and the PT Team will respond as soon as possible.
- To ensure participants are kept up to date with important information it is the participants' responsibility to inform the PT Team of any changes to contact details.
- Participants must ensure that any required paperwork / permits are in place to allow samples through national border controls / customs (additional charges from the courier will be passed on to participant should there be further fees payable). Failure to do so may result in delays or detainment of sample shipment and hence participation in the round.
- Participants must use the Proficiency Testing Online Data Entry System (PT ODES) to subscribe to the scheme.
- Samples **will not** be despatched until full payment has been received.
- The preferred method of payment is via Worldpay (online credit/ debit card system). A full VAT receipt is available immediately after the payment has been processed.
- If an invoice is required, the participant needs to allow 4-6 weeks for it to be issued and must pay, in full, within 30 days of the invoice date. An invoice shall not be regarded as paid until funds (GBP) are received into a UK sterling bank account operated by Health and Safety Executive.
- It is the participants' responsibility to ensure that scheme round results are submitted by the defined deadline dates. Participants must have access to certain mandatory IT facilities such as Microsoft Word and Excel, an email account and a web access facility in order to participate.
- Participants must submit round results via the PT ODES for each scheme. The PT Team reserves the right to refuse results submitted on reporting formats alternative to the online data entry system provided.
- Transcription errors and / or errors in reporting results in the correct format by participants is considered by the PT Team to be part of the proficiency testing assessment process. As such, the PT Team will not amend or correct any submitted results if requested. Participants can however, change their results, provided that any amendments are made by the close of the round and the before the predefined reporting deadline.

- For a copy of HSE's standard conditions of business, or for any queries regarding AIMS please email proficiency.testing@hse.gov.uk or visit the website at <http://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes>
- For urgent queries, please call 00 44 (0) 203 028 3382. Please remember to quote the allocated PT laboratory number in all correspondence.