

HISTOLOGY HANDBOOK

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1. Introduction

Welcome to the PureLab UK Histology Handbook.

This handbook has been developed to provide healthcare professionals, pathology users, clinical staff, and laboratory partners with comprehensive guidance on the histology services available through the PureLab UK Histology Laboratory.

The document outlines specimen requirements, service capabilities, reporting processes, quality standards, and referral pathways to ensure specimens are submitted correctly and processed efficiently.

Our aim is to support the delivery of accurate, timely, and clinically relevant diagnostic results while maintaining the highest standards of patient care, safety, and regulatory compliance.

2. About PureLab UK

PureLab UK is a independent diagnostic laboratory providing comprehensive pathology services to private hospitals, clinics, healthcare professionals, and laboratory partners throughout the United Kingdom.

Our services encompass a broad range of diagnostic disciplines, including:

Cellular Pathology

- Histopathology
- Immunohistochemistry (IHC)
- Special stains
- Gynaecological cytology
- Non-gynaecological cytology
- HPV testing
- Molecular pathology investigations

Blood Sciences

- Clinical biochemistry
- Haematology
- Immunology
- Allergy testing
- Microbiology
- Serology

- Capillary testing

We support:

- Routine diagnostic pathways
- Urgent and priority testing
- Fully outsourced pathology services
- Specialist referrals
- Second opinion consultations

PureLab UK is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO 15189:2022 Medical Laboratories - Requirements for Quality and Competence under accreditation number 9344.

Users should refer to the latest UKAS Schedule of Accreditation to confirm current accredited tests, services, and locations.

[UKAS Schedule Website](#)

3. Contact Information

Postal Address

PureLabUK
Histology Department
24-32 Stephenson Way
London
NW1 2HD

General Enquiries

Telephone: +44 (0)20 7299 4490

Email: customercare@purelab-uk.com

4. Operating Hours

Laboratory Opening Hours

Day	Opening Times
Monday to Friday	07:00 - 19:00
Saturday	07:00 - 13:00
Sunday and Bank Holidays	Closed

Specimen Reception Hours

Day	Opening Times
Monday to Friday	07:00 - 17:00
Saturday	07:00 - 13:00
Sunday and Bank Holidays	Closed

5. Patient Consent

PureLab UK operates in accordance with current legislation, professional standards, and information governance requirements.

Specific written consent may be required for tests involving:

- Referral to specialist laboratories
- Genetic investigations
- Molecular testing requiring additional patient information
- Tests requiring disclosure of family history or other relevant clinical information

For routine diagnostic histopathology services, consent is generally considered implied when the requesting clinician submits a specimen for diagnostic examination.

It is the responsibility of the requesting clinician to ensure appropriate consent has been obtained and documented.

6. Quality Assurance

PureLab UK is committed to delivering safe, accurate, and reliable diagnostic services through a comprehensive quality management system.

The laboratory maintains:

- Internal Quality Control (IQC) programmes
- Equipment maintenance and calibration programmes
- Staff competency assessments
- Continuous quality improvement activities
- Participation in External Quality Assessment (EQA) schemes

Histology EQA Participation

The laboratory participates in recognised external assessment programmes including:

- Specialist Techniques
- Tissue Diagnostics
- Mohs Procedure
- Frozen Sections
- Mega Blocks
- Digital Pathology

Immunohistochemistry EQA Participation

Including, but not limited to:

- General Pathology
- Breast Hormone Receptors (ER and PR)
- HER2 Testing
- Lymphoid Pathology
- Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumour (GIST) Testing
- Mismatch Repair (MMR) Protein Assessment

These programmes provide independent verification of technical performance and diagnostic accuracy.

7. Complaints and Compliments

We welcome feedback about our services and are committed to learning from every experience. Whether you would like to share a compliment, raise a concern or make a formal complaint, information on how to contact us and what to expect from the process is available on our Compliments and Complaints webpage.

[Compliments & Complaints Webpage](#)

8. Request Forms

The appropriate request form and dispatch log must accompany every specimen submitted to the laboratory and should include all required patient, clinical and requester information. A PureLab request form can be downloaded from our website, but we also accept a clinic's/hospital's own request forms that meet the acceptance criteria.

Please use the links below to access the latest laboratory request forms and review our specimen acceptance requirements before submitting samples.

[Histology Request Form](#)

[Histology Dispatch Log](#)

[Sample Acceptance Criteria Webpage](#)

High Risk Patients

Please indicate clearly on the request form if a specimen is high risk or suspected to be high risk. Histology samples must be clearly labelled with "Risk of Infection" or "High Risk" hazard stickers if the patient is a known or suspected carrier of HIV, Hepatitis B/C, TB or SARS-CoV-2. The request form must also state the reason for the risk of infection.

All doctors responsible for the care of patients have a duty of care towards other members of staff to ensure this is carried out

9. Transportation of Samples

Samples must be packaged, stored and transported appropriately to preserve their integrity and protect everyone involved in their handling. Please use the link below to access our

Transportation Manual and review the requirements before sending specimens to the laboratory.

[Transportation Manual Webpage](#)

10. Accessing Results

Authorised users may securely access pathology reports through the laboratory's online reporting portal.

To access the portal, please use the link below and sign in using your existing account details.

[Histology Portal](#)

11. Histology Services Overview

Histology involves the microscopic examination of tissue specimens to identify, characterise, and diagnose disease processes.

The PureLab UK Histology Department provides comprehensive diagnostic services using modern instrumentation, validated methodologies, and consultant-led reporting.

Services include:

- Routine histopathology
- Special stains
- Immunohistochemistry
- Molecular testing referrals
- Expert consultation and second opinions
- Frozen sections
- Mohs

A comprehensive test repertoire is available through the Histology Test Library. Please use the link below to view.

[Histology Test Library](#)

12. Specimen Acceptance and Rejection Criteria

To ensure diagnostic quality and patient safety, specimens must comply with laboratory acceptance requirements.

Factors affecting specimen acceptance include:

- Correct specimen container selection
- Appropriate fixative type
- Adequate fixative volume
- Sufficient fixation duration
- Accurate specimen labelling
- Complete request form information
- Concordance between specimen and documentation

The laboratory reserves the right to reject specimens that present unacceptable identification discrepancies or significant quality concerns.

Please use the link below to review the specimen acceptance criteria, including requirements for patient identification, request forms, and discrepancy guidelines.

[Specimen Acceptance Criteria Webpage](#)

13. Specimen Collection and Fixation Guidelines

Appropriate fixation is critical for optimal tissue preservation and accurate diagnosis.

Routine Histopathology

- Place tissue immediately into 10% neutral buffered formalin.
- Use a container appropriate to specimen size.
- Maintain a fixative-to-tissue ratio of at least 10:1.

Testicular Biopsies

- Bouin's fixative is recommended.

Immunofluorescence Specimens

- Use Michel's Transport Medium.

Large Surgical Specimens

Where the recommended volume of fixative cannot be achieved:

- Ensure the entire specimen is submerged.
- Use the largest suitable container available.

Bowel Resections

- Open along the anti-mesenteric border.
- Do not cut through the tumour.
- Remove excess faecal material before fixation.

Specialist Testing

Users should seek guidance from the laboratory regarding any specific fixation requirements before submitting specimens

14. Urgent and Priority Specimens

Urgent specimens should be clearly identified on:

- The request form
- Dispatch documentation

The following information should also be provided:

- Required reporting date
- Direct contact details for the requesting clinician

The laboratory will make every reasonable effort to accommodate urgent clinical requirements.

15. Immunohistochemistry Services

Immunohistochemistry (IHC) is an essential diagnostic adjunct that enables the identification of specific cellular proteins and biomarkers within tissue sections.

IHC supports:

- Tumour classification
- Disease subtyping
- Prognostic assessment
- Predictive biomarker testing
- Selection of targeted therapies

In many cases, IHC is performed following initial microscopic assessment by a consultant pathologist.

Where additional stains are required:

1. A provisional report may be issued.
2. IHC testing will be performed.
3. A supplementary or final integrated report will follow.

PureLab UK offers an extensive in-house IHC repertoire alongside referral access to specialist assays.

IHC full test repertoire can be found here:

[Histology Test Library.pdf](#)

16. Referral and Second Opinion Services

PureLab UK works closely with a network of accredited specialist referral centres to provide access to advanced diagnostic testing and expert opinion services.

Referral laboratories are selected based on:

- Accreditation status
- Technical expertise
- Quality performance
- Service reliability

Referral testing may include:

- Molecular pathology
- Advanced immunohistochemistry
- FISH and ISH analysis
- Neuropathology
- Dermatopathology
- Ocular pathology
- Flow cytometry
- Specialist genetic investigations

All referral laboratories undergo periodic review and audit by PureLab UK.

Use the following link to view our referral sites.

[Referral Laboratories](#)

17. Turnaround Times

Routine histology turnaround times are delivered in accordance with individual client service agreements.

PureLab UK aims to achieve reporting performance aligned with national professional standards and contractual obligations.

Typical service targets include:

- 80% of reports issued within 7 calendar days
- 90% of reports issued within 10 calendar days

Cases requiring any of the following may require extended processing times:

- Additional fixation
- Decalcification
- Immunohistochemistry
- Molecular testing
- Specialist referral testing
- External consultation

Due to the complexity of histopathological diagnosis, turnaround times may vary depending on individual case requirements.