

Results of the December 2021 Participant Feedback Survey



Background

To maintain accreditation to ISO17043, it is important that we continue to improve the service that we offer to participants. A way of recording participant satisfaction is to carry out feedback gathering exercises. This is the eighth survey that we have conducted. Details of the previous surveys are available on the PT section of the website (<http://www.hsl.gov.uk/proficiency-testing-schemes/participant-feedback>).

Survey

The survey was emailed to all asbestos Proficiency Testing participants, including (AIMS), Asbestos in Soils Scheme (AISS), Low Asbestos Content Scheme (LACS), Regular Inter-laboratory Counting Exchange (RICE) and Scanning Electron Microscopy Fibre Counting Scheme (SEMS). In total 495 participants were emailed the survey and 177 responded (36% response rate). 18 participants did not complete every question.

Results

- Q1. From the 177 responses – 84% participate in AIMS, 20% in AISS, 32% in LACS, 45% in RICE, 32% in SEMS.
- Q2. 38% of the responses were from the UK, 56% from Europe and 6% from ROW.
- Q3. 97% of participants find their samples/ slides to be of a suitable standard.
- Q4. 86% of participants receive their samples in a timely manner.
- Q5. 97% of participants found our answers to queries useful and informative.
- Q6. 95% of participants knew we have useful information available on the website, including the Information Book for Participants and Scheme Schedules.
- Q7. 94% of participants are happy with the timescales for submitting results.
- Q8. 98% of participants find our group reports useful and informative.
- Q9. 87% of participants know that we have a wide range of quality control samples available to purchase.
- Q10. Participants were given the opportunity to comment/make suggestions for the schemes (a selection have been listed below).

Customer Comments

Participants were given the opportunity to comment further on a few of the questions. Below are a few examples of the responses:

Q8. Do you find your scheme's Group Report useful & informative?

A few suggestions have been made to improve the information in group reports. Our Scheme Technical Managers will review these and put in place as deemed necessary.

A comment was raised about targeting email communication for result deadlines to participants who haven't entered their results.

- *For AIMS, AISS, LACS & SEMS participants are able to enter/ amend results up until the deadline date and for this reason we will continue to remind all participants of the upcoming deadline.*
- *For RICE, we only email participants who haven't submitted their counts.*

Q10. Comments/ Suggestions regarding the Schemes.

Transportation overseas

- *Over the past year, there have been many issues with transporting samples overseas. The pandemic has seen delays in customs and actual delivery of samples. Brexit has seen new procedures put in place in customs, which has made things more difficult. We have had numerous discussions with our courier company and we feel the last round of samples despatched went smoother than in previous rounds. The main difficulties are certain areas in Europe. Our courier requires particular information quoting on the commercial invoice, such as EORI number and VAT number. Our courier company also has an online commercial invoice system in place, which means customs can view the important information throughout the package journey. We are still having a few delays, but unfortunately we are unable to determine what packages customs will hold/ delay. If you haven't received your samples within a week of despatch, please contact the PT Team by email (include your HSE PT Lab number) so that we can look into the delay straight away.*
- *We are aware that a few overseas laboratories are being charged for receiving their samples. Please be aware that you should not be charged for receiving these samples (they are for research & testing purposes and have a value of £5 for customs purposes only). If you are asked to pay a charge, it should be appealed. Please contact us with your HSE PT lab number if you need any assistance.*

Reports to be issued sooner

- *We aim to issue the individual & group report within 2 weeks of the result deadline. This allows us to be flexible with deadlines if participants have had difficulties in receiving their samples in a timely manner, and to ensure we check the data thoroughly before issuing the report.*

RICE

- *A suggestion for the density to be automatically calculated for the participant. The PT Team have previously discussed this with the Fibre Proficiency Testing Steering Committee (FPTSC) and it was deemed an important part of the scheme for participants to calculate the density themselves.*

General

- *The last couple of years have been a difficult time for participants from all over the world. We have tried to be as flexible as we can to ensure participants can continue to demonstrate competency in the PT Schemes. Some participants have had delays receiving samples, or not receiving them at all. Some haven't been able to submit results by their specified deadline due to members of their team being absent with COVID. We have extended deadlines where appropriate, or sent additional rounds so they can be completed to a different timescale. If you are having difficulties with timescales, please email the PT Team at your earliest convenience so that we can try and help.*

Discussion

This is the ninth feedback gathering exercise and the response rate remains high. The main aim of this survey was to determine if the schemes, and the process, are of an acceptable standard for our participants.

Participants have made very positive comments regarding the quality of the schemes and how they are administered. They have also provided valuable constructive feedback where they feel improvement could be made. Although not all answers to comments/ suggestions have been provided in this report, the survey has been collated and distributed within the team so that we're all aware of where we are doing well and where we could improve.

If anyone has raised a concern/ query on the questionnaire which hasn't been answered, please email the PT team who will be happy to provide further feedback.

We are continually striving to improve the quality of the schemes so this exercise will be carried out annually. Participants are reminded that they are welcome to provide constructive feedback at any time by emailing the PT administration team.

Outcome

The results, comments and feedback have been passed to the HSE PT team, PT Management Team and findings will be discussed at the next FPTSC meeting in June 2022.