

Background

Each separate application to CPA for accreditation has a single CPA reference number. Each CPA reference number can only have one status, it is not possible for parts of the same application to have a different status with CPA as the whole is assessed and the decision made post assessment is for the whole reference number. The status of the application can be checked either on the CPA database or in the public domain via the website.

Our understanding is:

a merged department is a single entity that can be held legally accountable
a network is a confederation of separate laboratories with arrangements for sharing work or responsibilities

Merging departments

Many departments are undergoing change and there are mergers ongoing within the UK. CPA needs to be able to react to these mergers with as much flexibility as possible. The main issue is that the users of the service provided by each department are not misled about the CPA status. In order to minimise the disruption to the applicant and the users CPA has agreed the following policy.

Where work stays within one department (which may have more than one site, but has a single CPA reference number) out of several in an emerging network, then each department can maintain its own status. However, where a substantial proportion of work is exchanged or centralised then a single status for all participants in the merger is likely to be required.

Options

It must be stressed that the departments have a choice on how they proceed.

1. Regardless of CPA status of each separate department involved in the merger, the individual reference numbers may be maintained until the merged department has been assessed. When an application form is received for the new merged department it will be given a new CPA reference number and the status Awaiting Assessment. This will also be displayed on the website. If it is not possible to arrange a full assessment immediately, the new application will be placed in the 1st available schedule and a full assessment will be arranged. The timescale for this will be no longer than the next scheduled visit to one of the component parts (whether surveillance or main visit).

Post assessment, the original reference numbers will be deleted from the database and archive records maintained.

2. If all departments involved in the merger have the same CPA status there is the opportunity to retain one of the original reference numbers with the collective CPA status. If it is not possible to arrange a full assessment immediately a full assessment will be arranged at the next planned visit to any of the component parts (whether surveillance or main visit).

If the applicant so chooses CPA is able to provide a new CPA reference number for the merged service, both original numbers will be deleted from the database and archive records maintained.

3. If the departments do not have the same status, the laboratory can merge into a new reference number but the new status will be the lowest common denominator. If it is not possible to arrange a full assessment immediately a full assessment will be arranged at the next planned visit to any of the component parts (whether surveillance or main visit).

If the applicant so chooses they are able to maintain the separate reference numbers prior to assessment as described in option 1.

Sometimes mergers are declared after CPA have already arranged a full assessment and have a team of Peer assessors available. If the merger requires additional time on site than has been arranged, and the full team are not able to commit to these additional days then the visit may be cancelled. The status of the merged laboratory will be Awaiting Assessment until a visit can be completed.