

WHO Guidelines on submission of documentation for the procedure for prequalification of similar biotechnological products

Preparation of product dossiers in common technical document format

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1. Introduction

The World Health Organization (WHO) Prequalification programme is managed by the WHO department of Regulation and Prequalification (RPQ) to provide United Nations agencies and WHO Member States with guidance on the acceptability, in principle, of medicines, vaccines, in vitro diagnostics, immunization and other medical devices, and vector control products for procurement by such agencies and Member States.

Accordingly, for the purpose of providing guidance to interested United Nations agencies and WHO Member States in their procurement decisions, WHO undertakes a procedure for prequalification of eligible biotherapeutic products (i.e. listed in invitations for EOI published on the WHO web site), to evaluate whether candidate products: (a) meet WHO technical guidance on quality, safety and efficacy or performance, including compliance with WHO's recommended standards for good clinical practice (GCP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), good laboratory practices (GLP) and good distribution practices (GDP); (b) meet relevant operational packaging and presentation specifications; and (c) adhere to the principles laid out in the WHO guidelines on the international packaging and shipping of vaccines (1).

Candidate medicines, vaccines, in vitro diagnostics, immunization and other medical devices and vector control products which are found by WHO to meet its recommended standards of quality, safety and efficacy will be included in the WHO list of prequalified products (as manufactured at the specified manufacturing sites) which are considered to be acceptable, in principle, for procurement by United Nations agencies and WHO Member States. However, any United Nations agencies and/or WHO Member States using information from the WHO list of prequalified products should nevertheless perform additional steps of qualification prior to procuring any products included in such list. Such steps include, but are not limited to, ensuring the supplier's financial stability and standing, as well as its ability to supply the required quantities of the product, the security of the supply chain, pre-shipment quality control and other relevant aspects.

Inclusion in WHO's list of prequalified products does not imply: (a) any approval by WHO of the product and/or manufacturing sites in question (which is the sole prerogative of national authorities), or (b) any endorsement or warranty by WHO of the fitness of any product for a particular purpose, including its safety and/or efficacy in the treatment of any specific diseases, or (c) any warrant that the products have obtained regulatory approval for their specified use or any other use in any country of the world, or that their use is otherwise in accordance with the national laws and regulations of any country, including but not limited to patent laws.

Applicants, manufacturers and/or any other party may not use, for any commercial or promotional purposes: (i) the results of the prequalification assessment; (ii) the participation in the WHO prequalification assessment process; (iii) the inclusion of any product in the WHO list of prequalified products; and/or (iv) the WHO's name, acronym or emblem. Additionally, WHO will not accept any liability or responsibility whatsoever for any injury, death, loss, damage or other prejudice of any kind that may arise as a result of or in connection with the procurement, distribution and/or use of any product as to which WHO has published the prequalification assessment results and/or which is or has been included in the WHO list of prequalified products.

2. Objective

In recent years, a great number of biotherapeutic products (BTPs) have demonstrated success in treating many life-threatening chronic diseases. In May 2014, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted Resolution WHA67.21 (2) on "Access to biotherapeutic products, including similar biotherapeutic products, and ensuring their quality, safety and efficacy".

Considering the value that BTPs can provide and the fact that some BTPs have already been listed in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines, WHO's RPQ¹ is exploring options to facilitate access to BTPs, including similar biotherapeutic products (SBPs), at affordable prices. Given that BTPs, including the corresponding SBPs, are highly complex and that the regulatory assessment of those products according to internationally acceptable guidelines and standards can be challenging in some countries, WHO's Prequalification Programme has developed a WHO a procedure for prequalification of biotherapeutic products including their corresponding SBPs following either one of two pathways::

1) full assessment of SBPs that have been registered by non-SRAs (based on a Reference biotherapeutic product (RBP) approved by a SRA) (hereinafter referred to as "Full Assessment"); and

2) abridged assessment of BTPs, or the corresponding SBPs as applicable, that have been approved by stringent regulatory authorities (SRAs) (3) and marketed in the country of registration (hereinafter referred to as "Abridged Assessment").

The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the global use of Common Technical Document (CTD) guideline (8, 9, 10, 11) and its format developed by the International Council for Harmonisation (ICH). Many manufacturers have a prepared product dossier in CTD format which they have used to register a product in one or more countries. Furthermore many countries that import prequalified medicinal products require the submission of a product dossier in CTD format for registration of the products.

3. Scope

These guidelines are intended to assist applicants with the submission of documentation for prequalification of SBPs that have been registered by non-SRAs (based on a RBP approved by a SRA).

These guidelines primarily addresses the organization of the information to be presented in PDs for SBPs as defined above. They are generally not intended to indicate what studies are required. They merely indicate an appropriate format for the data that have been acquired.

These guidelines are also intended to fully adopt the modular format of the CTD, as developed by ICH; and to provide guidance on the location of regional information (Module 1) and other general data requirements. Applicants should not modify the overall organization of the CTD as outlined in the guidelines.

4. General procedure and data requirements

These guidelines present the agreed-upon common format for the preparation of a well-structured CTD for PDs that will be submitted to WHO. A common format for the technical documentation significantly reduces the time and resources needed to compile PDs for the prequalification of SBPs and eases the preparation of electronic submissions.

Assessments and communication with the applicant are facilitated by a standard document containing common elements. In addition, exchange of regulatory information between national regulatory authorities (NRAs) and with WHO are simplified.

These guidelines should be read in conjunction with other applicable WHO and ICH reference

¹ RPQ operates in the Division of Access to Medicines and Health Products [MHP].

documents and guidelines that provide further guidance and recommendations on the topic-specific content requirements for SBPs, notably:

- Guidelines on evaluation of similar biotherapeutic products (5, 6);
- Guidelines on evaluation of monoclonal antibodies as similar biotherapeutic products (7);
- WHO Guidelines on the quality, safety and efficacy of biotherapeutic protein products prepared by recombinant DNA technology and (8)
- WHO guidelines on the international packaging and shipping of vaccines, WHO/IVB/05.23 (1)

5. Glossary

The definitions given below apply to the terms used in this pilot procedure and should be read in conjunction with the “*WHO Pilot Procedure for Prequalification of BTPs or their corresponding SBPs*”(14) and “*WHO Guidelines on submission of documentation for the procedure for prequalification of biotherapeutic products or their corresponding similar biotherapeutic products approved by stringent regulatory authorities*”(3) published on the WHO website. Terms may have different meanings in other contexts.

Applicant

The person or entity who, by the deadline mentioned in an invitation for expressions of interest (EOI), submits an EOI to participate in the WHO pilot procedure for prequalification of: (i) BTPs, or the corresponding SBPs, that have been approved by SRAs, or (ii) SBPs that have been approved by non-SRAs (based on a RBP approved by a SRA)), together with the required documentation on such product(s).

Comparability exercise or Similarity exercise

Head-to-head comparison of a biotherapeutic product with a licensed reference biotherapeutic product (RBP) with the goal of establishing similarity in quality, safety and efficacy. Products should be compared in the same study using the same procedures.

Contract research organization (CRO)

An organization (commercial, academic or other) to which an applicant may have transferred some of its tasks and obligations in relation to the conduct of clinical studies with the product submitted to WHO for assessment under the above-mentioned procedure.

Drug product (DP)

A pharmaceutical product type that contains a drug substance, generally in association with excipients. The dosage form in the final immediate packaging intended for marketing.

Drug substance (DS)

The active pharmaceutical ingredient and associated molecules that may be subsequently formulated, with excipients, to produce the drug product. Any substance or mixture of substances intended to be used in the manufacture of a drug (medicinal) product and that, when used in the production of a drug, becomes an active ingredient of the drug product. Such substances are intended to furnish pharmacological activity or other direct effect in the diagnosis, cure, mitigation, treatment, or prevention of disease or to affect the structure and function of the body.

Head-to-head comparison

Direct comparison of the properties of the SBP with the RBP in the same study.

Immunogenicity

The ability of a substance to trigger an immune response or reaction (e.g. development of specific antibodies, T cell response, allergic or anaphylactic reaction).

Impurity

Any component present in the drug substance or drug product that is not the desired product, a product-related substance, or excipient including buffer components. It may be either process- or product-related.

Invitation for expressions of interest (EOIs)

Invitation calling upon interested parties (e.g. manufacturers or other applicants) to submit an expression of interest (EOI) to WHO by a specified deadline for the purpose of participating in the WHO prequalification procedure in respect of the product(s) listed in the invitation. Such an EOI should be accompanied by the required documentation on the product(s) in question.

Manufacturer

Any person or legal entity engaged in the manufacture of a product subject to marketing authorization or licensure. The term “manufacturer” also includes any person or legal entity that is an applicant or holder of a marketing authorization or product licence where the applicant assumes responsibility for compliance with the applicable product and other established standards.

Originator Product

BTP licensed and approved by an SRA on the basis of a full dossier with comprehensive data on non-clinical and clinical studies.

Prequalification

Standardized prequalification procedure of WHO to assess, in principle, whether candidate BTP or SBP products, as applicable: (a) meet WHO technical guidance on quality, safety and efficacy, including compliance with WHO’s recommended standards for good clinical practice (GCP), good manufacturing practices (GMP), good laboratory practices (GLP) and good distribution practices (GDP); (b) adhere to the principles laid out in the WHO guidelines on the international packaging and shipping of vaccines (1); and (c) meet relevant operational packaging and presentation specifications, for the purpose of providing guidance to interested United Nations agencies and WHO Member States in their procurement decisions. United Nations agencies and WHO Member States using information resulting from the WHO prequalification should perform additional steps of qualification prior to purchasing such products, including ensuring financial stability and standing of the supplier, ability to supply the required quantities, security of the supply chain, pre-shipment quality control and other related aspects, including the registration status of the products to be procured.

Reference biotherapeutic product (RBP)

A reference biotherapeutic product that: (a) has been licensed and approved by an SRA on the basis of a full dossier with comprehensive data on non-clinical and clinical studies; and (b) is used as the comparator for head-to-head comparability studies with the SBP in order to show similarity in terms of quality, safety and efficacy. This definition does not refer to measurement standards such as international, pharmacopoeial, or national standards or reference standards.

Risk management plan

A detailed description of the activities that continuously ensure patients’ safety and their benefit from a medicinal ingredient. A risk management plan includes:

- safety specifications, which summarize the known and potential safety issues and missing information about the rDNA-derived biotherapeutic;

- a pharmacovigilance plan to further evaluate important known or potential safety concerns and to provide post-marketing data where relevant information is missing;
- a risk minimization plan, which provides proposals on how to minimize any identified or potential safety risk.

Similarity

Absence of a relevant difference in the parameter of interest. A difference that expected to induce a difference in clinical effect, such as better impurity profile, could be accepted. No differences exist that are expected to induce impact on clinical activities based on a comparability or similarity exercise.

Similar biotherapeutic product (SBP)

A biotherapeutic product that is similar in terms of quality, safety and efficacy to a reference biotherapeutic product.

Stringent regulatory authority² (SRA)

A regulatory authority which is:

- a. a member of the International Council for Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Pharmaceuticals for Human Use (ICH), being the European Commission, the US Food and Drug Administration and the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare of Japan also represented by the Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency; or
- b. an ICH observer, being the European Free Trade Association, as represented by Swissmedic, and Health Canada (as before 23 October 2015); or
- c. a regulatory authority associated with an ICH member through a legally-binding, mutual recognition agreement, including Australia, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway (as before 23 October 2015).

² For the purpose of WHO pilot procedure, this interim definition taken from the “WHO Technical Report Series TRS 1003, Fifty-first Report of the WHO Expert Committee on Specifications for Pharmaceutical Preparations” is used.

Note: This interim definition is currently being revised.

6. Organization of a product dossier for an SBP in CTD format

The CTD is organized into five modules. Module 1 is region-specific. Modules 2, 3, 4 and 5 are intended to be common for all regions. Conformance with these guidelines facilitates the provision of Modules 2, 3, 4 and 5 in a format acceptable to WHO and to regulatory authorities.

This section provides an overview of module contents for an SBP in greater detail.

Module 1: Administrative information and prescribing information

- This module should contain documents specific to WHO and each region; for example, application forms or the proposed label for use in the region. The content and format of this module can be specified by WHO and the relevant regulatory authorities.
- A summary of the similarity information should be provided according to WHO's applicable guidelines on SBP (5, 6, 7).
- Risk management plan and methods used to report adverse events, safety specification, pharmacovigilance plan, post-marketing safety reports according to the WHO Guidelines on evaluation of similar biotherapeutic products (5, 6) should also be provided.
- WHO prequalification-specific addendum to the risk management plan (RMP) as detailed in PQ-BTP web page.

Module 2: CTD summaries

- This Module should begin with a general introduction to the SBP, including its pharmacological class, mode of action and proposed clinical use. In general, the Introduction should not exceed one page.
- A summary of the quality information should be provided according to WHO's applicable guidelines on SBPs (5, 6,7).
- The organization of these summaries is described in Guidelines for ICH M4, M4Q, M4S and M4E (9, 10, 11, 12,13).

Module 3: Quality

- Information on manufacturing and quality should be presented in the structured format described in ICH M4Q (9). In addition applicants should note that the comparability exercise for a SBP versus a RBP is an additional element to the normal requirements of a quality dossier. Such exercise should be discussed separately in section 3.2.R when presenting the data in module 3.

Module 4: Nonclinical study reports

- Information on nonclinical study reports should be presented in the structured format described in ICH M4S (12).

Module 5: Clinical study reports

- The human study reports and related information should be presented in the order described in ICH M4E (13).

The overall organization of the CTD is presented in Figure 1.³

Only if the Module 3 data demonstrate sufficient comparability of the candidate SBP to the RBP, the

³ Figure 1 is reproduced with the kind permission of the International Federation of Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Associations (IFPMA)

reduced Module 4 and 5 data packages may be submitted.

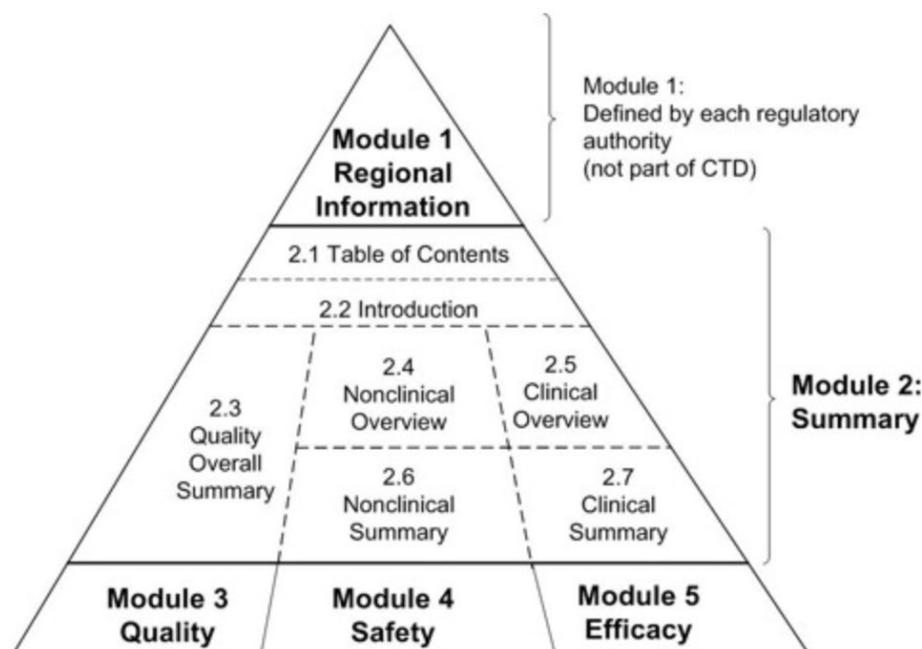


Figure 1. The overall organization of the CTD

7. Modules (including Module 1) of a product dossier for an SBP

The data for an SBP should follow the structure of the CTD format for the applicable sections. In addition, such applications should fulfil the specific requirements detailed in the ICH M4 guideline (9).

Module 1.

Additional guidance for some of the applicable sections to be included in Module 1 is provided below:

1.0 Cover letter

The cover letter submitted with the PD should include a clear statement by the responsible person submitting the PD, indicating that the information submitted is complete and correct.

1.2.2 Manufacturing and marketing authorization(s)/international registration status

List the countries in which:

- the SBP has been granted a marketing authorization;
- the SBP has been withdrawn from the market; and
- an application for the marketing of the SBP has been rejected, deferred or withdrawn.

1.4 Regional summaries

The regional summaries should be prepared in accordance with the available WHO templates, which are found on the WHO Prequalification web site.

1.5 Electronic review documents

Electronic submission of documentation (CD or DVD) should be submitted in Microsoft Word or text-selectable PDF format (other documentation).

1.6 Samples (e.g. DP, device(s))

Draft labelling may be submitted at the time of dossier submission when labelling for marketing has not been finalized. For guidance regarding labelling, refer to the information on WHO public assessment reports (WHOPARs) available on the WHO Prequalification web site under <https://extranet.who.int/prequal/key-resources/prequalification-reports/whopars>

Module 3. Quality

The applicable WHO guidelines (5, 6, 7) provide detailed guidance on the preparation of the SBP information by the applicant.

Module 4. Non-clinical study reports

The non-clinical part of the WHO Guidelines on the quality, safety and efficacy of biotherapeutic protein products prepared by recombinant DNA technology, the WHO Guidelines on evaluation of similar biotherapeutic products and the WHO Questions and Answers: similar biotherapeutic products (5,6,7,8) addresses the pharmaco-toxicological assessment of the SBP. The establishment of safety and efficacy of an SBP may require the generation of some non-clinical data with the SBP.

The demonstration of a high degree of molecular similarity between the SBP and RBP should significantly reduce the need for nonclinical studies since the RBP would normally already have a significant clinical history. Nonclinical studies should be conducted with the final formulation of the SBP intended for clinical use.

The applicable WHO guidelines (5,6, 7, 8) provide detailed guidance on this issue and on the preparation of the SBP information by the applicant.

Module 5. Product dossier for a SBP

Clinical studies should be designed to demonstrate comparable safety and efficacy of the SBP to the RBP and, therefore, need to employ testing strategies that are sensitive enough to detect relevant differences between the products, if present. The “*WHO guidelines on evaluation of similar biotherapeutic products (SBPs)*” (5, 6) as well as the “*WHO Guidelines on evaluation of monoclonal antibodies as similar biotherapeutic products*” (7) provide detailed guidance on this issue and on the preparation of the SBP information by the applicant.

8. Guidance on format and presentation of a product dossier in CTD

8.1 Guidance on format

The submission must be in English and must include officially certified English translations of product information and other documents, if applicable. The English language version of the product information, in the case of English translations, should also be submitted as Word files.

Throughout the CTD, the information should be displayed in an unambiguous and transparent manner. Text and tables should be prepared using margins that allow the document to be printed on both A4-sized paper (European Union and Japan) and 8.5 × 11-inch paper (US). The left-hand margin should be sufficiently large that information is not obscured whatever the method of binding.

Fonts for text and tables should be of a style and size large enough to be easily legible, even after photocopying. Times New Roman, 12-point font is recommended for narrative text.

Acronyms and abbreviations should be defined the first time they are used in each module.

References should be cited in accordance with the current edition of the *Uniform requirements for manuscripts submitted to biomedical journals*, International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE). Copies of relevant pages of references should be provided, with a copy of the full article in the case of a publication.

8.2 Guidance on presentation

The paper copies of the application should be bound for easy access to information.

Each binder should be labelled with the proprietary name (if applicable) and the non-proprietary name of the SBP and the company name of the applicant. For ease of reference, the following information could also be included on the label of each binder (space permitting): the volume number for that binder (out of the total number of volumes *for that module*), the section(s) contained within each volume and the date of the application (month and year), e.g.:

DP “Name ABC”

Nonproprietary name

Applicant “XYZ”

Module 3 — Quality

Volume 1 of 3

Module 3.1 — 3.2.S.3

Month/year

9. Variations

All variation applications, as described in the WHO “Guidelines on procedures and data requirements for changes to approved biotherapeutic products” (14) plus the general principles outlined in the existing WHO Guidance on variations for pharmaceuticals (15) and vaccines (16) should be submitted using the CTD format.

In the case of the filing of a variation, applicants should normally provide only the relevant modules or sections affected by the change. For example, if the variation was for a change in the shelf-life of the DP, only those sections affected by the change would need to be submitted.

References

1. WHO guidelines on the international packaging and shipping of vaccines, WHO/IVB/05.23
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5. WHO Guidelines on evaluation of similar biotherapeutic products (SBPs), Annex 2, Technical Report Series No. 977, 2009
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7. WHO Guidelines on evaluation of monoclonal antibodies as similar biotherapeutic products (SBPs), Annex 2, Technical Report Series No. 1004, 2016
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10. M4 Implementation Working Group Questions & Answers (R3)
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13. Revision of M4E Guideline on Enhancing the Format and Structure of Benefit-Risk Information in ICH: Efficacy – M4E (R2).
14. WHO Procedure for Prequalification of Biotherapeutic Products or their corresponding Similar Biotherapeutic Products.
15. WHO Guidelines on procedures and data requirements for changes to approved biotherapeutic products, Annex 3, Technical Report Series No. 1011, 2018
16. WHO guidelines on variations to a prequalified product
17. Guidance on reporting variations to a prequalified vaccine