

Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group In-person Meeting

Summary of Outcomes and Recommendations

4 October 2023

Dear Colleagues,

The World Anti-Doping Agency's (WADA's) [Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group \(STEAG\)](#) met in Montreal on 30-31 August 2023 to discuss the following main topics:

- As part of the 2027 Code and International Standards Update Process, the list of concepts for consideration and feedback of the 2027 International Standard for Testing (IST);
- Updates on the recently-launched blood Steroidal and Endocrine Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) Modules;
- The involvement of the STEAG with the further development of the Dried Blood Spot (DBS) project;
- The ADAMS enhancements released over the last six months, and an update on the priorities of the 2024 WADA IT Road map including the [DCO Central](#) paperless application; and
- The results of the review of the [Technical Document for Sport Specific Analysis](#) (TDSSA) by the Working Group of the STEAG

During its in-person meeting, the STEAG also received a presentation from the International Testing Agency (ITA) on the Paris 2024 Pre-Games project that included a timeline of activities and a strategy to provide testing recommendations to Anti-Doping Organizations (ADOs) in the build-up to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games.

The main outcomes of the meeting and recommendations are outlined below:

1. Concepts for Consideration and Feedback of the 2027 IST

The International Standard for Testing and Investigations (ISTI) has undergone multiple rounds of revision since its first publication in 2003. As a result of the development of the new International Standard for Intelligence and Investigations (ISII), the Investigations (I) element of the IST(I) will be removed, and the International Standard will become the IST.

The IST Drafting Team (which includes five STEAG members) identified the following concepts¹ which it considers will help further strengthen and clarify the IST as part of the 2027 Code & IS Update Process:

- a) The requirement for timely analysis and reporting of samples collected from athletes prior to a major event;
- b) Review and enhancement of whereabouts requirements for athletes;
- c) Harmonized identification requirements for athletes selected to provide a sample for analysis;
- d) Enhancements to the Athlete Biological Passport (ABP);
- e) Further guidance around sample retention and further analysis of samples;
- f) Clarification of sample collection procedures for transgender and gender diverse athletes; and
- g) Reporting of ADO Testing Statistics by athlete.

The STEAG welcomes stakeholder feedback on these concepts and related procedures during the Anti-Doping Organization (ADO) engagement phase which was launched on 28 September 2023 and will be in place until 23 December 2023. Stakeholders may also provide feedback on areas outside of these concepts.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 1:**

ADOs are encouraged to provide their feedback and comments on the aforementioned seven concepts during the upcoming 2027 Code and International Standards update process.

2. Athlete Biological Passport (ABP) projects

WADA's ABP team updated the STEAG on the latest developments on the Endocrine² Module of the ABP that aims to improve human Growth Hormone (GH) detection sensitivity through longitudinal profiling of GH biomarkers over time. In addition, the STEAG received an update on the Steroidal Module of the ABP that is now also applied on venous blood samples (serum)² and is anticipated to be particularly valuable in detecting abuse of testosterone and related compounds in female athletes. Both new features are available in ADAMS from 22 August 2023. ADOs are encouraged to contact WADA's ABP team at athletpassport@wada-ama.org with any questions and/or to request the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) documents for the Endocrine Module and the blood markers of the Steroidal Module of the ABP for further information on testing strategies (both FAQs were previously shared with ADOs on 25 July 2023).

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 2:**

ADOs are recommended to apply the Endocrine Module on the same sports/disciplines that they would target for GH testing based on their existing risk assessment.

3. Dried Blood Spot (DBS) Project

¹ WADA launched the first phase of 2027 World Anti-Doping Code and International Standards Update Process on 26 September 2023. ADOs can provide feedback via [WADA Connect](#).

² This new method is not mandatory to implement i.e., applied upon ADO's request and laboratory availability.

The STEAG was informed that more than 30 ADOs have already collected more than 5,000 DBS samples since the DBS project was launched in 2021 and which to date has resulted in eleven (11) Adverse Analytical Findings (AAFs). The STEAG was also informed of one WADA accredited laboratory that received WADA's approval to seek accreditation for the detection of erythropoietin receptor agonists (ERAs) in DBS samples. To assist in further implementation of DBS project globally, a DBS sub-group (DBS SG) will be created, including members of the STEAG with the short-term goals to create a Test Guide/Guidelines on testing strategies considering the existing DBS analytical capacity for the prohibited substances and methods that can be detected. In addition, the DBS SG will assist in educating ADOs that wish to incorporate DBS samples as part of their testing program, such as informing ADOs about DBS sample collection equipment and sample transportation. The DBS SG will also provide input on the strategic development of the DBS project including which prohibited substances and methods should be explored further from a scientific research perspective. The DBS SG will also liaise directly with the Technical DBS Working Group that will be responsible for the harmonized implementation of DBS analysis in WADA-accredited Laboratories, define the laboratory method performance requirements in DBS samples, develop the DBS External Quality Assessment Scheme (EQAS), and provide expert advice, recommendations, and guidance to WADA Management with regards to the further development of DBS analysis and harmonization of DBS sample collection equipment used in the field to collect DBS samples.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 3:**

A sub-group of the STEAG will assist in further developing DBS testing strategies and educational initiatives for ADOs on the use of DBS as part of their testing program.

4. ADAMS Enhancements, the 2024 WADA IT Roadmap and the DCO Central Paperless Application

The STEAG received an update on the latest ADAMS enhancements that include the launch of the Next Gen ABP module, and the new functionality (as previously recommended by the STEAG) allowing for the selection and reporting of samples stored long-term (LTS), that were released in 2023.

Elements of the 2024 WADA IT Roadmap were discussed and based on the recommendations of the [ADAMS Testing Working Group](#) and the STEAG, the development focus in 2024 – in collaboration with ADOs and laboratories - will be on the tracking of samples requested for quick turnaround sample analysis (less than 20 days) to laboratories in ADAMS to assist in the management of samples for athletes that may be competing in major events. In addition, the review and simplification of the ADAMS notification system, and the improvement of the whereabouts pool management following the completion of the Next Gen athlete profile will also be part of the focus in 2024.

The STEAG was also informed of the latest development of an Application Programming Interface (API) that is connecting ADAMS with other systems for a fee and as a result, ADOs, that are using these systems, can expedite ADAMS upload to meet compliance requirements and avoid duplicating the entry of Doping Control Forms (DCFs) when paperless DCF systems (other than WADA's DCO Central) are used by ADOs.

Finally, the STEAG was informed of the latest developments on WADA's paperless application (DCO Central) and its use by ADOs.

➤ **Outcome/Recommendation No 4:**

The STEAG recommended that ADOs review the new LTS functionality in ADAMS and provide their feedback to WADA at adams@wada-ama.org. Based on ADOs' and laboratories' feedback received, a revised version of the new LTS functionality is planned for the first quarter of 2024.

5. STEAG Working Group review of the Technical Document for Sport Specific Analysis (TDSSA)

The TDSSA came into force in 2015 and is now part of all ADOs' testing programs. After eight years of implementation, a sub-working group consisting of five members from the STEAG and WADA staff conducted a review of the TDSSA. This included analyzing the 2015-2022 ADAMS data and the current text contained in the TDSSA. The sub-working group provided its recommendations to the STEAG during its in-person meeting. The STEAG discussed and agreed to the main recommendations which can be found below. These recommendations will be included in TDSSA v9 that will be submitted for approval at the next WADA Executive Committee meeting on 16 November 2023. Upon approval, the final TDSSA v9 will be circulated to all stakeholders and is proposed to come into effect on 1 January 2024.

➤ **Outcomes/Recommendations No 5-12:**

- a) *The TDSSA v9 will be simplified by excluding examples, calculations and defined terms. The TDSSA FAQ will be replaced by a TDSSA guideline that will provide ADOs with examples of implementation of the TDSSA requirements.*
- b) *No new categories of specific analysis are proposed at this point to be added to the TDSSA.*
- c) *TDSSA analysis on samples collected from recreational athletes will remain optional.*
- d) *Implementation of Growth Hormone (GH) Minimum Levels of Analysis (MLAs) will remain optional and will be reassessed once the Endocrine Module of the ABP has been operational for at least one year. Implementation of the Endocrine Module of the ABP for athletes in those sports or disciplines for which the MLA for GH is 15% or higher is strongly recommended as part of their GH testing program. For the sports or disciplines with an MLA for GH of 10%, ADOs are encouraged to implement the Endocrine Module of the ABP as part of their GH testing program.*
- e) *The mandatory implementation of the Hematological Module of the ABP for sports/disciplines with ERAs MLAs of 30% or greater for athletes in a Registered Testing Pool (RTP) will remain unchanged. Four sports/disciplines were recommended to have an increase in the ERAs MLAs from 15% to 30% which will require ADOs to implement the Hematological Module of the ABP for athletes in an RTP within these four sports/disciplines. This new requirement is recommended to come into effect on 1 January 2025 to allow ADOs sufficient time to plan and adjust their Test Distribution Plans (TDPs).*
- f) *The implementation of the TDSSA MLAs of 5% will remain optional.*
- g) *The criteria for flexibility in the implementation of the TDSSA MLAs due to non-ABP related reasons will be revised and will reflect the quality of an ADO's anti-doping program. Sports and disciplines with MLAs of 10% or less will not be eligible for flexibility.*
- h) *The TDSSA will clarify that any retrospective analysis for the Prohibited Substances and/or Prohibited Methods within the scope of the TDSSA requested by ADOs will count towards the TDSSA requirements of the year that the sample was collected rather than the year the retrospective analysis is requested.*

We hope you find this update useful and should you have any comments or questions regarding the above, please contact WADA at testing@wada-ama.org.

Thank you for your continued commitment to clean sport.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Ricketts

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Ricketts', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Director, Testing

Matt Fedoruk

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matt Fedoruk', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Chair, Strategic Testing Expert Advisory Group