

# The GeoPT proficiency testing programme for whole rock techniques

**Proficiency testing** is one of the most effective ways for a laboratory to monitor its performance against its own expectations, an external criterion and the standards of performance set by other laboratories participating in the test. Proficiency testing represents, therefore, an 'external' form of quality control which helps to highlight not only reliable determinations made by a laboratory, but also measurements that may be subject to unsuspected bias.

The **GeoPT proficiency testing programme** is designed to be part of the routine quality control system employed by an analytical geochemistry laboratory engaged in the bulk analysis of geological materials. A laboratory can monitor its performance on a regular basis through proficiency testing, detect any unsuspected errors in its analytical procedures and take remedial action as appropriate.

The scheme has been operating successfully for over 20 years and currently more than 110 laboratories from every corner of the globe are signed up. They include a wide spectrum of commercial, governmental and academic institutions undertaking a great variety of analytical procedures.

The **Steering Committee** for the GeoPT programme comprises:

Peter Webb, The Open University, Milton Keynes  
Michael Thompson, Birkbeck College, University of London  
Phil Potts, The Open University, Milton Keynes  
Charles Gowing, The British Geological Survey, Keyworth

**Test samples** provided in the GeoPT programme are normally silicate rocks or comparable materials. A different routine material is distributed to participants at six-monthly intervals. It may occasionally be accompanied by a supplementary material that is analytically more challenging. A period of about two months is allowed for laboratories to submit their results; a process now facilitated through an online, web-based system. A report containing all contributed results, consensus values (assigned and provisional) for the sample, and corresponding z-scores (for around 50 to 60 constituents) for the submitted data is made available online for download about six weeks after the submission deadline.



**Further information** about the scheme, the nature and availability of previous test materials may be obtained from:

- [www.geoanalyst.org](http://www.geoanalyst.org)
- [www.iageo.com](http://www.iageo.com)

**Prospective participants** wishing to register an interest can do so through the link on the login page, where contact details can be supplied.

**Enquiries about:**

- the organization of the GeoPT programme should be addressed to Peter Webb ([geopt@macace.net](mailto:geopt@macace.net))
- subscriptions to GeoPT should be addressed to Chris Jackson ([iag-treasurer@virginmedia.com](mailto:iag-treasurer@virginmedia.com))

