Microbiology Rejection Criteria for Specimens and Request Forms

Microbiology request forms should contain the following data:

- NHS number or hospital number (ONLY if patient’s name given)
- Patient’s full name or unique coded identifier
- Date of birth
- Gender
- Patient’s location and destination for report
- Patient’s consultant, GP or name of requesting practitioner
- Investigation(s) required

along with:

- 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)

Samples for Microbiology should be labelled with the following:

- NHS number or hospital number ONLY if patients name given
- Patients full name or unique coded identifier
- Date of birth

along with:

- Date and time
- Nature of sample, including qualifying details, e.g. left, distal etc especially if more than one sample per request is submitted

The data shown in red are mandatory items giving 3 points of identification (or 4 if surname and forename are counted individually).

There are occasions where either the request form or specimen is not labelled in accordance with these requirements, or where specimens are received in unsuitable containers. The following pages set out the actions taken in the Microbiology laboratory if this situation arises.
Unlabelled specimens

Unlabelled specimens, whether received in a transport bag accompanying its request form or received separately from the request form will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable (See unrepeatable specimens).

Incorrectly labelled specimens

Incorrectly labelled specimens (when compared with its accompanying request form) will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable.

Specimens received without request form

If a specimen is received without a request form, the location from where it has originated (if known) will be informed. A correctly completed request form can either be sent to the laboratory or sent via the secure fax (01243 831634). However, if the request form is not received on the same day, the specimen will not be accepted for analysis.

Specimens received that are leaking or damaged

Leaking or damaged specimens will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable

Specimens received in incorrect container / transport media for test requested

Specimens received in unapproved or incorrect containers/transport media for the test requested will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable.

Specimens received that are in expired containers / non-aseptic containers

Specimens received in expired containers / non-aseptic containers will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable.

Request forms that have incorrect demographic details with respect to the specimen

Request forms that have incorrect demographic details when compared with the specimen will not be accepted for analysis unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable.

Specimens received with a request form that is devoid of any patient demographic details

If a specimen is received with a request form that is devoid of any patient demographic details, the location from where it has originated (if known) will be informed. A correctly completed request form can either be sent to the laboratory or sent via the secure fax
(01243 831634). However, if the correctly completed request form is not received on the same day, the specimen will not be accepted for analysis.

**Request forms received without any specimen**

If a matching specimen is not received by the end of the working day, a report will be issued stating that no specimen was received with the request form.

**Specimens received that have been delayed in transit**

Samples that have been delayed in transit may be rejected as unsuitable for processing. Generally speaking, specimens >3 days old will be rejected unless the specimen is deemed to be unrepeatable.

**Specimens deemed to be unrepeatable**

It may be necessary to process some specimens even though they are not clearly identified if they are difficult to repeat or are unrepeatable. This should be a very unusual occurrence. The most obvious examples of these difficult to repeat or unrepeatable specimens are:

- CSF
- Surgical fluid/tissue/swabs
- Post mortem specimens
- Blood cultures/ tips