



## Terms of Reference

### UK SMIs Working Groups

#### Purpose

The primary purpose of the Working Groups of UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations (UK SMIs) is to deliver the objectives of the Steering Committee. These objectives are described in the [Terms of Reference for the UK SMI Steering Committee](#).

The UK SMI Working Groups are:

- Joint Working Group for Syndromic documents (JWG).
- Working Group for Microbiology Standards in Clinical Bacteriology/Mycology/Parasitology (referred to as Bacteriology Working Group, BWG).
- Working Group for Microbiology Standards in Clinical Virology/Serology (referred to as Virology Working Group, VWG)

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

The UK SMI Working Groups are accountable to the UK SMI Steering Committee, which is tasked with overseeing, advising, and guiding the work of the UK SMI Working Groups and the development of the standards.

The Steering Committee is the body that is responsible for the development of the strategy and for delivery of UK SMI objectives. The objectives are delivered through the Standards Unit and UK SMI Working Groups.

The role of the Standards Unit is to review and develop UK Standards for Microbiology Investigations documents in collaboration with the UK SMI Working Groups and the medical editors who review the documents before publication. The process includes researching existing literature, developing/ editing flowcharts, writing/ reviewing other scientific documents and finalising the publication of the UK SMI documents written in conjunction with UK SMI Working Groups.

## Working Group composition

Membership is drawn from the Partner Organisations and comprise:

- a) Chair of Working Group (appointed from the Partner Organisations but serves independently of any organisational affiliation while acting as Chair)
- b) Scientific staff from the Standards Unit
- c) Partner Organisation representatives who reflect the collective views of that body and its wider membership. These representatives serve as key conduits for two-way communication between the Working Groups and their organisations.
- d) Deputies/Alternates: Partner organisations may nominate or approve one or more representatives. These members may deputise for one another when one is unable to attend or share meeting attendance between them. It is the responsibility of the representatives to confirm which meetings they will attend.
- e) Co-opted: individuals with specialist expertise or an interest in contributing to UK SMIs who do not represent a partner organisation. Co-opting individuals is a useful way to expand the breadth of knowledge within the Working Group.
- f) A guest may be invited to attend a meeting, or a series of meetings, at the discretion of the Chair to discuss or present on subjects relevant to UK SMIs and the Committee. The guest should have recognised knowledge or expertise related to UK SMI activities. Guests are not included in the quorum for the meeting and do not have voting rights.

All partner organisations are invited to nominate a representative to serve on the Working Groups. Members may also serve on multiple Working Groups, where appropriate.

At the Chair's discretion, more than one representative from a partner organisation may be invited to join the Working Group, where this is deemed necessary to ensure balanced representation and to support the Working Group in effectively carrying out its responsibilities. The Chair retains authority to address and resolve any issues arising from this arrangement.

A Working Group member may represent a Partner Organisation if the nominated representative is unable to attend. The covering member will have the same rights and responsibilities as the nominated representative and is responsible for ensuring effective two-way communication between the Working Group and the Partner Organisation.

## Role of the Working Group

- To recommend and present microbiology standards certified to ISO 9001:2015  
The Working Groups achieve this by reviewing and writing UK SMIs in line with the Modified NICE domain/criteria for the development of UK SMIs (see [Terms of Reference for the UK SMI Steering Committee](#)) and based on the Appraisal of Guidelines Research & Evaluation (AGREE) instrument  
<http://www.agreetrust.org/resource-centre/agree-ii/>
- Ensure a structured dialogue between Partner Organisations and the Working Group.

## Duties

### Duties of Members

All members are expected to:

1. Attend meetings via Microsoft Teams. In-person or hybrid meetings will be arranged upon request by members.
2. Review and write UK SMIs in line with the Modified NICE domain/criteria for the development of UK SMIs (see Terms of Reference for the UK SMI Steering Committee)
3. Engage with all stages of the development process by reviewing documents, sending comments or stating nil return when requested by the Standards Unit.
4. Facilitate the exchange of information regarding UK SMI activities within and across Working Groups.

5. Gather input from, and consult widely with, their respective partner organisations, relevant stakeholders, and subject matter experts as appropriate.
6. Share their knowledge and expertise to support evidence-based consensus decision-making.
7. Remain informed about ongoing developments in the UK SMI programme.
8. Maintain professional competence in clinical microbiology.
9. Serve as advocates for UK SMIs within their partner organisations and promote their use where applicable
10. Declare any potential conflict of interest at meetings and annually submit a completed DOI form to the Standards Unit
11. Advise the Standards Unit of any changes to the Partner Organisation's logo and ensure the revised logo is shared with the Standards Unit.

### **Duties of Partner Organisations**

**The duties of Partner Organisations are set out in the [Terms of Reference for the UK SMI Steering Committee](#).**

### **Term of Appointment**

Members of the Working Group serve a term of five years. This term may be extended with the agreement of both the Chair and the relevant Partner Organisation.

The Chair of the Working Group also serves a five-year term, which may be renewed for one additional term.

### **Appointment of a Chair**

When the role of Chair of a Working Group becomes vacant, the Chair of the Steering Committee is responsible for managing the appointment of a new Chair.

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

### **Interview or Selection Panel**

A panel of about 5 Steering Committee members will be convened to interview or select a chair when the position becomes available. The panel will comprise:

- The Chair of the Steering Committee

- Chair of a Working Group
- The Head of the Standards Unit
- Up to two volunteers from the remaining partner organisations

The proposed panel should be ratified by the UK SMI Steering Committee members via email.

The Head of the Standards Unit will manage the appointment process.

## **Meeting Procedures**

### **Frequency of Meetings**

The Working Group will hold three meetings annually. Frequency to be determined in consultation with Chair.

### **Attendance at meetings**

Working Group members are expected to attend all relevant scheduled meetings. Where absence is unavoidable members should inform the Standards Unit in advance and send a deputy/alternate if possible. Timely notification is important given the broad expertise required for document discussions and the implications of not meeting quorum.

Repeated non-attendance of individual members without reasonable explanation may result in the Chair initiating a review of the members' continuing involvement.

Following such a review, the Chair may request that the Partner Organisation nominates a replacement to ensure consistent engagement in the Working Group activities.

### **Quorum**

For meetings to be considered quorate, the Chair and representatives from at least a third of the partner organisations who are relevant to the discussions should be present.

The quorum does not include Standard Unit staff and guests.

See Appendix 1 if a meeting does not reach quorum.

### **Chairing of meetings**

In the absence of the Chair, the meeting will be rescheduled. Alternatively, a member of the Working Group or a representative from the Standards Unit will assume the role of Chair for that meeting.

### **Agenda and Papers**

The agenda will be prepared by the Standards Unit/Chair in consultation with members and distributed in advance. Members may propose items by notifying the Standards Unit/Chair prior to the meeting.

Members will receive relevant documentation (e.g. agenda, previous minutes) approx. 5-10 working days in advance of the meeting date.

### **Decision-Making**

Where consensus cannot be reached, decisions will be made by majority vote of partner organisation members present. The Chair holds the casting vote in the event of a tie.

### **Recording of Minutes**

Non-verbatim, contemporaneous minutes of each meeting will be maintained. The minutes will be written as a summary of key discussions and decisions, with actions clearly recorded and assigned where appropriate. Draft minutes will be circulated for review and formally approved at the subsequent meeting before being confirmed as an accurate record of proceedings.

### **Confidentiality and Circulation**

Minutes and documentation are to be circulated only to members of the Working Group and relevant executive bodies. They are not to be made available to the wider membership of partner organisations or uploaded to a public website. This is to ensure open discussion and to protect individuals' identities. Members may request a summary of the minutes if required for their wider membership.

An annual report is written as a summary of activities for members to circulate to their partner organisations.

## **Review**

The Terms of Reference, performance and relevance of each Working Group will be reviewed by the Chair and the Head of the Standards Unit, in consultation with the Chair of the Steering Committee.

## Appendix 1 – Policy for non-quorate meetings

The Chair will call a meeting to order when a quorum is reached. 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 at the discretion of the Chair in the absence of a quorum:

### **In the event that a meeting does not reach quorum:**

- Proceed with discussion

The Chair may wish to exercise their discretion to make a privileged motion to conduct the meeting with existing attendees putting aside actions that need a quorum.

However, any decisions taken must be clearly noted as provisional and subject to ratification.

- Deal with and finalise the minutes and actions of the previous meeting
- Deal with non-substantive changes to UK SMIs e.g. grammatical and clerical points but ensure 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