

## Position Statement

# MICROBIAL SAMPLING: SAMPLING REQUIREMENTS

## Issue

Specific service providers attempt to require microbial sampling on all restoration and remediation projects and that it be performed by microbiologists and/or mycologists only.

## Peer-Reviewed Position Statement

Microbial sampling is not required or appropriate on all restoration and remediation projects, and it need not be performed by microbiologists or mycologists only.

### 1. Mould Sampling is Not Required on All Projects

Visual and olfactory evaluations are generally the most important means of investigating microbial issues in the built environment. Indeed, several agencies across the globe specifically advise against testing of any kind in homes as a priority.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, there isn't an official authoritative organisation or standard in Australia which states that microbial sampling is required on all restoration or remediation projects. Where mould-like staining is visible, it is generally not considered necessary to test a surface to prove staining is due to mould growth. As there are no standard limits set for mould-generated gases, fragments or spores, sampling cannot confirm compliance to any standard<sup>2</sup> and can be cost inhibitive.

The decision to sample and when to sample should therefore be made on a case-by-case basis, based on need, medical issues, economic factors, legal issues, other considerations and situations where it is not otherwise possible to assess individual project risks.

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1. Facts About Mold, AIHA (2020) at p. 6 (<https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Facts-About-Mold-A-Consumer-Focus-Fact-Sheet.pdf>), Mold, CDC (2022) ([https://www.cdc.gov/mold/control\\_mold.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/mold/control_mold.htm)) and Potential Health Effects of Mould in the Environment (2021) at p. 3 ([https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A12B57E41EC9F326CA257BF0001F9E7D/\\$File/Effects-Mould-Environment-fs.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/A12B57E41EC9F326CA257BF0001F9E7D/$File/Effects-Mould-Environment-fs.pdf))  
2. Facts About Mold, supra, at p. 6.

## 2. Mould Sampling Should Not be Undertaken Without a Clear Purpose

The general objective of sampling is to collect evidence to answer a specific question that can be articulated before the sampling is conducted. In other words, samples should not be taken without a clear purpose, i.e., to test a (bona fide) hypothesis.<sup>3</sup> Otherwise, sampling may be detrimental to the best interests of the stakeholders.

## 3. Sampling for Mould May be Conducted by any Professional with Sufficient and Relevant Experience

Qualified persons should be utilised for the design and management of mould assessments, directing others performing initial mould assessments, writing protocols for mould remediation and conducting post-remediation inspections.<sup>4</sup> Sampling for mould should be conducted by professionals who have specific experience in designing mould sampling protocols, sampling methods, and interpreting results.<sup>5</sup> It must be performed by experienced investigators familiar with current guidelines and, if applicable, local regulations.<sup>6</sup> The qualifications are often gained through years of formal study, specific training related to mould and the indoor environment, years of on-the-job training or a combination of these factors.

A range of experts may be qualified to conduct mould sampling and no single license, certification, or designation (such as microbiologist or mycologist) automatically qualifies an individual to conduct mould sampling.<sup>7</sup>



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3. Mold and Dampness in the Built Environment [Position Statement], AIHA (2020) at p. 5 (<https://aiha-assets.sfo2.digitaloceanspaces.com/AIHA/resources/Position-Statements/Mold-and-Dampness-in-the-Built-Environment-Position-Statement.pdf>).

4. Mold and Dampness in the Built Environment, *supra*, at p. 8.

5. Mold Testing or Sampling, *supra*, at p. 5.

6. Mold and Dampness in the Built Environment, *supra*, at p. 5.

7. Standard and Reference Guide for Professional Mold Remediation, 3d Ed., IICRC (2015) at p. 6.

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