

HPA Executive Steering Group for Food and Water Microbiology External Quality Assessment Schemes

Senior staff in the HPA's Food and Environmental Proficiency Testing Unit (FEPTU) are responsible for organising the Agency's Food and Water Microbiology External Quality Assessment (EQA) Schemes. They are supported by advice from the HPA Executive Steering Group for Food and Water Microbiology External Quality Assessment (EQA) Schemes. The Chair of the Steering Group is normally independent of FEPTU's day-to-day operational interests, and membership will include appropriate experts, participants and advisors.

The Steering Committee does not consider the performance of individual participating laboratories, except in advising on performance criteria or where this may indicate a failure in the operation of a Scheme (and even in such cases the laboratories will not be identifiable).

Remit for Steering Group Members

- To advise the Scheme Co-ordinator on the overall design and operation of the schemes, including aspects such as:
 - appropriateness of the investigations surveyed
 - nature of the samples distributed
 - number and frequency of sample distribution
 - source of target values
 - data analysis and performance assessment
 - data presentation
 - communication with participants, including meetings, newsletters, educational activities
 - communication with the food and water industries
 - research and development for the Scheme(s)
- In consultation with the Scheme Co-ordinator, to liaise with the relevant national and international bodies in order to set appropriate performance criteria
- To consider, and advise the Scheme Co-ordinator on the need for initiation or termination of EQA services for investigations in the area covered
- To receive any representations, to Chair, members or Co-ordinator, from participants concerning the Schemes
- To advise on changes in food and water legislation to ensure that the schemes are relevant and current

Timescales

- The Steering Group structure is permanent, though it's appropriateness shall be reviewed at least three-yearly
- Meetings of the Steering Group shall be held regularly and as appropriate (normally at least twice a year; some business may be dealt with by correspondence, by telephone communication, or by other means)

Composition

- Members shall be professionally active in their discipline
- Steering Committee membership shall be drawn from an appropriate mix of the relevant professional groups, e.g. food and water legislation, scientific, technical, proficiency testing
- Steering Committee membership shall be drawn from an appropriate mix of participant laboratory types, eg specialist, private sector, HPA FEPTU personnel, FEPTU-appointed food and water EQA consultants

Membership

- The Chair and members of Steering Group are appointed by one or more representatives of the HPA Executive Group. The Chair may recruit additional members in consultation with senior FEPTU staff and EQA Scheme Consultants
- Attendance shall be monitored, and membership reviewed in case of repeated non-attendance
- Secretaries are appointed from the membership, and will be FEPTU personnel
- The Chair, members and observers shall declare any potential conflict of interest which may arise in the course of Steering Group business
- The Chair and members shall respect the confidentiality of information disclosed in the course of Steering Group business; all Steering Group documents are confidential, and all discussions and information should be considered to be in commercial confidence.

Members Agreement:

I understand and agree to comply with the above remit. I understand that any information divulged about HPA schemes during these HPA Executive Steering Group meetings should be treated as confidential:

Signed:
Print name:

Date: