



Peer Assessment of Laboratories Participating in Screening Programmes

Sometimes peer assessors raise a non-conformity because the number of tests performed in a laboratory, or by an individual, does not reach a target figure mentioned in guidance by screening programmes. The various issues around this have been debated from time to time by the Professional Advisory Committee, most often in relation to the NHS Cervical Screening Programme. This matter was reported to the CPA Board before it was dissolved, but not in time for the Board to authorise specific guidance. The text below is taken from the report to the Board:

“The PAC discussed the issue of laboratory participation in Screening Programmes and accreditation status. Most, if not all programmes require a certain volume of activity from the laboratory or individuals as a condition of participation. However it is the impression of the PAC that the quality assurance bodies monitoring the Screening Programmes do not always apply these rigidly, or perhaps do not monitor participation closely. We then have peer assessors raising a non-compliance because of insufficient volume of activity, hence the accreditation status of the laboratory is dependent upon how they participate in a Screening Programme, irrespective of how well the test is conducted. This is even though the monitoring body of that programme has not excluded participation. In future, it is the intention of the PAC that these issues are considered separately. Compliance with CPA standards will be judged on the conduct of the test, acknowledging that some tests inherently require a certain volume of activity to be reliable. It will be up to other agencies to determine whether a laboratory should participate in their programmes, and this of itself should not affect accreditation status.”

In summary, the focus for CPA peer assessors should be on the in-house quality of the results and to assess the competency of staff, not to assess the Screening Programme’s minimum workload.