EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

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Human Medicines Evaluation Division

Mandate, objectives and rules of procedure for the Inter-Committee Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) for Oncology

1. Legal basis

- Article 56(2) of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, the Committees (CHMP, CVMP) may establish SAGs in connection with the evaluation of specific types of medicinal products or treatments, to which the Committee may delegate certain tasks associated with drawing up the scientific opinions;
- Article 61(8) of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, the Committees shall in particular lay down procedures relating to working parties and SAGs;
- Article 62(1) of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, the applicant may request that the Committee consult a scientific advisory group in connection with the re-examination of its opinion;
- Article 78(2) of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, SAGs shall in general matters establish contacts, on an advisory basis, with parties concerned with the use of medicinal products, in particular patient organisations and heath care professionals' associations relevant to the of the indication of the medicinal product concerned;
- Article 80 of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, the internal rules and procedures of the Agency, its committees and its working groups shall be made available to the public at the Agency and on the Internet;
- Article 64(2) of Parliament and Council Regulation (EC) No 726/2004 of 30 April 2004, the EMA Executive Director shall be responsible for ensuring appropriate coordination between the EMA scientific committees.

2. General considerations

The CHMP, following consultation of the Scientific Coordination Board (see Definitions), shall establish the Inter-Committee SAG for Oncology (hereinafter referred to as the SAG) and adopt its Core Member composition and Rules of Procedure.

The SAG is established to deliver answers, on a consultative basis, to specific questions about issues related to paediatric and adult clinical oncology and haematology relevant to the work of the Agency,

7 Westferry Circus ● Canary Wharf ● London E14 4HB ● United Kingdom
Telephone +44 (0)20 7418 8400 **Facsimile** +44 (0)20 7418 8613
E-mail info@ema.europa.eu **Website** www.ema.europa.eu
An agency of the European Union

following a specific request for advice. The Committees, while taking into account the position expressed by the SAG, remain responsible for their final opinion.

Each Committee may initiate a request for SAG advice on its own initiative, or jointly with other relevant Committee(s). The Committee(s) initiating a request are hereinafter referred to as the "initiating" Committee(s). It is the responsibility of the initiating Committee(s) to care for the coordination with the other Committee(s) concerned (see EMA POLICY/0009).

The initiating Committee(s) shall be responsible for any practical aspects related to the SAG request they have initiated, including the adoption of the detailed questions, the need for Additional Experts, and the possibility for a hearing with companies or third parties.

In case of disagreement between Committees, meetings to discuss coordination issues may be convened between chairs as necessary (see EMA POLICY/0009).

In order to ensure consistent decisions with regard to the need of arranging a SAG meeting and to facilitate its adequate organisation, the need for arranging meetings should be considered in accordance with Committee guidelines on the need to convene a SAG, where appropriate.

3. Mandate and objectives

The SAG is established to provide an independent recommendation on scientific and technical matters related to products under evaluation through centralised regulatory procedures and Referrals or any other scientific issue relevant to the work of the Committees.

The SAG could also be consulted through one of the Committees on scientific questions by the Commission (e.g. in collaboration with the WHO).

Working Parties and Drafting Groups may request a Committee to get scientific input on guidelines from the SAG.

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The SAG has the opportunity to identify scientific issues that may need further discussion within the SAG, subject to the agreement by the relevant Committee(s).

4. Composition and rules of participation

The SAG is composed of experts selected according to their specific expertise. The SAG Core Members shall have proven expertise in the fields of clinical oncology, haematological oncology, paediatric oncology, or biostatistics.

The SAG will comprise a group of Core Members, which ensure continuity and consistency within the SAG, and Additional Experts who may be called upon to participate to a given meeting or series of meetings on a specific issue about which they have relevant professional education, training and experience, therefore bringing additional expertise in specific domains on a case-by-case basis.

The CHMP, having consulted with the Scientific Coordination Board, shall adopt a list of SAG Core Members selected for their clinical and technical expertise and independence in the field of interest.

Where necessary, for individual meetings the Core Members will be complemented by Additional Experts to ensure sufficient number and relevant expertise in the field to be discussed.

Patient and consumer representatives may be appointed to attend the SAG meeting as core members or Additional Experts, where appropriate. The appointment of patient and consumer representatives follows the same process of appointment as for core members and Additional Experts, as appropriate.

Members of the SAG will be independent experts and will not be members of any EMA Committee nor EMA or European National Competent Authorities (NCA) staff.

Experts from non-EEA countries may also be appointed.

EMA's Committees and Working Parties members, other than the concerned (Co) Rapporteurs, assessors from NCAs, visiting experts and regulators from non-EEA countries under confidentiality agreement with the Agency may participate as observers and their presence should be notified to the relevant Committee(s).

The EMA policy on conflicts of interests (EMA POLICY/0044) and EMA Code of Conduct on confidentiality (section 6) apply to all SAG core members and Additional Experts.

4.1. Appointment of the core members

Twelve (12) core members will be selected for their clinical or technical expertise and independence in the field of interest and will be nominated for a period of 3 years.

The group of Core Members should reflect a balanced composition of scientific expertise and therefore members should have diverse professional education, training and experience. The composition of the core group should, as far as possible, reflect different schools of thinking or European therapeutic practices.

An expert in clinical trials methodology and biostatistics should always be one of the core members and may be appointed to more than one SAG.

The inclusion of experts on advanced therapies should be considered.

The Committee members, SAG secretariat, and NCAs will be asked to propose experts to be core members of the SAG. In order to get a list of candidates, learned societies can be contacted by the SAG secretariat. For the establishment of a new SAG or the renewal of the mandate of an existing SAG a public call for expression of interests may be launched by the Agency. The SAG Secretariat will collect all proposals. The CHMP and the SAG secretariat will propose a first list of Core Members.

The Scientific Coordination Board will discuss this first proposal and may recommend changes to ensure that the right balance of expertise is available among the Core Members, based on the expected fields and populations relevant for upcoming SAG discussions.

The CHMP, having considered any recommendations from the Scientific Coordination Board, will adopt the final list of Core Members.

The CHMP will appoint a SAG Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson, based on a proposal from the SAG.

Core members will be included in the EMA Experts Database and provide updated Declarations of Interest according to EMA Policy.

The core members of the SAG shall commit to active participation in the activities of the group. Should a member fail to attend for any reason for more than 3 meetings in less than 2 years (or attend less than 50% of the meetings during the same period), replacement of the member will be considered by the Scientific Coordination Board.

5. Meeting frequency

The SAG will meet on the request by the initiating Committee(s). The SAG Secretariat should schedule a frequent number of meetings, where applicable.

6. Terms of duration of the sag

The duration of the SAG activity will be decided on by the CHMP.

7. Rules of procedure

The conclusions of the SAG meeting should be reflected in the "Answers and Comments to the Committee(s)" document.

7.1. Responsibilities of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson

7.1.1. The Chairperson, and in his/her absence the Vice-Chairperson, is responsible for the efficient conduct of the business of the SAG and shall in particular:

- Propose to the Committees Additional Experts to a SAG meeting according to expertise needed;
- Plan the work of the SAG meetings, together with the SAG secretariat;
- Monitor, together with the SAG secretariat, that the mandate and rules of procedure are followed;
- Ensure that at the beginning of each meeting any potential conflict of interest is declared;
- Assume responsibility for the conduct and running of the meetings;
- Ensure that the Committees' Questions for the SAG and any additional topics of the agenda are discussed;
- Ensure that all SAG members have the opportunity to express their views;
- Before the end of each meeting, summarise the conclusions of the SAG on each question raised by the Committees for inclusion in the SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s). The Chairperson should get formal verbal agreement from the SAG members on the main conclusions and answers to the Committee(s). This summary will be the content of the debriefing to the applicant;
- Ensure that scientific grounds are adequately reflected in the SAG Answer and Comments document;
- In case consensus can not be reached, ensure that all the views expressed by the SAG members are reflected and justified in the SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s);
- Provide feedback from the SAG discussions including divergent views to the Committee(s) plenary meeting, where requested.

7.1.2. The Vice-Chairperson will deputise for the Chairperson when the latter is unable to undertake all or part of the above-listed responsibilities. On such occasions, the Chairperson will seek the agreement of the Vice-Chairperson as early as possible, and shall inform the SAG secretariat immediately, in particular, when it concerns chairing an entire meeting. In case the Vice-Chairperson is unable to undertake the delegated responsibilities, the Scientific Secretary will propose a member from the SAG core group as acting chairperson with the agreement of the SAG.

7.2. Election of Chairperson and vice Chairperson

7.2.1. Core members of the SAG shall elect one of its core members to be proposed to the CHMP as Chairperson for the SAG and one as Vice-Chairperson, respectively. The CHMP thereafter appoints the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson. The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson of the SAG shall be elected for a term of three years, which may be renewed once. Regardless of the time of election, the Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson shall be appointed for the remaining term of the SAG should this be shorter than 3 years.

7.2.2. Candidatures for Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson should be expressed verbally or in writing to the SAG secretariat before or at the start of the SAG meeting at which the election is to take place. To fulfil the function as Chairperson, the candidate should have a very low potential for conflict of interest with regard to products envisioned to be discussed.

7.2.3. Candidates shall submit a brief résumé in support of their candidature at the time of applying for it.

7.2.4. The election of the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson shall be by absolute majority of the core members of the SAG (i.e. favourable votes by at least half of the total number of the SAG members eligible to vote plus one) and by secret ballot. If absolute majority is not reached, the candidate(s) with the lowest number of favourable votes shall withdraw. In case of a tie in the decisive round, another round is organised with two remaining candidates. If, at the decisive round, the candidate with the highest number of votes does not get an absolute majority, a further round of voting is organised with this candidate only, where he/she needs favourable votes by at least half of the total number of SAG core members eligible to vote plus one, to be elected Chairperson or Vice-Chairperson, as the case may be.

7.2.5. In the event of resignation of the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson shall take the chair until a new election is convened.

7.3. Organisation of meetings and reporting arrangements

7.3.1. A request for SAG advice may be initiated by one or more Committee(s). Requests shall be made to the SAG Secretariat.

The request for SAG advice will be communicated to other Committees secretariats, together with dates and deadlines for Additional Expert proposal.

Any Committee may request to be considered as initiating Committee following a request for SAG advice.

All initiating Committees will share responsibilities related to requesting a SAG.

The SAG has the opportunity to identify scientific issues that may need further discussion within the SAG, subject to the agreement by one or more the Committees. All Committees will be informed of any such proposal.

7.3.2. The SAG shall meet at the Agency. Participation by video/teleconference is facilitated.

7.3.3. The dates of meetings are decided on by the SAG Secretariat in agreement with the SAG Chairperson and the CHMP.

7.3.4. The meetings will be held and the Answers and Comments document will be in English.

7.3.5. The draft agenda for every meeting shall be circulated, together with the relating documents, by the SAG secretariat, in consultation with the Chairperson, in good time before the meeting.

7.3.6. The list of participating experts shall be made available by the SAG secretariat to the company/applicant 48 hours before the SAG meeting, upon request.

7.3.7. When a member of the SAG is unable to participate in a meeting, part of a meeting, or discussion of a topic due to conflict of interest, he/she must inform the Secretariat in advance.

7.3.8. The proposal for a SAG meeting and the conduct and objectives of such a SAG meeting shall particularly consider the following points:

- Rapporteurs or Committee members shall comment on the potential need for a SAG meeting as early as possible, such as at the time of the list of questions, list of outstanding issues or request for supplementary information during the centralised procedure. In addition, the company/applicant may request that the Committee consult a SAG in connection with the re-examination of its opinion.
- The decision to convene a SAG meeting is taken by the initiating Committee(s).
- The initiating Committee(s), other Committees, the SAG Chairperson, and SAG Secretariat may propose SAG Additional Experts in accordance with section 4 of the present rules. The list of Additional Experts will be considered formally adopted when all initiating Committee(s) have agreed on the list. In case of disagreement between Committees, meetings to discuss coordination issues may be convened between chairs as necessary (see EMA POLICY/0009).
- The SAG Secretary shall liaise with the SAG Chairperson to propose the agenda and arrangements for the meeting.
- The SAG Secretariat will invite participants, naming the products and companies concerned in the List of Questions for the SAG, and request updated declarations of conflict of interest, according to EMA POLICY/0044.
- Provided that confidentiality agreements are signed, the SAG Secretary will ensure that the List of Questions for the SAG adopted by the Committee(s) and all relevant supporting documents, including the (Co)Rapporteurs Assessment Reports, are sent to the SAG members in good time before the meeting.
- The initiating Committee(s) Rapporteur and the Co-Rapporteur (medicinal products), the Working Party (Co)Rapporteur (guidelines) or the scientific advice Co-ordinators shall be invited to attend the SAG meeting, to present the List of Questions and to provide any additional information to the SAG. Where more than one Committee is involved, all rapporteurs will be given the opportunity to provide relevant background information to the List of Questions to the SAG, including their respective Committee views and any rapporteurs' views on the issues to be discussed.
- Observers are not entitled to participate in the SAG discussions, but they can express their point of view on the request of the SAG Chairperson.
- (Co)-Rapporteurs could ask to the SAG Chair that one or more of their assessors intervene in the discussion.

- The company/applicant or a third party may be invited to provide an oral explanation in front of the SAG following agreement from the initiating Committee(s) and they will attend the (Co)-Rapporteur' presentations.
- The SAG shall not make conclusions during or after these presentations in the presence of the company or any third party.
- A debriefing meeting with the company will occur after the end of the SAG meeting. It will be led by the SAG Chair and the (Co)-Rapporteur will contribute. The SAG Secretary will ensure that what is said at debriefing corresponds to the conclusions of the discussion and is later on well reflected in the SAG answers and comments to the Committee(s). During the debriefing with companies, any regulatory discussion on the subsequent steps in the procedure should not be carried out, but a separate meeting can be arranged by the (Co)Rapporteurs and the EMA product team following the debriefing.
- The SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s) will contain answers to the List of Questions for the SAG, and a justification for each answer. Where consensus cannot be reached on an answer, the conclusion reached by the majority together with any divergent positions within the SAG will be noted and explained in the SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s). Post meeting comments from experts changing the responses agreed during the meeting should not be allowed.
- The SAG Secretary and Chairperson will be responsible for finalising the SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s) to be adopted by the SAG and circulated to all involved Committees for information.
- The draft "SAG Answer and Comments to the Committee(s)" relating to specific product(s) will be released to the concerned company.
- The List of Questions for the SAG, and the SAG Answers and Comments to the Committee(s) shall be reflected in the Committee(s) Assessment Reports, as appropriate, and thus appended to the relevant Committees' opinion, where applicable. If, on request by a company the Committee has consulted a SAG in connection with the re-examination of its opinion, the views of the SAG should also be included in the relevant Assessment Report(s) adopted by the Committee(s).
- Whenever possible, the Chairperson of the SAG shall be available during a relevant Committee(s) meeting, to provide feedback from the SAG discussions including divergent views. The use of teleconference and videoconference is encouraged.

7.4. Participation of Additional Experts in SAG meetings

- All relevant Committees, SAG Chair and the SAG Secretariat and NCAs will be requested to make proposals for Additional Experts on the basis of their expertise in the therapeutic area and population to be covered by the particular SAG meeting, according to the List of Questions for the SAG. For example, if the questions to the SAG raised by the CHMP refer to paediatric issues, the PDCO will be requested to propose Additional Experts.
- In order to prepare a list of candidates, SAG secretariat could consult learned societies.
- One or more patient representatives may be appointed as Additional Experts.
- The appointment of Additional Experts, the inclusion of new experts and maintenance of experts in the Experts Database will follow the Procedural advice on inclusion and updating of experts in the European Medicines Agency's Experts database (EMA/114108/2011).

- Committees may draw up Groups of Additional Experts selected for their clinical and technical expertise in a particular area to serve as potential additional members to the SAG. The lists of experts belonging to the Groups of Additional Experts may be maintained by the SAG Secretariat.

7.5. Guarantees of independence

7.5.1. The experts referred to above shall not have any direct interests in the pharmaceutical industry, which could affect their impartiality. They shall undertake to act in the public interest and in an independent manner, and shall make an annual declaration of their interests. All reported interests that could relate to the pharmaceutical industry, shall be accessible to the public in accordance with EMA POLICY/0044.

7.5.2. Experts attending the SAG meetings shall declare at the beginning of each meeting any specific interests, which could be considered to be prejudicial to their independence with respect to the points of the agenda.

7.5.3. The specific provisions for handling declaration of interests and confidentiality undertakings as defined in the EMA POLICY/0044, are applicable to members of the SAG and experts participating in the activities of the SAG.

7.5.4. The experts shall not accept any instructions incompatible with the tasks incumbent upon them within the Agency from Member States. It is essential for these tasks to remain strictly scientific in nature.

7.5.5. The same principles apply to observers.

7.6. Code of conduct

Experts participating in the EMA's activities shall abide by the principles set out in the EMA Code of Conduct.

7.7. SAG secretariat

7.7.1. Under the authority of the Executive Director, the SAG secretariat shall provide scientific, technical, and administrative support to the SAG. This includes the following:

- Provide technical and scientific support to the SAG;
- Provide legal and regulatory support to the SAG;
- Process and evaluate any declared interests according to the standard operating procedures on the arrangements for handling and evaluating of conflicts of interests for EMA scientific meetings (SOP/EMA/0126, SOP/EMA/0040), in accordance with EMA POLICY/0044;
- Prepare in consultation with the Chairperson the Answers and Comments document to be conveyed to the Committee(s);
- Prepare and co-ordinate the work of the SAG in consultation with the Chairperson;
- Organise meetings of the SAG and ensure timely circulation of meeting documents;
- At relevant time-points, the Committees or their secretariats may provide feedback through the SAG Secretariat about any important outcome or discussion that should be brought to the attention of the SAG Core Members and Additional Experts for information (in particular, but not limited to, as regards to topics for which a SAG recommendation has been sought);

- Ensure adequate co-ordination of the work carried out within the SAG and as relevant with the Committees and their working parties;
- Encourage scientific and regulatory consistency of the recommendations of the SAG in cooperation with the Chairperson;
- Contribute to the debriefing meetings with the company/applicant.

7.7.2. The Executive Director of the Agency, other Agency staff and representatives of the Commission, may attend SAG meetings as observers.

7.8. Contacts with Interested Parties

7.8.1. The SAG will establish contacts in agreement with the Committee(s), on an advisory basis, with parties concerned with the use of medicinal products, in particular patients' organisations and health-care professionals' associations.

7.8.2. When considered appropriate by the Committee(s), oral presentations by interested parties can be made during SAG meetings. The SAG may also meet with interested parties to discuss general matters or specific scientific issues with the agreement of the Committee(s) and under specific conditions to be agreed by the Committee(s).

7.8.3. The SAG shall neither conduct deliberations nor reach any formal decisions in the presence of members of interested parties.

7.9. General Provisions

The Members of the SAG as well as observers and all experts shall be bound, even after the cessation of their duties, not to disclose any information, which, by its nature, must be covered by individual professional secrecy. The EMEA Guidance on Confidentiality and Discretion (EMEA Code of Conduct, EMEA/6470/03/2368) applies.

SAG members when participating in meetings or other *fora* on behalf of the Committee(s), shall ensure that the views expressed are those of the Committee(s). When they are participating not on behalf of a Committee(s), they shall make clear that the views expressed are their own. The EMA Policy on Representation of EMEA Scientific Committees by Its Members (EMEA/231477/2005) applies to SAG Core Members and Additional Experts.

Entry into force: This Rules of Procedure shall enter into force 90 days following CHMP adoption.

8. Definitions

Committee: EMA's Committees (CHMP, PRAC, CVMP, COMP, HMPC, PDCO, CAT) and SAWP.

SAG Secretariat: EMA secretariat function responsible for organisational aspects and co-ordination. The secretariat includes a SAG Secretary.

SAG Core Members: Experts selected for their clinical and technical expertise and independence, which are consulted for every SAG recommendation.

SAG Additional Experts: Experts selected for their clinical and technical expertise in a specific area, based on the request for SAG recommendation, and independence, which are on an *ad hoc* basis for a specific request for SAG recommendation.

Groups of Additional Experts: SAG Additional Experts selected for their clinical and technical expertise in a particular area (e.g., paediatric oncology, haematology, breast cancer) for which recurrent requests for SAG recommendation are expected. The groups may serve as a pool for selecting Additional Experts.

Scientific Coordination Board: This EMA group, which is chaired by the Agency's Executive Director, is composed of the chairs of the Agency's scientific committees, the scientific advice working parties and relevant senior management staff from the Agency's secretariat.

9. Abbreviations

CAT	Committee for Advanced Therapies
CHMP	Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use
COMP	Committee for Orphan Medicinal Products
CVMP	Committee for Medicinal Products for Veterinary Use
EMA	European Medicines Agency
HMPC	Committee on Herbal Medicinal Products
PDCO	Paediatric Committee
PRAC	Pharmacovigilance Risk Assessment Committee
SAG	Scientific Advisory Group
SAWP	Scientific Advice Working Party
WHO	World Health Oganization