Background

These instructions follow guidance issued by the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS), the UK professional body for biomedical science.

Accurate identification details on laboratory samples are vital for patient safety. It is the responsibility of the person requesting a laboratory investigation to ensure that samples are correctly labelled and request forms are completed to the required standard. Note that sample and request form information MUST be compatible.

It is important that the identity and location of the requesting medical practitioner is identified on the form to allow sample results to be issued.

The laboratories reception processes include quality checks to ensure that:

- Sample request forms provide the information required to ensure appropriate examinations are carried out and that results can be properly interpreted if required.
- Samples are adequately labelled to provide assurances as to the identity of the patient
- Samples are analytically viable.

Samples and Request Forms

Samples must be labelled immediately at the site of sampling to ensure correct identification of the patient.

Electronic requests and sample labels (generated via ICE and Order-comms) are preferred as these contain all of the information required to process the sample. The exception if Blood Transfusion samples – **Blood Transfusion samples MUST be handwritten.**

Samples and request forms must include the following information:

	Essential	Desirable
Sample	• NHS, Hospital Number or unique coded identifier • Patients full name or unique coded identifier (in addition to the information above) • Date of birth **Blood transfusion samples only** • Date of collection • Signature of person who took the sample • Ward and gender	• Date and time of collection • Nature of sample, including qualifying details, e.g. left, distal etc. especially if more than one sample per request is submitted
Request Form	• NHS, Hospital Number or unique coded identifier • Patients full name or unique coded identifier (in addition to the information above) • Date of birth • Gender • Patient's location and destination for report • Patients consultant, GP code or name of requesting practitioner • Investigation(s) required • Sample taker personal ID number (PIN) - essential for LBC (cervical screening) samples **Blood transfusion samples only** • Date of collection • Signature of person who took the sample • Ward and gender **Microbiology/Cellular pathology samples** • Sample type/description	• Clinical information including relevant medication (which is sometimes essential) • Date and time sample collected (which is sometimes essential) • Patient's address including Postcode • Practitioner's contact number (bleep or extension)

1. Everyone registered with the NHS in England and Wales has their own unique NHS Number made up of 10 digits shown in a 3-3-4 format.
2. Date and time collected is usually essential for biochemistry samples.
3. Microscope slides (e.g. FNAS) must have the patient's forename, surname and date of birth written in pencil
4. Major Incidents – In the event of a major incident the 10 digit Majax number (or equivalent) MUST be used in place of an NHS or Hospital number.

Action regarding samples received with insufficient or incompatible patient identification

Samples or request forms received without the minimum essential identification criteria may be rejected without analysis or referred back to the requesting practitioner.

Laboratory staff are NOT permitted to add or amend details on the sample.

In cases where an inadequately labelled sample or request form is received from a patient, where it is not possible or is very difficult to repeat the sample collection, then the sample may be processed at the discretion of a biomedical scientist.

The laboratory may require the requesting medical practitioner to attend the laboratory to complete the missing details before the request is accepted.

In circumstances where pathology personnel evaluate a repeat sample is possible the sample will be rejected. The action taken will be recorded and where possible a report issued to inform the requesting source of the rejection and appropriate reasons why the rejection has occurred. Where the limited information provided does not enable pathology personnel to positively identify the patient or the location of the requesting practitioner, it may not be possible for the laboratory to issue a report.

Samples that have been rejected and not processed may be stored in the laboratory for up to one week to allow the requesting practitioner time to get in touch. This storage period will differ between individual departments.

Additional Laboratory Acceptance Criteria

Samples must comply with laboratory requirements to ensure the viability of the sample and the validity of investigation results. These requirements include the following:

- Sample type. Incorrect preservation or anticoagulation may render results invalid.
- Sample volume/size. Samples received without sufficient volume to ensure viable results will be rejected. This includes samples where there is insufficient volume to carry out the investigation and where the use of liquid anticoagulants may influence the results due to over-filling or under-filling of the sample tube.
- Special requirements such as time to reach laboratory, transport at body temperature, transport on ice etc.
- Sample quality. If sample quality is insufficient to ensure the validity of investigations then the sample will be rejected. Examples of sample quality issues include:
    - Haemolysis
    - Lipemia
    - Icterus
    - Clotted samples

  Sample quality issues may only impact on specific investigations. In this instance the sample will not be rejected, but some requested analytes may not be reported. The laboratory report will include details of the sample issue.

Hazardous samples

Specimens that may present a hazard include those that have been grossly contaminated due to leakage and blood gas samples that retain the hypodermic needle. Hazardous samples of this nature will be rejected by the laboratory.

If a repeat collection is difficult or not possible then analysis may proceed at the discretion of pathology personnel.