



Terms of Reference

Working Groups for

UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (UK SMIs)

TITLE

The Working Groups for the UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (UK SMIs)^a.

The UK SMI Working Groups include:

- Joint Working Group Meeting for Syndromic Algorithms.
- Working Group for Microbiology Standards in Clinical Bacteriology.
- Working Group for Microbiology Standards in Clinical Virology/Serology

Additional UK SMI Working Groups may be set up to develop UK SMIs on topics which are not covered by the listed working groups.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND AUTHORITY

The development of UK SMIs is undertaken under the custodianship of Public Health England (PHE)^b. PHE^b is responsible for facilitating the development and hosting of UK SMIs but does not have full ownership. UK SMIs are developed in equal partnership with the professional societies and PHE^b which display their logos (if available) on the UK SMIs; these bodies are hereafter referred to as “partner organisations” and are listed below.

The Working Groups for UK SMIs are accountable to the UK SMI Steering Committee. The Chairs of the Working Groups report to the Chair of the Steering Committee. The Working Groups are responsible for the laboratory, clinical and public health input into the UK SMIs.

The Working Groups work with the Standards Unit which is responsible for managing the development, revision, archiving, publication and access of UK SMIs.

^a Background information regarding UK SMIs is available in Appendix 1

^b Reference to PHE throughout this document includes any successor organisation

ROLE

The role of the Working Groups is to recommend and present microbiology standards which are produced to a National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) accredited standard. The Working Groups achieve this by reviewing and writing UK SMIs in line with the Appraisal of Guidelines Research & Evaluation (AGREE) instrument <http://www.agreetrust.org/resource-centre/agree-ii/> used for NICE accreditation.

MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

Membership

Membership of each group is drawn from the relevant partner organisations and includes a Chairperson, Standards Unit scientific staff, nominees from partner organisations, and lay representation. The nominees participate in the development of the UK SMIs although their views need not be rigorously representative of the members of the partner organisation nor the corporate view of the organisation. Nominees provide individual subject matter expertise and act as conduits for two way reporting and dialogue. Lay representatives evaluate and comment on the documents and any other agenda items under discussion, and also the UK SMI development processes from a patient and public perspective. Lay representatives act as a conduit to specialist interest and/or patient and public involvement groups via the PHE^b People's Panel.

Members include:

1. Chair of Working Group (appointed from the membership of the partner organisations but does not represent a partner organisation in the role of Chair)
2. Staff from the Standards Unit
3. Lay Representatives
4. Partner organisations:
 - i. Association of Clinical Oral Microbiologists
 - ii. Association for Clinical Biochemistry and Laboratory Medicine
 - iii. British Infection Association
 - iv. British Society for Medical Mycology
 - v. British Society for Microbial Technology
 - vi. British Society for Parasitology
 - vii. Healthcare Infection Society
 - viii. Public Health Scotland
 - ix. Institute of Biomedical Science
 - x. Microbiology Society

- xi. Northern Ireland Microbiology and Audit Group
- xii. Northern Ireland Public Health Agency
- xiii. Public Health Wales
- xiv. Royal College of General Practitioners
- xv. Scottish Microbiology and Virology Network
- xvi. Society for Anaerobic Microbiology
- xvii. Society for Applied Microbiology
- xviii. The British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy
- xix. The Royal College of Pathologists
- xx. The UK Clinical Virology Network
- xxi. UK Clinical Mycology Network
- xxii. Welsh Microbiological Association
- xxiii. British Society for Parasitology

All partner organisations are invited to send a representative to sit on the appropriate Working Groups. It is permissible for a Working Group member to represent a maximum of three partner organisation when the nominee of said organisation is unable to attend. It is the responsibility of the covering member to act as the conduit for two way reporting in these situations. It is also permissible for a Working Group member to sit on more than one Working Group plus the UK SMI Steering Committee.

The Chair has discretion to invite multiple members from a partner organisation, where necessary, to ensure balance of representation and to assist the Working Group in fulfilling its role.

Attendance

The Chair and a minimum of one half of partner organisations that have nominated representatives (excluding Standards Unit staff and lay representatives) are required to be in attendance at a meeting to be quorate.

In the absence of the designated Chair, a member of the Working Group or Standards Unit will chair the meeting.

Working Group members are expected to attend scheduled meetings. Where possible, members should notify the Standards Unit when they know they will miss a meeting. This is important due to the resource consequences if a quorum is not reached. Actions that can take place if a quorum is not reached are listed in Appendix 2.

A review of attendance will be undertaken annually. Results discussed with the Chair and discussed with the member and the relevant partner organisation where appropriate.

Duties of members

All members are expected to:

- i) Attend meetings (including face to face, virtual and teleconference)
- ii) Review and write UK SMIs in line with the AGREE instrument
- iii) Engage with all stages of the development process by reviewing documents, sending comments or stating nil return when requested by the Standards Unit
- iv) Collect information from and consult widely with members of partner organisation, other interested stakeholders and individuals with relevant expertise where appropriate
- v) Contribute their experience and knowledge of good practice to reach consensus decisions
- vi) Maintain an understanding of the development of UK SMIs
- vii) Maintain professional competence in clinical microbiology
- viii) Act as a champion for UK SMIs within their partner organisation and promote them elsewhere when relevant.

Duties of Partner Organisations

All partner organisations are expected to:

- i) Nominate individuals to sit on UK SMI committees
- ii) Fund the travel expenses of nominees
- iii) Maintain a strong input into the production of UK SMIs
- iv) Maintain a system for regular progress reports to Council
- v) Establish consultation procedures for commenting on UK SMIs
- vi) Reinforce own perception of ownership.

Tenure of Membership

The tenure of members of the Working Group is 5 years. The tenure of members may be extended with the agreement of the partner organisation. The tenure of the Chair is 5 years which can be extended by a further term. When the post becomes vacant, members of the Steering Committee oversee the process for the appointment of a new Working Group Chair.

The tenure of the lay representatives is 5 years and this may be extended with the agreement of the Chair.

APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR

The partner organisations are invited to submit nominations for the position of Chair. The candidates forward a short CV and a letter of interest which is considered by a selection or interview panel.

A job description and personal specification for the post is available.

MEETINGS AND FUNCTIONAL ARRANGEMENTS

Meetings are held at least two times a year, with additional meetings including teleconferences arranged at the discretion of the Chair. The Chair, with the support of the Working Group members may invite a guest or co-opt an individual to assist the Working Group in fulfilling its role.

The scientific and administrative support is provided by the Standards Unit. The Standards Unit circulate the agenda and papers to the members of the group approximately 10 working days in advance of the meeting. Circulation of papers is restricted to Working Group members, guests and co-opted members.

When documents are circulated electronically before consultation, members are expected to engage with the process and highlight areas of inaccuracy or gaps in content at this time. Discussions in the Working Group meetings need to centre on the particular stage in the development process reached at that time.

Non-verbatim, contemporaneous minutes of each meeting are maintained. The minutes are completed and approved by the Chairs and sent out to members 6-8 weeks after the meeting.

Meetings generally take place on PHE^b premises or elsewhere at the discretion of the Standards Unit with refreshment and lunch provided.

All meetings are CPD approved by the Royal College of Pathologists and the Institute of Biomedical Science.

REVIEW

The terms of reference, performance and appropriateness of the Working Groups will be reviewed by the Chairs of the Working Groups, Chair of the Steering Committee and the Head of the Standards Unit, taking into account the views and recommendations of the members of the Working Groups.

APPENDIX 1 - BACKGROUND

UK SMIs are a referenced collection of clinical bacteriology/virology standards and quality guidance notes, consisting of approximately 100 documents. UK SMIs cover all stages of the investigative process in microbiology^c from the the pre-laboratory processes (pre-analytical stage), laboratory processes (analytical stage) and post-laboratory processes (post-analytical stage).

UK SMIs are freely available on the PHE^b webpages of the Gov.UK website as controlled documents; they can be viewed online.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/standards-for-microbiology-investigations-smi>

Standardisation of the diagnostic process through the application of UK SMIs helps to assure the equivalence of investigation strategies in different laboratories across the UK and is essential for public health, surveillance, research and development activities.

UK SMIs are NICE accredited and represent neither minimum standards of practice nor the highest level of complex laboratory investigation possible.

Three groups of users have been identified for whom UK SMIs are especially relevant:

- UK SMIs are primarily intended as a general resource for practising professionals operating in the field of laboratory medicine and infection specialties in the UK.
- UK SMIs provide clinicians with information about the available test repertoire and the standard of laboratory services they should expect for the investigation of infection in their patients as well as providing information that aids the electronic ordering of appropriate tests.
- UK SMIs provide commissioners of healthcare services with the appropriateness and standard of microbiology investigations they should be seeking as part of the clinical and public health care package for their population.

^c Microbiology is used as a generic term to include the two GMC-recognised specialties of Medical Microbiology (which includes Bacteriology, Mycology and Parasitology) and Medical Virology.

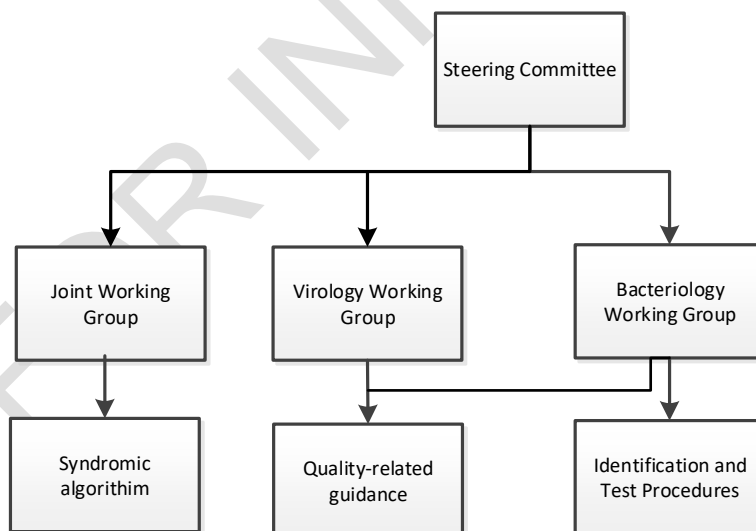
APPENDIX 2 – POLICY FOR NON QUORATE MEETINGS

The Chair will call a meeting to order after finding that a quorum is present. If a meeting has not reached a quorum at the call to order or during a meeting (eg when a member leaves early), the Chair has a duty to declare the absence of a quorum. The following is a list of actions that may be taken in the absence of a quorum:

- Deal with and finalise the minutes and actions of the previous meeting
- Deal with non substantive changes to UK SMIs eg grammatical and clerical points but ensure these are endorsed by a quorum of members electronically
- Deal with the comments from consultation but ensure that these are endorsed by a quorum of members electronically
- Continue or finalise business that has previously been considered and agreed at the last quorate meeting where appropriate

Any new business and substantive decisions should be communicated with members by email before they are ratified.

APPENDIX 3 – STEERING COMMITTEE AND WORKING GROUP ORGANOGRAM



APPENDIX 4 – POINTS FOR CONSIDERATION WHEN ACCEPTING PARTNER ORGANISATIONS ONTO UK COMMITTEES/WORKING GROUPS

An open and transparent process for appointment of partner organisations onto UK SMI committees is required to strengthen the position of UK SMIs and avoid selection based on personal recommendation or historical participation.

When considering a candidate organisation the following areas should be considered by the Steering Committee:

- Synergy between the objectives of the candidate organisation and UK SMIs
- Breadth of scope of candidate organisation to include whole specimen pathway, user engagement and patient involvement
- Membership - number of members, types of members, discipline
- Interaction with membership – active e-mail distribution list or message board
- Impact on training and professional standards
- UK or devolved administration standing of the candidate organisation and wide influence
- Ability to support committees and groups that form part of UK UK SMIs where appropriate
- Demonstration that they are not a pressure group for narrow issues, have political or industry affiliation
- Ability to sign up to memorandum of understanding to ensure participation and involvement

The rationale for the final decision on appointment should be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.