

# Industry Report



## Focus on competence draws researchers to new chromatography and mass spectrometry event

Jacqueline Balian, GAMBICA, [jacqueline.balian@gambica.org.uk](mailto:jacqueline.balian@gambica.org.uk)

According to US market research company, ReportLinker, the market for laboratory proficiency testing is growing rapidly while, unfortunately, some other lab services are failing to keep pace with inflation. The key areas of focus for proficiency testing, where labs employ independent reviewers to compare their results to a reference value, are currently chromatography and mass spectrometry. These are becoming so important that laboratories recognise the need to demonstrate consistent, accurate results to potential and existing clients. Demonstrable competence in cell culture, PCR and immunoassays are also becoming important differentiators in laboratory selection.

This focus on competence is nothing new to academia where conferences and events to help researchers to understand best practice have long been the norm. This summer, a new UK-based event also turned the spotlight on competence and best practice in chromatography and mass spectrometry.



Solutions in Science (SinS), held for the first time in July in Cardiff, came about as a result of a request from the Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC). The event provided a new forum at which researchers using chromatography and mass spectrometry techniques could get together and discuss in real depth, the merits of the different methodologies available and which is most appropriate for particular types of project.

For many years the RSC had been holding special interest group meetings around the country. Wouldn't it be better, they thought, to hold one big meeting where all our specialisms could come together, have more opportunities for cross-fertilisation of ideas and be more sustainable by involving fewer separate trips to different destinations?

The RSC called in the International Labmate team to run the event and the result was a three-day molecular characterisation event led by a heavyweight scientific committee, with Professor John Langley of the University of Southampton in the chair and a good showing of academics from across the Benelux region also heavily involved. The event had a major focus on networking opportunities (there was a two-hour lunch break each day and evening get togethers) and a pertinent supporting exhibition.



The programme, as well as in-depth discussions of the benefits of various methodological options for the use of mass spectrometers and chromatography equipment, also offered some first rate 'how to' sessions from equipment suppliers including GAMBICA members; Andrew James of Ellutia, who talked about the need for targeted analysis of Nitrosamines for the pharmaceutical industry, Mark Perkins of Element, who gave a very well-received contribution on automated SIFT-MS and Arianne Soliven of Avantor who talked about the use of short 10mm columns for rapid LC-MS analyses which was new and exciting information for some of the delegates.

"We like this event. It brings the disciplines together," said Professor Langley, "We have different problems but we use the same solutions - it's a great cross fertilising learning opportunity." Pragmatism was definitely at the heart of the event. "Once you have a method that's fit for purpose - use it! Don't keep striving for perfection," Langley told the gathering. He also made a plea for more open access learning solutions: "Every year one-third of researchers are new. They need training."

The exhibition for this first event attracted over 200 visitors and delegates from industry and academia and post-show survey feedback from the event rated SinS 100% good-excellent. Planning for the next event, at the same venue in 2025, is well underway.

For more information about the Solutions in Science event visit the ILM exhibitions site here: <https://www.ilmexhibitions.com/sins/>

## ISO/IEC 17025:2017 competence of testing and calibration laboratories

While independent proficiency testing hasn't yet arrived at all UK universities, North America is taking a strong lead in the field, it was the largest region for laboratory proficiency testing in 2022. This has interesting implications for UK laboratories as, thanks in part to the exchange rate, a very great deal of research for US based companies is being contracted out to UK labs.

Inevitably they will find themselves turning to the new version of the most popular standard for the competence of laboratories ISO/IEC 17025:2017 which was released earlier this year. It now takes into account the latest changes in laboratory practice, and specifies requirements for the competence, impartiality and consistent operation of laboratories. Overall, it helps lab customers identify general risks of contamination, failings in processes and, perhaps most importantly, inadequate equipment.

## A new application for spectrophotometry?

Meanwhile, mass spectrometry is moving out of the labs. A research team from the *Chinese Academy of Sciences* (CAS), has published a paper in the *Chinese Journal of Analytical Chemistry* claiming to have developed a deep-sea mass spectrometer responding to the rush to mine the deep seas which has resulted in a need for continuous analysis of deep sea samples.

The Chinese team says its deep-sea mass spectrometer operated continuously and reliably for over 8 hours under simulated water depths of -5800 meters and that the technology is also applicable to acquisition of dissolved gas information in inland rivers, lakes, and near-shore waters.



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