

## GUIDELINE

**Subject: Turnaround Time in Anatomical Pathology**  
**Approval Date: May 2015, April 2022**  
**Review Date: March 2026**  
**Review by: Anatomical Pathology Advisory Committee**  
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Turnaround Time is broadly defined as the time between specimen receipt by the laboratory and the issuing of the final Pathologist's report.

Assessment of Turnaround Time should account for variable fixation and processing duration. Specimens are of a heterogeneous nature, varying from biopsy fragments less than a millimetre across to formal organ or limb resections. Formalin fixation is required for most specimens and some will also require decalcification prior to dissection and processing. Small biopsies will often be fixed by the time the specimen is received in the laboratory, while larger specimens require longer fixation before processing. Specimens for immunofluorescence, flow cytometry and frozen section are required to be submitted fresh prior to formalin fixation.

Assessment of Turnaround Time should account for additional investigation using histochemical, immunohistochemical, electron microscopic, genetic and other methods.

Assessment of Turnaround Time should account for complex cases requiring wider collegial, expert and multidisciplinary consultation.

Quality and safety considerations should always take precedence over expectations regarding Turnaround Time.

The Pathology Request-Test-Report Cycle Guideline RCPA 8/2004 supports timely communication with clinicians of interim or provisional diagnostic information when unexpected, life threatening or difficult diagnoses are identified and as a means of informing clinicians and patients of the progress leading to a final Pathologist's report.

In the context of the considerations above the RCPA supports Turnaround Times for final Pathologist's reports being made available to clinicians as follows: 80% of specimens within 5 working days, 90% within 10 working days and 98% within 15 working days.