

## Results of the May 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 488 participants were emailed the survey and 148 responded (30% response rate).

### Results

Q1. From the 148 responses – 41% participate in AIMS, 8% in AISS, 14% in LACS, 23% in RICE, 14% in SEMS.

Q2. 39% of the responses were from the UK, 55% from Europe and 5% from ROW.

Q3. 95% of participants find their samples/ slides to be of a suitable standard.

Q4. 82% of participants receive their samples in a timely manner.

Q5. Participants were given the opportunity to comment/make suggestions for the schemes.

### Customer Comments

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

Q3. Are the samples/ slides provided as part of your scheme of a suitable standard?

- A few comments were made regarding the quality of the slides. The PT Team review slide data following submission of results, and highlight any concerns to our analyst. Slide comments made by participants are also logged so that the slide can be investigated upon its return to HSE. Slide investigations are carried out at the end of the round - our analyst looks at the data and the slide to determine suitability for use within the scheme.

Q10. Comments/ Suggestions regarding the Schemes.

- AIMS & LACS
  - *Participants would like to see more commercial samples within a round. The PT Team are working hard to be able to provide more commercial samples in the near future. However, as this is a PT Test, it's important that a wide range of matrix and asbestos types are included within a round, to ensure the testing criteria is met.*
- RICE
  - *Rogue slides have been introduced from R117. A concern has been raised that slides should be representative of what they would normally analyse in the laboratory, not be tricky/ hard. These slides are designed to test participants on the counting rules in relation to the rejection criteria. Rogue slides should be easily identified and may include slides with uneven deposits, overloaded with dust and irregular or distorted gridlines.*

- General
  - *The main area of concern since January 2021 has been the transportation of samples overseas. One of the main issues was customs in certain countries being inundated with packages and new legislation - resulting in massive backlogs. These issues affected many companies (not only PT). The PT Team have worked hard with our courier company to try and improve our delivery times. It is important that overseas laboratories send a copy of their permit to the team (if required) and apply for their EORI number ([https://ec.europa.eu/taxation\\_customs/business/customs-procedures-import-and-export/customs-procedures/economic-operators-registration\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/business/customs-procedures-import-and-export/customs-procedures/economic-operators-registration_en)). If samples are not received in a timely manner, please email the PT Team with your PT Lab number so that we can contact our courier company.*

## **Discussion**

This is the eighth 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 December 2021.