

13th November 2020

Dear Valued Participants and Distributors

UK NEQAS COVID-19 Update (3)

As you are aware, the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic has been affecting us all in every aspect of our lives for almost a year. The impact on healthcare networks worldwide have been acute, with limitations on staff availability, new working requirements for reducing transmission risk and most significantly the introduction of entirely new tests for the diagnosis and monitoring of SARS-CoV-2 patients.

With the emergence in many countries of a second wave of infection, we are once again seeing a rapidly changing situation with regards to the spread of SARS-CoV-2 and the subsequent impact this has on the ability of everyone in healthcare to deliver services. At UK NEQAS, we believe that the provision of robust, timely and professional external quality assessment (EQA)/proficiency testing (PT) services are key to supporting clinical laboratories.

We recognise that the situation may create significant difficulties for clinical laboratories worldwide in their ability to deliver services, and in response to this UK NEQAS centres may be able to extend exercise deadlines for all new and current EQA/PT exercises issued. As such, if you are unable to provide a result for any exercises, or if you would like to request an extension please contact the individual centre by your usual route and we will do everything we can to facilitate such requests.

Throughout the year, UK NEQAS centres have implemented and developed their service continuity plans. As such we are in a very strong position with regards to providing EQA/PT services to our participants and do not envisage any service interruptions, although minor changes to distribution schedules may be required. If this occurs, then you will be notified of any delays directly by the relevant UK NEQAS centre. Additionally, details of all UK NEQAS service changes will also be published on the central UK NEQAS website (www.ukneqas.org.uk) and will be available on our Twitter and LinkedIn feeds (@UKNEQAS).

The SARS-CoV-2 situation is rapidly changing, and UK NEQAS is taking these steps to support centres under pressure due to increased workloads and changes in local staff availability during the current pandemic, but still ensure that the necessary EQA/PT framework is in place to support laboratories.

We thank you for your continued support in this difficult time and we hope that the current situation improves soon.

Yours sincerely



Mr Liam Whitby
President of UK NEQAS



Finlay MacKenzie
**Director of Birmingham Quality
Organiser of the UK NEQAS for Clinical Chemistry**