



# Darwin Tree of Life Project

## *Sampling Code of Practice*

The aims of the Darwin Tree of Life Project (DToL) are to sequence and publish openly the genomes of all known species of eukaryotes (animals, plants, fungi and protists) in Britain and Ireland. It is a collaboration between biodiversity, genomics and analysis partners that hopes to transform the way we interact with the living world.

Partners in DToL are the Wellcome Sanger Institute, the Natural History Museum London, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, the Marine Biological Association, the Earlham Institute, the University of Oxford, the University of Edinburgh, the University of Cambridge and EMBL-EBI.

This **Sampling Code of Practice** has been agreed between the DToL partners and will be reviewed annually in May of each year.

By signing below, the organisation represented agrees they will meet the requirements of this **Sampling Code of Practice**, in respect of all samples acquired for and supplied to the Darwin Tree of Life Project.

### **Law and regulation**

Organisations and individuals affiliated to DToL and supplying specimens are responsible for their compliance with all applicable laws, licences, permissions, permits and regulations (both international in scope and local to the UK and other countries where samples will be collected) relating to the acquisition, transfer, storage, use, destruction and disposal (where relevant) of the specimens they collect for DToL, and for making available to partners documentary evidence of this compliance.

Legal and regulatory documentation shall include provision for the transfer and use in DToL of samples and specimens obtained from collecting organisations or individuals and transferred to the DToL partners, including samples and specimens collected overseas and imported into the UK.

The standards within this document must be maintained during transfer of samples or specimens to DToL partners. In particular we note the following:

- **Compliance with the Nagoya Protocol of the Convention on Biological Diversity.** Compliance with national legislation to implement the Nagoya Protocol, where applicable, must be ensured, including obtaining Prior Informed Consent (PIC) and Mutually Agreed Terms (MAT) prior to accessing relevant samples. Beyond legislative requirements, DToL will also consider the principles of access and benefit sharing, when samples or specimens will be obtained from an overseas country.
- **Specimens collected by non-DToL partner organisations.** Organisations supplying specimens acquired by individuals not employed by that DToL partner organisation must ensure that specimens have been collected by appropriately approved individuals, and in accordance with the partner organisation's policies and procedures.
- **Provenance metadata.** All samples collected or supplied to DToL must have sufficient data describing their provenance and origins.
- **Transfer of specimens and samples from DToL partners.** DToL partners receiving specimens and data shall not transfer, store or use them except in accordance with the terms and conditions defined in the relevant legal and regulatory documentation, including permits, licences and information relating to the original sourcing of the specimens. DToL partners

transferring specimens for use in the Project must provide the recipient partner with all relevant regulatory documentation prior to the shipment of material and clearly stipulate any terms and conditions linked to their collection, transfer, storage, use, destruction and disposal (where relevant).

- **Import of samples into the UK for DToL.** Partners importing specimens into the UK for use in DToL must request that the sending organisation provides all relevant regulatory documentation, including export and import licences and risk assessments, prior to the shipment of material to the DToL partner and clearly stipulates any terms and conditions linked to their collection, transfer, storage, use, destruction and disposal (where relevant).
- **Communication of our Sampling Code of Practice.** Partners should provide a copy of this code to collaborators outside the DToL partner organisations to ensure that it is clearly communicated.

## **Environmental and biological impact**

Samples and specimens will be acquired with the minimum possible impact on biodiversity, the local habitat and wider environment, and the species itself, and should be balanced with achieving the scientific goals of DToL.

Where a species is abundant in one location, but rare in another, collection of specimens of that species from the locale in which it is more abundant is preferred, unless there are good scientific reasons why an alternative location should be selected.

If samples of known provenance, suitable quality and appropriately robust metadata sufficient to meet the scientific needs of DToL can be obtained from existing collections, they should be used in preference to new field collections.

Where there is no applicable law, permit, licence requirement or regulation relating to a species (for example, relating to rarity or endangered status), or to a particular habitat (such as Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) or Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) status), steps should be taken to ensure that collection occurs with no or minimal impact on the species or habitat (which may include consideration of effects on other species), and advice sought on conservation status in cases of doubt.

In cases where planned sampling or collection for DToL might present a broader ecological risk to a vulnerable environment, there should be a written assessment of this risk and mitigation measures prior to sample collection.

The Project will not condone the acquisition of samples or specimens where individuals or organisations have conspired to acquire these for DToL illegally.

Where there are doubts concerning whether the acquisition of a particular sample or specimen for DToL would comply with the requirements within this Sampling Code of Practice, then this will be brought to the attention of the DToL Steering Committee for a decision.

## **Documentation standards**

Partners will ensure that specimens and samples are documented to the relevant recognised standards for their organisation, in addition to any information required by this Sampling Code of Practice. The Wellcome Sanger Institute and the Earlham Institute will undertake to act as secondary repositories for information deemed appropriate and proportionate to the due diligence required relating to samples and specimens, which may include legal and regulatory documentation received from the partners.

DToL and its partners shall maintain records of samples and specimens, including electronic copies provided by collecting organisations of legal and regulatory documentation, permits and licences, as appropriate, to provide assurance to DToL that samples and specimens have been acquired in accordance with legal requirements.

Information and documentation regarding specimens and samples donated by individuals to DToL partners for DToL will be managed by those organisations in line with any legal requirements and the organisation's existing policies and procedures.

## Signature

Signed ..... by:  
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Name:  
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Organisation:  
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Date:  
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## Appendix

### List of other considerations which may apply to sample/specimen acquisition for the Project

This Appendix lists other aspects relating to sample and specimen collection which should be considered, depending on the species, samples, specimens and sites involved:

- Requirement for landowner permission and compliance with property law, including for the collection of non-protected species outside protected areas.
- The relevance of current laws and licences which may have changed since sample or specimen acquisition.
- Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) import regulations and requirements (and the related regulations and requirements of the devolved administrations).
- Compliance with the requirements of EU Plant Health Passports and import regulations.
- DToL sample acquisition standard operating procedures should detail how specimens will be collected in accordance with best practice, include an assessment of the impact of the collection, and provide the minimum size of samples and number of specimens. The detailed Sampling Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) developed within DToL should be consulted for details.
- Sampling methods for relevant animals must be humane and consistent with current legal requirements and good practice.
- Transport by partnering organisations of live animals must be carefully considered and will be detailed in an appropriate SOP.
- Information contained within legislative instruments, permits and licences may be permissive of or prohibit activities. This includes prohibited or unauthorised methods to capture or kill mammals and birds: [Prohibited or unauthorised method to capture or kill](#)
- Compliance with United Nations Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) regulations and the evolving Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) agreement.