

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE - NHQI PROGRAMME DATA COMPLIANCE

Document Title	SOP - NHQI Programme Data Compliance
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Owner / Responsible for Implementation	National Histopathology Quality Improvement (NHQI) Programme
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Purpose

To define the monthly process by which National Histopathology Quality Improvement (NHQI) Programme quality improvement (QI) data are uploaded to NQAIS-Histopathology, signed off by the QI clinical lead, and monitored for site compliance, so that the national dataset is complete, accurate and available for regional and national reporting. The NHQI Programme is managed by the RCPI National Specialty Quality Improvement (NSQI); with recommendations and key quality indicators developed by the NHQI working group.

Scope

- **What this SOP covers:** the monthly upload of NHQI QI data to NQAIS-Histopathology, sign-off by the QI clinical lead, tracking of site compliance, and the implications for local, national, and regional reporting.
- **Included:** the annual Data Upload Schedule ([six-week lag](#)); the local operational manager (LOM) upload step; QI clinical lead (CL) sign-off; site status tracking; reminders, escalation, and regional reporting on signed-off data.
- **Excluded:** wider information governance obligations, set out in the [NSQI Information Governance Policy V3 \(2024\)](#); laboratory coding practice and KQI definitions ([see the NHQI Programme Guidelines](#)); and local LIS extraction procedures, which are the responsibility of each site.
- **Applicable department:** NHQI programme management team, NSQI Programmes, RCPI. Local roles referenced: the LOM and the CL at each participating laboratory.
- **Data handling note:** no patient or histopathologist identifiable information is uploaded from the local LIS into NQAIS-Histopathology; NHQI data are shared in aggregate form only.

Roles and Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility
Local Operations Manager (LOM)	Each month, extract QI data from the local LIS, encrypt it with the NHQI python encryption tool, and upload to NQAIS-Histopathology.
QI Clinical Lead	Review the uploaded data and sign off as complete and accurate.
NHQI Programme Manager	Maintain the Data Upload Schedule; monitor status; issue reminders; extract signed-off data for the National Data Report, report compliance and monitor regional quarterly report usage.
NHQI Working Group	Provide clinical expertise and oversight, and direct the escalation of persistent non-compliance.
Regional Executive Officer (REO)	Accesses the regional dataset for their Health Region to review participation and compliance across sites within the region. Uses signed-off regional data to support oversight, service planning and quality assurance.

Procedure

- Maintain the Data Upload Schedule.** The programme manager maintains and circulates the annual data upload schedule, setting the target upload and sign-off date for each monthly period. Uploads follow a six-week lag from the end of the calendar month (for example, January 2026 data are uploaded and signed off by 16 March 2026). The schedule moved from a two-month lag to a six-week lag, effective December 2025, to improve timeliness and accuracy.
- Extract, encrypt and upload.** Each month, the LOM at each laboratory extracts the QI data from the local LIS, encrypts the extract, and uploads it to NQAIS-Histopathology. Each upload includes at least the previous 12 months of data.
- Review and sign off.** In NQAIS, the LOM generates a Data Quality report, checks it for anomalies, and sends the report link to the QI Clinical Lead. The Clinical Lead reviews the data and, once satisfied, signs them off as complete and accurate. Only signed-off data become viewable on the dataset.
- Track site status.** The programme coordinator records each site as one of the three categories: *signed off*, *uploaded but not signed off*, or *not uploaded*, and reports this status to the monthly working group meeting.
- Send reminders.** The programme manager or programme coordinator reviews upload and sign-off status across all sites regularly and emails reminders to the QI clinical lead and LOM where either step is outstanding, in line with the [Data Upload Schedule](#).
- Escalate.** Escalate persistent non-compliance to the NHQI working group in accordance with its directive.

Regional Reporting

- Only signed-off local data are visible on the regional dataset. Consequently, if a report is run before a participating site has signed off, that site will return a null or incomplete result for the REO.
- Before running a regional or national report, consult the data upload schedule to confirm the relevant sites have uploaded and signed off for the reporting period.

Site status	Meaning	Visible on national dataset?
Signed off	Uploaded and signed off by the clinical lead.	Yes, included in national dataset and reports.
Uploaded, not signed off	Uploaded but not yet signed off.	No, not yet visible.
Not uploaded	No upload recorded for the period.	No, site absent for the period.

Appendix A - Compliance and Uploads Process Map

