

State Laboratory

Organisation and Structure

1. General Overview

- 1.1 The State Laboratory is part of the Civil Service and is listed in Part II of the Schedule of the Public Service Management Act 1997 (PSM) and listed in Part 2, Section 7 of the Ministers and Secretaries (Amendment) Bill 2011 as coming under the aegis of the Department of Public Expenditure and Reform. It is an office with its own vote and the State Chemist (Head of the Laboratory) is accountable to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform. Its mandate is laid down in various Acts of the Oireachtas including the European Communities Acts. It is situated in a modern purpose built laboratory in Kildare and has no off-site facilities.
- 1.2 The State Laboratory was established in 1924 and evolved from a merging of the Revenue Laboratory with the Chemical Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture. Its current function is to provide a comprehensive service to Governments Departments, Offices and the Public Service.

2 Policy

- 2.1 The management of the State Laboratory will ensure that there are managerial and technical personnel with the authority (in accordance with the PSM Act 1997) and resources (in accordance with Government policy and which are allocated annually by the Oireachtas in the Budget) to carry out their duties.
- 2.2 The management of the State Laboratory will also ensure that staff are free from undue internal and external pressures and influences that may adversely affect the quality of their work. Staff working in the laboratory fall under the scope of the Ethics in Public Office Act 1995. No member of staff is permitted to accept any inducement that might adversely affect their judgement or the results of their work and should any member of staff be offered any such inducement, they are required to immediately report the fact to the Technical Manager.
- 2.3 Staff serving in the State Laboratory are covered by the Official Secrets Act 1963. Each staff member acknowledges acceptance of the Official Secrets Act, and a signed form to this effect is retained on their personnel file. The laboratory also comes within the Scope of the Freedom of Information Act. It is laboratory policy to:
 - ensure information held either as a hard copy, on computers or electronic media can be accessed only by authorised personnel
 - ensure that the building is secure and that all visitors log in at reception and/or are assigned to the care of a staff member
- 2.4 The staff within the laboratory are bound by Civil Service rules and regulations to limit their involvement in activities that would diminish confidence in the laboratory's competence, impartiality, judgement or operational integrity.

- 2.5 The Section Manager in each section is responsible for ensuring that all their staff, including trainees, are suitably supervised.
- 2.6 The Section Manager in each section is responsible for identifying the occurrence of departures from the system or from the procedures for performing tests, and initiating actions to prevent or minimise such departures.

3. Management System

- 3.1 The Management Board (MB), consisting of the State Chemist and Principal Chemists, has primary responsibility for the operation of the laboratory. The laboratory is organized into a number of distinct analytical sections, each managed by a Senior Chemist. The Corporate Services section is managed by an Assistant Principal. The Senior Management Team consists of the Management Board and Section Managers.
- 3.2 Senior Management Team meetings are held monthly to discuss the ongoing management of the laboratory, including issues such as quality, IT, finance, safety, changes in volume and type of work and staff changes. Minutes of these meetings are available to staff on the electronic notice board. Section meetings are also held at regular intervals to keep staff informed of developments.
- 3.3 At required intervals, a Strategy Statement is published by the laboratory which documents the future direction of the laboratory. A situational analysis is carried out and, based on this analysis, a number of goals are identified to be completed over the lifetime of the Strategy Statement. Each goal has a number of associated objectives and performance indicators. The statement also documents the approach to the implementation and monitoring of the Strategy Statement. The current strategy statement is available on the laboratory website (www.statelab.ie).
- 3.4 Business plans are produced every year by each section, in consultation with section staff, based on the current Strategy Statement. These plans document the specific actions required to achieve the goals identified in the Strategy Statement and specify outputs and targets for each action.
- 3.5 Each year, through the Performance Management and Development System (PMDS), the role profile of each staff member is documented based on the current business plan for the section. Objectives, key deliverables, performance indicators and critical success factors are identified. Progress in achieving these objectives is monitored at interim review meetings. This ensures that staff are aware of the relevance and importance of their activities and how they contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the organisation.
- 3.6 Progress in achieving the actions defined in each business plan and the goals defined in the Strategy Statement is monitored by the MB and discussed at the MB / Section Manager meetings at regular intervals. Specific progress in achieving the goals set out in the Strategy Statement is also described each year in the annual report of the laboratory, available on the laboratory website
- 3.7 The laboratory has also published a Customer Charter setting out service standard commitments. A report on the performance of the laboratory against the commitments contained in the Charter is included in the annual report. The Customer Charter is available on the laboratory website.

3.8 The management system and associated process implemented in the laboratory, as described above, is designed to ensure that appropriate communication processes are in place so that all staff are made aware of the overall strategic goals and specific objectives of the organisation and of their role in achieving these goals. It also ensures that progress in achieving these goals and objectives is monitored, reviewed and reported on at regular intervals. In addition, it provides the means for top management to communicate the importance of meeting customer, statutory and regulatory requirements to all staff. Furthermore, it provides evidence of the commitment of top management to the development and implementation of the management system and to continually improving its effectiveness. Finally, it provides top management with a mechanism to ensure that the integrity of the management system is maintained when changes to the management system are planned and implemented.