



Collaborative Testing Services Inc

Predistribution Testing: Information for Laboratories

Collaborative Testing Services (CTS) conducts *predistribution testing* of proficiency tests as one of our means to ensure test validity before the samples are shipped to participating laboratories. Laboratories can volunteer to lend their services and expertise to “pre-test” the proficiency test samples. Along with a data sheet, laboratories complete a short questionnaire regarding the test samples, packaging, data sheet and other information relating to the test.

Before you choose to serve as a predistribution laboratory, you may have some questions. Below are some of the most frequently asked questions regarding predistribution testing.

How does my laboratory benefit by conducting predistribution testing?

In addition to providing valuable insight relating to the specific test samples, information you supply may influence future proficiency test designs and samples. As compensation for your assistance, CTS will extend a credit in the amount of the test fee that you may apply to a future order.

Are the predistribution test samples different from the regular test samples?

No. CTS manufactures all test samples at once and then randomly selects sets to send to predistribution laboratories, with the exception of image-based tests. For tests where the samples are photographs or on DVDs (i.e. Latent Prints, Imprint/Impressions, Handwriting, Bloodstain Pattern) we produce a limited number of initial sets. We then invite the predistribution laboratories to provide feedback on the quality of the images or make suggestions for improvement before the full sample sets are created.

How long do we have to complete the test?

For most tests, we allow 4-5 weeks to complete the testing and return the data sheet and questionnaire (a due date will be printed on the paperwork that accompanies the samples). Forensic Biology samples must be manufactured shortly before the ship date; therefore, predistribution is limited to 3-4 weeks before test shipment. In order to receive the credit, we must have the results by the predistribution due date.

Am I obligated to return predistribution results?

While predistribution testing is voluntary, CTS depends on the receipt of predistribution results in a timely manner to maintain test schedules. If your laboratory finds that it cannot conduct predistribution testing of the samples received, please contact us immediately so we can arrange for an alternate predistribution laboratory.

Predistribution Testing: Information for Laboratories, continued...

I have more than one examiner scheduled to take this proficiency test; do all of my examiners need to complete the predistribution testing?

No. Only one examiner is asked to complete the predistribution testing for us. The rest of the examiners should perform the test during normal distribution. We do, however, ask that the examiner who completes the predistribution testing not share the results with the other examiners.

Will I still receive the same number of test sets that I ordered?

Yes. The predistribution test set is in addition to the test sets that you ordered. You will receive the same number of sets that your laboratory ordered during the scheduled distribution period.

Can my predistribution results fulfill the external proficiency testing requirements?

Yes. Predistribution results can be used toward fulfillment of accreditation requirements providing you are not given any information that would give you an advantage over other laboratories. Like all proficiency test kits, your predistribution set will not include any information as to the expected results of the examination.

Are the predistribution results automatically included in the CTS Summary Report or sent to the Accrediting body?

No. Because the predistribution data sheets may solicit data that would not be required for participants that complete the test for regular proficiency testing purposes, we do not include predistribution results in a CTS Summary Report or the Reports sent to the Accrediting bodies at the conclusion of testing.

How can I have my predistribution results included in the Summary Report?

Since your laboratory will still receive the same number of tests during the regular testing period, you can resubmit your predistribution results using one of your laboratory's assigned participant codes provided in your proficiency test package. This will also allow you to designate the "Participant Code" (U####A, U####B, etc.) that you would like these results to appear under in the report. You will then be able to complete the Accreditation Release section of the data sheet that authorizes the submission of the test results to the appropriate Accrediting body. Alternatively, you may choose to retest the samples if you like.

If I choose not to retest, what should I do with the "extra" sample set?

Laboratories that elect to resubmit predistribution results without retesting will be in possession of an "extra" sample set since the predistribution set was received in addition to the other sets ordered. This set is yours to use as you wish, and many laboratories use it for training or other internal proficiency testing purposes. Please note, however, that CTS will only accept and publish the same number of results as the number of tests ordered.

How do I sign up to serve as a predistribution laboratory?

Contact the Forensics Department at 571-434-1925, via e-mail at forensics@cts-interlab.com or fax at 571-434-1937. With your e-mail or fax, please include the tests or disciplines that your laboratory would be interested in conducting predistribution testing.