

South West Water Laboratory Sample Handling Guide

Following the [Guidance on Deviating Samples](#) issued by UKAS, we have updated our Sample Handling Policy required to meet ISO17025 accreditation requirements.

Our policy is to assess all samples, bottles, and individual parameters for compliance with the sampling handling criteria outlined by UKAS. Upon assessment, non compliant samples, bottles and, or, test parameters will be highlighted as deviating.

WHAT IS A DEVIATING SAMPLE?

UKAS guidance states that 'Deviating samples are samples which are not 'correctly' preserved, for example they may have exceeded their maximum preservation time, lack date and time of sampling, are not cooled, have inappropriate headspace and so on..'

The laboratory will assess any deviations at three levels - sample, bottle and test. Our Laboratory Customer Support team will contact you if a sample and, or bottle deviation is identified.

Sample Deviations are highlighted automatically when:

- No sample date and time is provided
- The sample matrix is not provided

Providing the required information at the time of sample submission will prevent samples being highlighted with deviations.

Bottle Deviations are monitored in Sample Reception by analysts. Bottles are deemed deviating when **one or more** of the following conditions are met:

- Inappropriate sample container
- Damaged container on arrival
- Insufficient sample provided
- Incorrect preservation of sample
- Analysis unspecified by the customer

An **Associated Deviation** is highlighted on the Certificate of Analysis when bottles are deemed deviating and as a consequence the validity of associated test results **may be jeopardized**.



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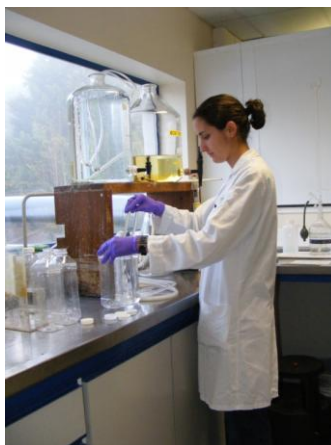
Test Deviations are monitored by an automatic process which highlights when the maximum preservation time associated with a test has been exceeded.

WHAT IS PRESERVATION TIME & WHY DOES IT MATTER?

The laboratory defines the maximum preservation time of a test within a sample as the test **stability time**.

Stability of each test will be assessed from the time the sample is taken until the time at which the test analysis starts which is why sample delivery time is very important.

- Tests analysed within stability provide the customer with representative results.
- Tests preserved or analysed after the recommended stability time may be affected by sample deterioration and therefore the result may no longer be representative.



It is widely recognised that every analysis conducted on a sample **may have a different stability time**. Therefore, we have chosen to assess the stability of each parameter offered.

If analysis of a parameter exceeds stability, the Certificate of Analysis will indicate that the test result is deviating and therefore the validity of the result may be jeopardized.

Samples submitted without a date and time of sampling, are automatically considered deviating as sample stability cannot be assessed.

WHAT ARE THE STABILITY TIMES AT EXETER LABORATORY?

In many methods, the sample preparation conducted in the laboratory is critical in stabilizing the parameter prior to analysis.

The following data indicates the stability times from sampling until laboratory preparation and analysis of the individual parameters. All breaches in stability will be highlighted as compromised against the parameter result on the Certificate of Analysis.

[Laboratory stability times](#)

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Times applied to parameters have been collated from ISO 5667-3:2003 and internal stability validation trials.

Our method validation programme ensures that we always strive to improve stability times.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Always provide sample details to include **Date, Time, Material code** and **Analysis required** to avoid any unnecessary sample handling deviations notifications on your Certificate of Analysis.

We offer a pre-registration service that will help you complete most of the information you need before samples are taken.

HOW CAN I MEET STABILITY TIMES?

To enable us to analyse samples within the stability time, please ensure the samples arrive at the laboratory by 16:30 on the day of sampling. Samples are accepted Monday – Friday, excluding bank holidays.

Exeter Laboratory cannot be held responsible for preparing or analysing samples over the stated stability time if they arrive outside this time frame.

We consistently aim to improve analysis within stability time and we will be introducing a new software package to facilitate this in 2013.

WHAT CHANGES WILL YOU SEE AS A RESULT OF MONITORING STABILITY?

Quotations for new work will list the stability times of all requested parameters.

The Certificate of Analysis will indicate when a test is deviating due to stability by using the following flags:

Associated Deviation: Sample Stability exceeded on arrival. Analysis will still proceed but the sample will be flagged as outside stability on arrival.

Associated Deviation: Analysed outside of sample stability the sample arrived within stability time but was analysed outside of stability. Analysis will still proceed but the sample will be flagged as outside stability when analysis started.

Associated Deviation: No date and time, unable to assess sample stability. Analysis will still proceed but the sample will be flagged.

All deviating tests are analysed with the understanding that they will be paid for within our normal terms and conditions.

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WHAT DO YOU DO TO MINIMIZE SAMPLE HANDLING DEVIATIONS ON YOUR CERTIFICATE ANALYSIS?

- Use the appropriate containers for the analysis required
- Deliver the samples before 16:30 Monday – Friday, excluding bank holidays
- Adhere to relevant preservation requirements
- Provide the required sample processing information including the **date and time** of sampling



HOW WE ARE HELPING YOU...

We are updating our website www.southwestwater.co.uk/laboratory to make it easier for you to access up-to-date information.

CONTACT US

For more information about sample stability requirements call **01392 443567** or email labcommercial@southwestwater.co.uk