



J Grove  
request-772797-910b3402@whatdotheyknow.com

Our Reference: 202100222153

Your Reference: The current Cycle Threshold (Ct) value(s) for a positive COVID-19 test

16 September 2021

Dear J Grove,

I have now completed my review of our response to your request under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) of 09 July 2021.

I have been asked to look at your request afresh, to decide whether the original response should be confirmed, with or without modifications, as appropriate, or that a fresh decision should be substituted. I can confirm that I was not involved in the handling or decision-making around the original response.

#### Your request

You asked for:

As a FOISA 2002 request what is the currently recorded Cycle Threshold (Ct) value (or values) that the Scottish Government holds for the interpretation of a positive polymerase chain reaction (PCR) COVID-19 test result?

#### Review response

I have concluded that the original decision should be confirmed, without modifications.

In conducting my review, I have reconsidered the circumstances of the case afresh. I can confirm that the Scottish Government does not direct diagnostic laboratories and does not require reporting to Scottish Government of the details of how diagnostic testing is undertaken. It is up to the virologists at the diagnostic labs to interpret the result of the test that is reported, and where a test looks to be weak positive then there are protocols in place to retest.

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I have therefore determined that we were entitled to respond to your request under section 17(1) of FOISA notifying you that the Scottish Government does not have the information you have requested.

More details of how PCR testing is undertaken can be found on the Public Health Scotland website:

[COVID-19 - laboratory testing frequently asked questions - version 3.2 - COVID-19 - laboratory testing frequently asked questions - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

The sensitivity and specificity values depend on a number of factors, including the assay used, the population sampled, how the sample is taken and stored, type of sample and stage of infection. These factors are variable at different periods of time, and across different laboratories and regions of Scotland. It is therefore not possible to give one percentage value which is representative of the sensitivity or specificity value of the PCR test in Scotland.

There is a reflex testing procedure in place for Scotland which was put in place to reduce the likelihood of false positive results. Public Health Scotland have published guidance for sampling and laboratory investigations for COVID-19:

[COVID-19 - guidance for sampling and laboratory investigations - version 8.3 - COVID-19 - guidance for sampling and laboratory investigations - Publications - Public Health Scotland](#)

If you are unhappy with the outcome of this review you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner about our decision within 6 months of receiving this letter. Information on how to make an appeal, along with an application form, is available on the Commissioner's website at:

[Appealing to the Scottish Information Commissioner \(itspublicknowledge.info\)](https://itspublicknowledge.info)

You can also contact the Commissioner:

The Scottish Information Commissioner  
Kinburn Castle  
Doubledykes Road  
St Andrews  
Fife  
KY16 9DS

Yours sincerely



Roderick Duncan  
**CSUR : Outbreak Management**

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