



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

July 14, 2020

**DEPARTMENT CIRCULAR**

No. 2020- 0306

**TO :** ALL REGIONAL DIRECTORS, HEADS OF HOSPITALS AND OTHER HEALTH FACILITIES, CHIEFS OF THE HEALTH FACILITIES AND SERVICES REGULATORY BUREAU AND THE CENTERS FOR HEALTH DEVELOPMENT – REGULATION, LICENSING AND ENFORCEMENT DIVISION, MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS REGION IN MUSLIM MINDANAO (MOH-BARMM), REGULATORY OFFICERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS CONCERNED

**SUBJECT :** Waived Requirement for the Renewal of License to Operate a Clinical Laboratory for the Year 2021

Pursuant to Department Memorandum No. 2009-0086-B, dated September 8, 2014 titled “Implementation of External Quality Assurance Program (EQAP) as a Regulatory Requirement for Licensing Clinical Laboratories”, all clinical laboratories shall participate in the National External Quality Assessment Scheme (NEQAS) administered by designated National Reference Laboratory (NRL) or other local and international EQAP approved by the Department of Health. A Certificate of Participation in NEQAS is required for the renewal of the License to Operate (LTO) of clinical laboratories.

A Memorandum dated November 28, 2019, titled “Lifting of the Moratorium on the Initial Issuance of License to Operate for a Free Standing Clinical Laboratories Nationwide”, was issued so that laboratories can continuously operate even if they failed to participate in the EQAP.

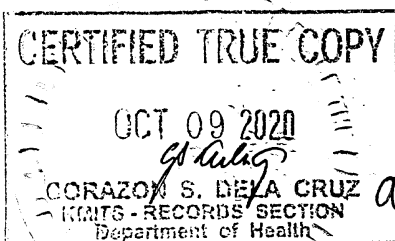
However, the current COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected the regular operations of the NRLs, such that carrying out of the scheduled test events have been cancelled or delayed. (ANNEX)

In view of the foregoing, the licensing requirement for the NEQAS 2020 Certificate of Participation / Certificate of Performance issued by the designated NRLs is hereby **WAIVED** for the 2021 renewal of LTO of a clinical laboratory.

For your information and guidance.

By Authority of the Secretary of Health:

**MARIA ROSARIO SINGH-VERGEIRE, MD, MPH, CESO IV**  
Undersecretary of Health  
Health Regulation Team



ANNEX

July 03, 2020

**ATTY. NICOLAS B. LUTERO III, CESO III**  
Director IV  
Health Facilities Services and Regulatory Bureau (HFSRB)  
Manila City

Dear Atty. Lutero,

Good day!

The global crisis of COVID-19 pandemic has greatly affected the regular operations of the NRLs. Financial and human resources of the NRLs were diverted to the COVID-19 response as priority.

The Committee on NRL has written a letter to your office dated March 19, 2020 requesting for the extension of the deadline of the National External Quality Assurance Scheme (NEQAS) from the regular deadline of May 31, 2020 to July 31, 2020.

However, with the continued response, three (3) of the NRLs have determined that it will not proceed its EQA event for 2020. A Certificate of Enrollment shall be issued before September 30, 2020 for those who have paid their NEQAS fees.

NATIONAL REFERENCE LABORATORY	EQA PROGRAM	STATUS
Research Institute for Tropical Medicine	Bacteriology Parasitology Tuberculosis Transfusion-Transmissible Infections	Cancelled but accepting registration until September 30, 2020, for the 2021 NEQAS
East Avenue Medical Center	Drug Testing Water Testing	Cancelled but accepting registration until July 31, 2020, for the 2021 NEQAS
National Kidney and Transplant Institute	Hematology	Cancelled but accepting registration until July 31, 2020, for the 2021 NEQAS
San Lazaro Hospital-STD/AIDS Cooperative Central Laboratory	Serology for HIV/Hepa B/ Hepa C	Continue with 2020 NEQAS registration until July 31, 2020
Lung Center of the Philippines	Chemistry	Continue with 2020 NEQAS registration until July 31, 2020

On behalf of the Committee on National Reference Laboratories (NRL), we are submitting the above information for the guidance of the Health Facilities and Services Regulatory Bureau.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

**AMADO O. TANDOC III, MD, FPSP**  
Chairman, Committee on NRLs