

## **OECD GUIDELINE FOR THE TESTING OF CHEMICALS**

### **Performance-Based Test Guideline for Stably Transfected Transactivation *In Vitro* Assays to Detect Estrogen Receptor Agonists**

#### **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

##### ***Performance-Based Test Guideline***

1. This Performance-Based Test Guideline (PBTG) describes the methodology of Stably Transfected Transactivation *In Vitro* Assays to detect Estrogen Receptor Agonists (ER TA assays). It comprises several mechanistically and functionally similar test methods for the identification of estrogen receptor (i.e., ER $\alpha$ , and/or ER $\beta$ ) agonists and should facilitate the development of new similar or modified test methods in accordance with the principles for validation set forth in the OECD Guidance Document (GD) on the Validation and International Acceptance of New or Updated Test Methods for Hazard Assessment (1). The fully validated reference test methods (Annex 2 and Annex 3) that provide the basis for this PBTG are:

- The Stably Transfected TA (STTA) assay (2) using the (h) ER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line; and
- The BG1Luc ER TA assay (3) using the BG1Luc-4E2 cell line which predominately expresses hER $\alpha$  with some contribution from hER $\beta$  (4) (5).

Performance standards (PS) (6) are available to facilitate the development and validation of similar test methods for the same hazard endpoint and allow for timely amendment of this PBTG so that new similar test methods can be added to an updated PBTG, however, similar test methods will only be added after review and agreement that performance standards are met. The test methods included in this Test Guideline can be used indiscriminately to address countries' requirements for test results on estrogen receptor transactivation while benefiting from the Mutual Acceptance of Data.

##### ***Background and principles of the test methods included in the PBTG***

2. The OECD initiated a high-priority activity in 1998 to revise existing, and to develop new, Test Guidelines for the screening and testing of potential endocrine disrupting chemicals. The OECD conceptual framework (CF) for testing and assessment of potential endocrine disrupting chemicals was revised in 2012. The original and revised CFs are included as Annexes in the Guidance Document on Standardised Test Guidelines for Evaluating Chemicals for Endocrine Disruption (7). The CF comprises five levels, each level corresponding to a different level of biological complexity. The ER Transactivation (TA) assays described in

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this PBTG are level 2, which includes "in vitro assays providing data about selected endocrine mechanism(s)/pathway(s)". This PBTG is for *in vitro* Transactivation (TA) test methods designed to identify estrogen receptor (ER) agonists.

3. The interaction of estrogens with ERs can affect transcription of estrogen-controlled genes, which can lead to the induction or inhibition of cellular processes, including those necessary for cell proliferation, normal fetal development, and reproductive function (8) (9) (10). Perturbation of normal estrogenic systems may have the potential to trigger adverse effects on normal development (ontogenesis), reproductive health and the integrity of the reproductive system.

4. *In vitro* TA assays are based on a direct or indirect interaction of the chemical with a specific receptor that regulates the transcription of a reporter gene product. Such assays have been used extensively to evaluate gene expression regulated by specific nuclear receptors, such as ERs (11) (12) (13) (14) (15). They have been proposed for the detection of estrogenic transactivation regulated by the ER (16) (17) (18). There are at least two major subtypes of nuclear ERs,  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$ , which are encoded by distinct genes. The respective proteins have different biological functions as well as different tissue distributions and ligand binding affinities (19) (20) (21) (22) (23) (24) (25). Nuclear ER $\alpha$  mediates the classic estrogenic response (26) (27) (28) (29), and therefore most models currently being developed to measure ER activation are specific to ER $\alpha$ . The assays are used to identify chemicals that activate the ER following ligand binding, after which the receptor-ligand complex binds to specific DNA response elements and transactivates a reporter gene, resulting in increased cellular expression of a marker protein. Different reporter responses can be used in these test methods. In luciferase based systems, the luciferase enzyme transforms the luciferin substrate to a bioluminescent product that can be quantitatively measured with a luminometer. Other examples of common reporters are fluorescent protein and the *LacZ* gene, which encodes  $\beta$ -galactosidase, an enzyme that can transform the colourless substrate X-gal (5-bromo-4-chloro-indolyl-galactopyranoside) into a blue product that can be quantified with a spectrophotometer. These reporters can be evaluated quickly and inexpensively with commercially available test kits.

5. Validation studies of the STTA and the BG1Luc TA assays have demonstrated their relevance and reliability for their intended purpose (3) (4) (5) (30). Performance standards for luminescence-based ER TA assays using ovarian cells lines are included in ICCVAM Test Method Evaluation Report The LUMI-CELL<sup>®</sup> ER (BG1Luc ER TA) Test Method: An *In vitro* Assay for Identifying Human Estrogen Receptor Agonist and Antagonist Activity of Chemicals (3). These performance standards have been modified to be applicable to both the STTA and BG1Luc TA test methods (3).

6. Definitions and abbreviations used in this Test Guideline are described in [Annex 1](#).

#### ***Scope and limitations related to the TA assays***

7. These test methods are being proposed for screening and prioritisation purposes, but can also provide mechanistic information that can be used in a weight of evidence approach. They address TA induced by chemical binding to the ERs in an *in vitro* system. Thus, results should not be directly extrapolated to the complex signaling and regulation of the intact endocrine system *in vivo*.

8. TA mediated by the ERs is considered one of the key mechanisms of endocrine disruption (ED), although there are other mechanisms through which ED can occur, including (i) interactions with other receptors and enzymatic systems within the endocrine system, (ii) hormone synthesis, (iii) metabolic activation

and/or inactivation of hormones, (iv) distribution of hormones to target tissues, and (v) clearance of hormones from the body. None of the test methods under this PBTG addresses these modes of action.

9. This PBTG addresses the ability of chemicals to activate (*i.e.* act as agonists) but not to suppress ER-dependent transcription (*i.e.* act as antagonists). Therefore, chemicals that are negative in these test methods should be evaluated in an ER binding assay or in an assay known to detect ER antagonists before concluding that the chemical does not bind to the receptor. In addition, the assay is only likely to inform on the agonist activity of the parent molecule bearing in mind the limited metabolising capacities of the *in vitro* cell systems. Considering that only single substances were used during the validation, the applicability to test mixtures has not been addressed.

10. For informational purposes, Table 1 provides the test results for the 34 chemicals that were tested in both of the fully validated test methods described in this PBTG. Of these chemicals, 26 are classified as definitive ER agonists and 8 negatives based upon published reports, including *in vitro* assays for ER binding and TA, and/or the uterotrophic assay (3) (18) (30) (32) (33) (34) (35). In reference to the data summarised in table 1, there was 100% agreement between the two test methods on the classifications of all the chemicals, and each chemical was correctly classified as an ER agonist or negative. Supplementary information on this group of chemicals as well as additional chemicals tested in the STTA and BGLuc ER TA test methods during the validation studies is provided in the Performance Standards for the ER TA (6), Annex 2 (Tables 1, 2 and 3).

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**Table 1: Comparison of Results from STTA and BG1Luc ER TA Assays for Chemicals Tested in Both Assays and Classified as ER Agonists (POS) or Negatives**

	Chemical	CASRN	STTA Assay <sup>1</sup>			BG1Luc ER TA Assay <sup>2</sup>		Data Source For Classification <sup>4</sup>		
			ER TA Activity	PC <sub>10</sub> Value (M)	PC <sub>50</sub> Value <sup>b</sup> (M)	ER TA Activity	EC <sub>50</sub> Value <sup>b,3</sup> (M)	Other ER TAs <sup>c</sup>	ER Binding	Uterotrophic
1	17-β Estradiol <sup>a</sup>	50-28-2	POS	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS	5.63 × 10 <sup>-12</sup>	POS (227/227)	POS	POS
2	17-α Estradiol <sup>a</sup>	57-91-0	POS	7.24 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	6.44 × 10 <sup>-10</sup>	POS	1.40 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	POS(11/11)	POS	POS
3	17-α Ethinyl estradiol <sup>a</sup>	57-63-6	POS	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS	4.20 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	POS(22/22)	POS	POS
4	17-β-Trenbolone	10161-33-8	POS	1.78 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	2.73 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	7.31 × 10 <sup>-12</sup>	POS (2/2)	NT	NT
5	19-Nortestosterone <sup>a</sup>	434-22-0	POS	9.64 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	2.71 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	1.30 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(4/4)	POS	POS
6	4-Cumylphenol <sup>a</sup>	599-64-4	POS	1.49 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	1.60 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	3.20 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(5/5)	POS	NT
7	4-tert-Octylphenol <sup>a</sup>	140-66-9	POS	1.85 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	7.37 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	POS	3.19 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	POS(21/24)	POS	POS
8	Apigenin <sup>a</sup>	520-36-5	POS	1.31 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	5.71 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	1.60 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(26/26)	POS	NT
9	Atrazine <sup>a</sup>	1912-24-9	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG (30/30)	NEG	NT
10	Bisphenol A <sup>a</sup>	80-05-7	POS	2.02 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	2.94 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	3.33 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(65/65)	POS	POS
11	Bisphenol B <sup>a</sup>	77-40-7	POS	2.36 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	2.11 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	1.95 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(6/6)	POS	POS
12	Butylbenzyl phthalate <sup>a</sup>	85-68-7	POS	1.14 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	4.14 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	1.98 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(12/14)	POS	NEG
13	Corticosterone <sup>a</sup>	50-22-6	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG( 6/6 )	NEG	NT
14	Coumestrol <sup>a</sup>	479-13-0	POS	1.23 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	2.00 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	1.32 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(30/30)	POS	NT
15	Daidzein <sup>a</sup>	486-66-8	POS	1.76 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	1.51 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	7.95 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(39/39)	POS	POS
16	Diethylstilbestrol <sup>a</sup>	56-53-1	POS	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	2.04 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS	3.34 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS(42/42)	POS	NT
17	Di-n-butyl phthalate	84-74-2	POS	4.09 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	(no PC <sub>50</sub> )	POS	4.09 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(6/11)	POS	NEG
18	Ethyl paraben	120-47-8	POS	5.00 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	(no PC <sub>50</sub> )	POS	2.48 × 10 <sup>-5</sup>	POS		NT
19	Estrone <sup>a</sup>	53-16-7	POS	3.02 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	5.88 × 10 <sup>-10</sup>	POS	2.34 × 10 <sup>-10</sup>	POS(26/28)	POS	POS
20	Genistein <sup>a</sup>	446-72-0	POS	2.24 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	2.45 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	POS	2.71 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(100/102)	POS	POS
21	Haloperidol	52-86-8	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG (2/2)	NEG	NT
22	Kaempferol <sup>a</sup>	520-18-3	POS	1.36 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	1.11 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	3.99 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(23/23)	POS	NT
23	Kepone <sup>a</sup>	143-50-0	POS	7.11 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	7.68 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS	4.91 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	POS(14/18)	POS	NT
24	Ketoconazole	65277-42-1	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG (2/2)	NEG	NT
25	Linuron <sup>a</sup>	330-55-2	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG (8/8 )	NEG	NT
26	meso-Hexestrol <sup>a</sup>	84-16-2	POS	<1.00 × 10 <sup>-10</sup>	2.75 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS	1.65 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	POS(4/4)	POS	NT
27	Methyl testosterone <sup>a</sup>	58-18-4	POS	1.75 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	4.11 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	2.68 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(5/6)	POS	NT
28	Morin	480-16-0	POS	5.43 × 10 <sup>-7</sup>	4.16 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	2.37 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(2/2)	POS	NT
29	Norethynodrel <sup>a</sup>	68-23-5	POS	1.11 × 10 <sup>-11</sup>	1.50 × 10 <sup>-9</sup>	POS	9.39 × 10 <sup>-10</sup>	POS(5/5)	POS	NT
30	p,p'-Methoxychlor <sup>a</sup>	72-43-5	POS	1.23 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	(no PC <sub>50</sub> ) <sup>b</sup>	POS	1.92 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS(24/27)	POS	POS
31	Phenobarbital <sup>a</sup>	57-30-7	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG(2/2)	NEG	NT
32	Reserpine	50-55-5	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG(4/4)	NEG	NT
33	Spironolactone <sup>a</sup>	52-01-7	NEG	-	-	NEG	-	NEG(4/4)	NEG	NT
34	Testosterone	58-22-0	POS	2.82 × 10 <sup>-8</sup>	9.78 × 10 <sup>-6</sup>	POS	1.75 × 10 <sup>-5</sup>	POS(5/10)	POS	NT

Abbreviations: CASRN = Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Number; M = molar; EC<sub>50</sub> = half maximal effective concentration of test chemical; NEG = negative; POS = positive; PC<sub>10</sub> (and PC<sub>50</sub>) = the concentration of a test chemical at which the response is 10% (or 50 % for PC<sub>50</sub>) of the response induced by the positive control (E2, 1nM) in each plate.

<sup>a</sup>Common chemicals tested in the STTA and BG1Luc ER TA assays that were designated as ER agonists or negatives and used to evaluate accuracy in the BG1 Luc ER TA validation study ( ICCVAM BG1Luc ER TA Evaluation Report, Table 4-1 (3).

<sup>b</sup>Maximum concentration tested in the absence of limitations due to cytotoxicity or insolubility was 1 x 10<sup>-5</sup> M (STTA Assay) and 1 x 10<sup>-3</sup> M (BG1Luc ER TA Assay).

<sup>c</sup>Number in parenthesis represents the test results classified as positive (POS) or negative (NEG) over the total number of referenced studies.

<sup>1</sup>Values reported in Draft Report of Pre-validation and Inter-laboratory Validation For Stably Transfected Transcriptional Activation (TA) Assay to Detect Estrogenic Activity - The Human Estrogen Receptor Alpha Mediated Reporter Gene Assay Using hER-HeLa-9903 Cell Line (30)

<sup>2</sup>ICCVAM Test Method Evaluation Report on the LUMI-CELL<sup>®</sup> ER (BG1Luc ER TA) Test Method: An *In Vitro* Method for Identifying ER Agonists and Antagonists (3)

<sup>3</sup>Mean EC<sub>50</sub> values were calculated with values reported by the laboratories of the BG1Luc ER TA validation study (XDS, ECVAM, and Hiyoshi) (3).

<sup>4</sup>Classification as an ER agonist or negative was based upon information in the ICCVAM Background Review Documents (BRD) for ER Binding and TA test methods (31) as well as information obtained from publications published and reviewed after the completion of the ICCVAM BRDs (3) (18) (30) (32) (33) (34) (35).

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**ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS*****Essential Test Method Components***

11. This PBTG applies to methods using a stably transfected or endogenous ER $\alpha$  receptor and stably transfected reporter gene construct under the control of one or more estrogen response elements; however, other receptors such as ER $\beta$  may be present. These are essential test method components.

***Control substances***

12. The basis for the proposed concurrent reference estrogen and controls should be described. Concurrent controls (negative, solvent, and positive), as appropriate, serve as an indication that the test method is operative under the test conditions and provide a basis for experiment-to-experiment comparisons; they are usually part of the acceptability criteria for a given experiment (1).

***Standard Quality Control Procedures***

13. Standard quality control procedures should be performed as described for each assay to ensure the cell line remains stable through multiple passages, remains mycoplasma-free, and retains the ability to provide the expected ER-mediated responses over time. Cell lines should be further checked for their correct identity as well as for other contaminants (e.g. fungi, yeast and viruses).

***Demonstration of Laboratory Proficiency***

14. Prior to testing unknown chemicals with any of the test methods under this PBTG, each laboratory should demonstrate proficiency in using the test method by testing of the 14 proficiency chemicals listed in Table 2. This proficiency testing will also confirm the responsiveness of the test system. The list of proficiency chemicals is a subset of the Reference Chemicals provided in the Performance Standards for the ER TA assays (6). These chemicals are commercially available, represent the classes of chemicals commonly associated with ER agonist activity, exhibit a suitable range of potency expected for ER agonists (i.e., strong to weak) and negatives. Testing of these chemicals should be replicated at least twice, on different days. Proficiency is demonstrated by correct classification (positive/negative) of each proficiency chemical. Proficiency testing should be repeated by each technician when learning the test methods.

**Table 2: List of (14) Proficiency Chemicals<sup>8</sup>**

N <sup>o7</sup>	Chemical Name	CASRN	Expected Response <sup>1</sup>	STTA Assay			BG1Luc ER TA Assay		MeSH Chemical Class <sup>5</sup>	Product Class <sup>6</sup>
				PC <sub>10</sub> Value (M) <sup>2</sup>	PC <sub>50</sub> Value (M) <sup>2</sup>	Test concentration range (M)	Bg1Luc EC <sub>50</sub> Value (M) <sup>3</sup>	Highest Concentration for Range Finder (M) <sup>4</sup>		
14	Diethylstilbestrol	56-53-1	POS	$<1.00 \times 10^{-11}$	$2.04 \times 10^{-11}$	$10^{-14} - 10^{-8}$	$3.34 \times 10^{-11}$	$3.73 \times 10^{-4}$	Hydrocarbon (Cyclic)	Pharmaceutical, Veterinary Agent
12	17 $\alpha$ -Estradiol	57-91-0	POS	$4.27 \times 10^{-11}$	$6.44 \times 10^{-10}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$1.46 \times 10^{-9}$	$3.67 \times 10^{-3}$	Steroid	Pharmaceutical, Veterinary Agent
15	<i>meso</i> -Hexestrol	84-16-2	POS	$<1.00 \times 10^{-11}$	$2.75 \times 10^{-11}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$1.65 \times 10^{-11}$	$3.70 \times 10^{-3}$	Hydrocarbon (Cyclic), Phenol	Pharmaceutical, Veterinary Agent
11	4- <i>tert</i> -Octylphenol	140-66-9	POS	$1.85 \times 10^{-9}$	$7.37 \times 10^{-9}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$7.19 \times 10^{-8}$	$4.85 \times 10^{-3}$	Phenol	Chemical Intermediate
9	Genistein	446-72-0	POS	$2.24 \times 10^{-8}$	$2.45 \times 10^{-8}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$2.71 \times 10^{-7}$	$3.70 \times 10^{-4}$	Flavonoid, Heterocyclic Compound	Natural Product, Pharmaceutical
6	Bisphenol A	80-05-7	POS	$2.02 \times 10^{-8}$	$2.94 \times 10^{-7}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$5.33 \times 10^{-7}$	$4.38 \times 10^{-3}$	Phenol	Chemical Intermediate
2	Kaempferol	520-18-3	POS	$1.36 \times 10^{-7}$	$1.21 \times 10^{-6}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$3.99 \times 10^{-6}$	$3.49 \times 10^{-3}$	Flavonoid, Heterocyclic Compound	Natural Product
3	Butylbenzyl phthalate	85-68-7	POS	$1.14 \times 10^{-5}$	$4.11 \times 10^{-6}$	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$1.98 \times 10^{-6}$	$3.20 \times 10^{-4}$	Carboxylic Acid, Ester, Phthalic Acid	Plasticizer, Industrial Chemical
4	<i>p,p'</i> -Methoxychlor	72-43-5	POS	$1.23 \times 10^{-6}$	-	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$1.92 \times 10^{-6}$	$2.89 \times 10^{-3}$	Hydrocarbon (Halogenated)	Pesticide, Veterinary Agent
1	Ethyl paraben	120-47-8	POS	$5.00 \times 10^{-6}$	-	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	$2.48 \times 10^{-5}$	$6.02 \times 10^{-3}$	Carboxylic Acid, Phenol	Pharmaceutical, Preservative
17	Atrazine	1912-24-9	NEG	-	-	$10^{-10} - 10^{-4}$	-	$4.64 \times 10^{-4}$	Heterocyclic Compound	Herbicide
20	Spironolactone	52-01-7	NEG	-	-	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	-	$2.40 \times 10^{-3}$	Lactone, Steroid	Pharmaceutical

21	Ketoconazole	65277-42-1	NEG	-	-	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	-	$9.41 \times 10^{-5}$	Heterocyclic Compound	Pharmaceutical
22	Reserpine	50-55-5	NEG	-	-	$10^{-11} - 10^{-5}$	-	$1.64 \times 10^{-3}$	Heterocyclic Compound, Indole	Pharmaceutical, Veterinary Agent

Abbreviations: CASRN = Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Number; EC<sub>50</sub> = half maximal effective concentration of test chemical; NEG = negative; POS = positive; PC<sub>10</sub> (and PC<sub>50</sub>) = the concentration of a test chemical at which the response is 10% (or 50 % for PC<sub>50</sub>) of the response induced by the positive control (E2, 1nM) in each plate.

<sup>1</sup>Classification as positive or negative for ER agonist activity was based upon the ICCVAM Background Review Documents (BRD) for ER Binding and TA test methods (31) (32) as well as empirical data and other information obtained from referenced studies published and reviewed after the completion of the ICCVAM BRDs (3) (18) (30) (31) (32) (33) (34) (35).

<sup>2</sup>Values reported in Draft Report of Pre-validation and Inter-laboratory Validation For Stably Transfected Transcriptional Activation (TA) Assay to Detect Estrogenic Activity - The Human Estrogen Receptor Alpha Mediated Reporter Gene Assay Using hER-HeLa-9903 Cell Line (30).

<sup>3</sup>Mean EC<sub>50</sub> values were calculated with values reported by the laboratories of the BG1Luc ER TA validation study (ZDS, ECVAM, and Hiyoshi) (3).

<sup>4</sup>Concentrations reported were the highest concentrations tested (range finder) during the validation of the BG1Luc ER TA Assay. If concentrations differed between the laboratories, the highest concentration is reported. See table 4-10 of ICCVAM Test Method Evaluation Report: The LUMI-Cell<sup>®</sup>ER (BG1Luc ER TA) Test Method: An *In Vitro* Assay for Identifying Human Estrogen Receptor Agonist and Antagonist Activity of Chemicals (5).

<sup>5</sup>Substances were assigned into one or more chemical classes using the U.S. National Library of Medicine's Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), an internationally recognized standardized classification scheme (available at: <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/mesh>).

<sup>6</sup>Substances were assigned into one or more product classes using the U.S. National Library of Medicine's Hazardous Substances Database (available at: <http://toxnet.nlm.nih.gov/cgi-bin/sis/htmlgen?HSDB>).

<sup>7</sup>From Table 1 of the Performance Standards (6)

<sup>8</sup>If a Reference Chemical is no longer commercially available, a substance with the same classification and comparable potency, mode of action and chemical class can be used.

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### ***Test Run Acceptability Criteria***

15. Acceptance or rejection of a test run is based on the evaluation of results obtained for the reference estrogen and controls used for each experiment. Values for the PC<sub>50</sub> or EC<sub>50</sub> values for the reference estrogen should meet the acceptability criteria as provided for the selected test method (for STTA see Annex 2, for BG1Luc ER TA see Annex 3), and all positive/negative controls should be correctly classified for each accepted experiment. The ability to consistently conduct the test method should be demonstrated by the development and maintenance of a historical database for the reference estrogen and controls. Standard deviations (SD) or coefficients of variation (CV) for the means of reference estrogen curve fitting parameters from multiple experiments may be used as a measure of within-laboratory reproducibility.

In addition, the following principles regarding acceptability criteria should be met:

- Data should be sufficient for a quantitative assessment of ER activation (i.e., efficacy and potency).
- The mean reporter activity for the reference concentration of reference estrogen should be at least the minimum specified in the test methods relative to that of the vehicle (solvent) control to ensure adequate sensitivity. For the STTA and BG1Luc ER TA test methods, this is four times that of the mean vehicle control on each plate.
- The concentrations tested should remain within the solubility range of the test chemical and not demonstrate cytotoxicity.

### ***Analysis of data***

16. The defined data interpretation procedure for each test method should be used for classifying a positive and negative response.

17. Meeting the acceptability criteria (paragraph 15) indicates the assay system is operating properly, but it does not ensure that any particular test will produce accurate data. Replicating the correct results of the first test is the best indication that accurate data were produced. If two tests give reproducible results (e.g., both test results indicate a substance is positive), it is not necessary to conduct a third test.

18. If two runs do not give reproducible results (e.g. a substance is positive in one run and negative in the other run), or if a higher degree of certainty is required regarding the outcome of this assay, at least three independent runs should be conducted.

### ***General Data Interpretation Criteria***

19. There is currently no universally agreed method for interpreting ER TA data. However, both qualitative (e.g., positive/negative) and/or quantitative (e.g., EC<sub>50</sub>, PC<sub>50</sub>) assessments of ER-mediated activity should be based on empirical data and sound scientific judgement. Where possible, positive results should be characterised by both the magnitude of the effect as compared to the vehicle (solvent) control or reference estrogen and the concentration at which the effect occurs (e.g., an EC<sub>50</sub>, PC<sub>50</sub>, RPC<sub>Max</sub>, etc.).

### ***Test Report***

20. The test report should include the following information:

## Test method:

- Test method used;

## Test substance:

- identification data and Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Number (CAS RN), if known;
- physical nature and purity;
- physicochemical properties relevant to the conduct of the study;
- stability of the test substance;

## Solvent/Vehicle:

- characterisation (nature, supplier and lot);
- justification for choice of solvent/vehicle;
- solubility and stability of the test substance in solvent/vehicle, if known;

## Cells:

- type and source of cells:
  - Is ER endogenously expressed? If not, which receptor(s) were transfected?
  - Reporter construct(s) used (including source species);
  - Transfection method;
  - Selection method for maintenance of stable transfection (where applicable);
  - Is the transfection method relevant for stable lines?
- number of cell passages (from thawing);
- passage number of cells at thawing;
- methods for maintenance of cell cultures;

## Test conditions:

- solubility limitations;
- description of the methods of assessing viability applied;
- composition of media, CO<sub>2</sub> concentration;
- concentrations of test substance;
- volume of vehicle and test substance added;
- incubation temperature and humidity;
- duration of treatment;
- cell density at the start of - and during treatment;
- positive and negative reference chemicals;
- reporter reagents (product name, supplier and lot);
- criteria for considering tests as positive, negative or equivocal;

## Acceptability check:

- fold inductions for each assay plate and whether they meet the minimum required by the test method based on historical controls;
- actual log<sub>10</sub>EC<sub>50</sub>, log<sub>10</sub>PC<sub>50</sub>, and Hill slope values for concurrent positive controls/reference substances;

## Results:

- raw and normalised data;
- the maximum fold induction level;

- cytotoxicity data;
- if it exists, the lowest effective concentration (LEC);
- $RPC_{Max}$ ,  $PC_{Max}$ ,  $PC_{50}$  and/or  $EC_{50}$  values, as appropriate;
- concentration-response relationship, where possible;
- statistical analyses, if any, together with a measure of error and confidence (*e.g.* SEM, SD, CV or 95% CI) and a description of how these values were obtained;

Discussion of the results

Conclusion

Replaced  
This version has been replaced  
on 28 July 2015 and will be deleted  
effectively on 28 January 2017.

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ANNEX 1

## Definitions and Abbreviations

**Acceptability criteria:** Minimum standards for the performance of experimental controls and reference standards. All acceptability criteria should be met for an experiment to be considered valid.

**Accuracy (concordance):** The closeness of agreement between test method results and an accepted reference values. It is a measure of test method performance and one aspect of relevance. The term is often used interchangeably with “concordance” to mean the proportion of correct outcomes of a test method (1).

**Agonist:** A substance that produces a response, e.g., transcription, when it binds to a specific receptor

**Antagonist:** A type of receptor ligand or chemical that does not provoke a biological response itself upon binding to a receptor, but blocks or dampens agonist-mediated responses.

**Anti-estrogenic activity,** the capability of a chemical to suppress the action of 17 $\beta$ -estradiol mediated through estrogen receptors.

**BG-1:** An immortalized adenocarcinoma cell that endogenously express estrogen receptor.

**BG-1Luc4E2:** The BG-1Luc4E2 cell line was derived from BG-1 immortalized human-derived adenocarcinoma cells that endogenously express both forms of the estrogen receptor (ER $\alpha$  and ER $\beta$ ) and have been stably transfected with the plasmid pGudLuc7.ER $\beta$ . This plasmid contains four copies of a synthetic oligonucleotide containing the estrogen response element upstream of the mouse mammary tumor viral (MMTV) promoter and the firefly luciferase gene.

**Cell morphology:** The shape and appearance of cells grown in a monolayer in a single well of a tissue culture plate. Cells that are dying often exhibit abnormal cell morphology.

**CF:** The OECD Conceptual Framework for the Testing and Evaluation of Endocrine Disrupters.

**Charcoal/dextran treatment:** Treatment of serum used in cell culture. Treatment with charcoal/dextran (often referred to as “stripping”) removes endogenous hormones and hormone-binding proteins.

**Cytotoxicity:** Harmful effects to cell structure or function that can ultimately cause cell death and can be reflected by a reduction in the number of cells present in the well at the end of the exposure period or a reduction of the capacity for a measure of cellular function when compared to the concurrent vehicle control.

**CV:** Coefficient of variation

**DCC-FBS:** Dextran-coated charcoal treated fetal bovine serum.

**DMEM:** Dulbecco’s Modification of Eagle’s Medium

**DMSO:** Dimethyl sulfoxide

**E2:** 17 $\beta$ -estradiol

**EC<sub>50</sub>:** The half maximal effective concentration of a test substance.

**ED:** Endocrine disruption

**hER $\alpha$ :** Human estrogen receptor alpha

**hER $\beta$ :** Human estrogen receptor beta

**EFM:** Estrogen-free medium. Dulbecco's Modification of Eagle's Medium (DMEM) supplemented with 4.5% charcoal/dextran-treated FBS, 1.9% L-glutamine, and 0.9% Pen-Strep.

**ER:** Estrogen receptor

**ERE:** Estrogen response element

**Estrogenic activity:** The capability of a chemical to mimic 17 $\beta$ -estradiol in its ability to bind to and activate estrogen receptors. hER $\alpha$ -mediated estrogenic activity can be detected with this PBTG.

**FBS:** Fetal bovine serum

**HeLa:** An immortal human cervical cell line

**HeLa9903:** A HeLa cell subclone into which hER $\alpha$  and a luciferase reporter gene have been stably transfected

**IC<sub>50</sub>:** The half maximal effective concentration of an inhibitory test substance.

**ICCVAM:** The Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods.

**Inter-laboratory reproducibility:** A measure of the extent to which different qualified laboratories, using the same protocol and testing the same substances, can produce qualitatively and quantitatively similar results. Interlaboratory reproducibility is determined during the prevalidation and validation processes, and indicates the extent to which a test method can be successfully transferred between laboratories, also referred to as between-laboratory reproducibility (1).

**Intra-laboratory reproducibility:** A determination of the extent that qualified people within the same laboratory can successfully replicate results using a specific protocol at different times. Also referred to as "within-laboratory reproducibility" (1).

**LEC:** Lowest effective concentration is the lowest concentration of test substance that produces a response (*i.e.* the lowest test substance concentration at which the fold induction is statistically different from the concurrent vehicle control).

**Me-too test:** A colloquial expression for a test method that is structurally and functionally similar to a validated and accepted reference test method. Interchangeably used with similar test method

**MT:** Metallothionein

**MMTV:** Mouse Mammary Tumor Virus

**OHT:** 4-Hydroxytamoxifen

**PBTG:** Performance-Based Test Guideline



**PC** (Positive control): a strongly active substance, preferably 17 $\beta$ -estradiol, that is included in all tests to help ensure proper functioning of the assay.

**PC<sub>10</sub>**: the concentration of a test substance at which the measured activity in an agonist assay is 10% of the maximum activity induced by the PC (E2 at 1nM for the STTA assay) in each plate.

**PC<sub>50</sub>**: the concentration of a test substance at which the measured activity in an agonist assay is 50% of the maximum activity induced by the PC (E2 at the reference concentration specified in the test method) in each plate.

**PC<sub>Max</sub>**: the concentration of a test substance inducing the RPC<sub>Max</sub>

**Performance standards:** Standards, based on a validated test method, that provide a basis for evaluating the comparability of a proposed test method that is mechanistically and functionally similar. Included are (1) essential test method components; (2) a minimum list of reference chemicals selected from among the chemicals used to demonstrate the acceptable performance of the validated test method; and (3) the comparable levels of accuracy and reliability, based on what was obtained for the validated test method, that the proposed test method should demonstrate when evaluated using the minimum list of reference chemicals (1).

**Proficiency chemicals (substances):** A subset of the Reference Chemicals included in the Performance Standards that can be used by laboratories to demonstrate technical competence with a standardized test method. Selection criteria for these substances typically include that they represent the range of responses, are commercially available, and have high quality reference data available.

**Proficiency:** The demonstrated ability to properly conduct a test method prior to testing unknown substances.

**Reference estrogen (Positive control, PC):** 17 $\beta$ -estradiol (E2, CAS 50-28-2).

**Reference standard:** a reference substance used to demonstrate the adequacy of a test method. 17 $\beta$ -estradiol is the reference standard for the STTA and BG1Luc ER TA assays.

**Reference test methods:** The test methods upon which this PBTG is based.

**Relevance:** Description of relationship of the test to the effect of interest and whether it is meaningful and useful for a particular purpose. It is the extent to which the test correctly measures or predicts the biological effect of interest. Relevance incorporates consideration of the accuracy (concordance) of a test method (1).

**Reliability:** Measure of the extent that a test method can be performed reproducibly within and between laboratories over time, when performed using the same protocol. It is assessed by calculating intra- and inter-laboratory reproducibility.

**RLU:** Relative Light Units

**RNA:** Ribonucleic Acid

**RPC<sub>Max</sub>:** maximum level of response induced by a test chemical, expressed as a percentage of the response induced by 1 nM E2 on the same plate

**RPMI:** RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 0.9% Pen-Strep and 8.0% fetal bovine serum (FBS)

**SD:** Standard deviation.

**Sensitivity:** The proportion of all positive/active substances that are correctly classified by the test. It is a measure of accuracy for a test method that produces categorical results, and is an important consideration in assessing the relevance of a test method (1).

**Specificity:** The proportion of all negative/inactive substances that are correctly classified by the test. It is a measure of accuracy for a test method that produces categorical results, and is an important consideration in assessing the relevance of a test method (1).

**Stable transfection:** When DNA is transfected into cultured cells in such a way that it is stably integrated into the cells genome, resulting in the stable expression of transfected genes. Clones of stably transfected cells are selected by stable markers (e.g., resistance to G418).

**STTA Assay:** Stably Transfected Transactivation Assay, the ER $\alpha$  transcriptional activation assay using the HeLa 9903 Cell Line.

**Substance:** Used in the context of the UN GHS (1) as chemical elements and their compounds in the natural state or obtained by any production process, including any additive necessary to preserve the stability of the product and any impurities deriving from the process used, but excluding any solvent which may be separated without affecting the stability of the substance or changing its composition.

**TA (Transactivation):** The initiation of mRNA synthesis in response to a specific chemical signal, such as a binding of an estrogen to the estrogen receptor.

**Transcription:** mRNA synthesis

**Validated test method:** A test method for which validation studies have been completed to determine the relevance (including accuracy) and reliability for a specific purpose. It is important to note that a validated test method may not have sufficient performance in terms of accuracy and reliability to be found acceptable for the proposed purpose (1).

**Validation:** The process by which the reliability and relevance of a particular approach, method, process or assessment is established for a defined purpose (1).

**VC (Vehicle control):** The solvent that is used to dissolve test and control chemicals is tested solely as vehicle without dissolved chemical.

**Weak positive control:** A weakly active substance selected from the reference chemicals list that is included in all tests to help ensure proper functioning of the assay.

ANNEX 2**Stably Transfected Human Estrogen Receptor- $\alpha$  Transactivation Assay for Detection of Estrogenic Agonist-Activity of Chemicals using the hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line****INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS** (See also **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**, page 1)

1. This transactivation (TA) assay uses the hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line to detect estrogenic agonist activity mediated through human estrogen receptor alpha (hER $\alpha$ ). The validation study of the Stably Transfected Transactivation (STTA) Assay by the Japanese Chemicals Evaluation and Research Institute (CERI) using the hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line to detect estrogenic agonist activity mediated through human estrogen receptor alpha (hER $\alpha$ ) demonstrated the relevance and reliability of the assay for its intended purpose (1).

2. This test method is specifically designed to detect hER $\alpha$ -mediated TA by measuring chemiluminescence as the endpoint. However, non-receptor-mediated luminescence signals have been reported at phytoestrogen concentrations higher than 1  $\mu$ M due to the over-activation of the luciferase reporter gene (2) (3). While the dose-response curve indicates that true activation of the ER system occurs at lower concentrations, luciferase expression obtained at high concentrations of phytoestrogens or similar compounds suspected of producing phytoestrogen-like over-activation of the luciferase reporter gene needs to be examined carefully in stably transfected ER TA assay systems (Appendix 1).

3. The “**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**” and “**ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS**” (pages 1-14) should be read before using this test method for regulatory purposes. Definitions and abbreviations used in this TG are described in Annex 1.

**PRINCIPLE OF THE TEST METHOD** (See also **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**, page 1)

4. The assay is used to signal binding of the estrogen receptor with a ligand. Following ligand binding, the receptor-ligand complex translocates to the nucleus where it binds specific DNA response elements and transactivates a firefly luciferase reporter gene, resulting in increased cellular expression of luciferase enzyme. Luciferin is a substrate that is transformed by the luciferase enzyme to a bioluminescence product that can be quantitatively measured with a luminometer. Luciferase activity can be evaluated quickly and inexpensively with a number of commercially available test kits.

5. The test system utilises the hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line, which is derived from a human cervical tumor, with two stably inserted constructs: (i) the hER $\alpha$  expression construct (encoding the full-length human receptor), and (ii) a firefly luciferase reporter construct bearing five tandem repeats of a vitellogenin Estrogen-Responsive Element (ERE) driven by a mouse metallothionein (MT) promoter TATA element. The mouse MT TATA gene construct has been shown to have the best performance, and so is commonly used. Consequently this hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line can measure the ability of a test chemical to induce hER $\alpha$ -mediated transactivation of luciferase gene expression.

6. Data interpretation for this assay is based upon whether or not the maximum response level induced by a test chemical equals or exceeds an agonist response equal to 10% of that induced by a maximally inducing (1 nM) concentration of the positive control (PC) 17 $\beta$  estradiol (E2) (*i.e.* the PC<sub>10</sub>). Data analysis and interpretation are discussed in greater detail in paragraphs 30 - 40.

**PROCEDURE***Cell Lines*

7. The stably transfected hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line should be used for the assay. The cell line can be obtained from the Japanese Collection of Research Bioresources (JCRB) Cell Bank<sup>1</sup>, upon signing a Material Transfer Agreement (MTA).
8. Only cells characterised as mycoplasma-free should be used in testing. RT-PCR (Real Time Polymerase Chain Reaction) is the method of choice for a sensitive detection of mycoplasma infection (4) (5) (6).

*Stability of the cell line*

9. To monitor the stability of the cell line, E2, 17 $\alpha$ -estradiol, 17 $\alpha$ -methyltestosterone, and corticosterone should be used as the reference chemicals and a complete concentration-response curve in the test concentration range provided in Table 1 should be measured at least once each time the assay is performed, and the results should be in agreement with the results provided in Table 1.

*Cell Culture and Plating Conditions*

10. Cells should be maintained in Eagle's Minimum Essential Medium (EMEM) without phenol red, supplemented with 60 mg/L of antibiotic kanamycin and 10% dextran-coated-charcoal-treated fetal bovine serum (DCC-FBS), in a CO<sub>2</sub> incubator (5% CO<sub>2</sub>) at 37 $\pm$ 1°C. Upon reaching 75-90% confluency, cells can be subcultured at 10 mL of 0.4 x 10<sup>5</sup> - 1 x 10<sup>5</sup> cells/mL for 100 mm cell culture dish. Cells should be suspended with 10% FBS-EMEM (which is the same as EMEM with DCC-FBS) and then plated into wells of a microplate at a density of 1 x 10<sup>4</sup> cells/(100  $\mu$ L x well). Next, the cells should be pre-incubated in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub> incubator at 37 $\pm$ 1°C for 3 hours before the chemical exposure. The plastic-ware should be free of estrogenic activity.
11. To maintain the integrity of the response, the cells should be grown for more than one passage from the frozen stock in the conditioned media and should not be cultured for more than 40 passages. For the hER $\alpha$ -HeLa-9903 cell line, this will be less than three months.
12. The DCC-FBS can be prepared as described in Appendix 2, or obtained from commercial sources.

*Acceptability Criteria**Positive and Negative Reference Chemicals*

13. Prior to and during the study, the responsiveness of the test system should be verified using the appropriate concentrations of a strong estrogen: E2, a weak estrogen (17 $\alpha$ -estradiol), a very weak agonist (17 $\alpha$ -methyltestosterone), and a negative compound (corticosterone). Acceptable range values derived from the validation study (1) are given in Table 1. These 4 concurrent reference chemicals should be included with each experiment and the results should fall within the given acceptable limits. If this is not the case, the cause for the failure to meet the acceptability criteria should be determined (*e.g.* cell handling, and serum and antibiotics for quality and concentration) and the assay repeated. Once the acceptability criteria have been achieved, to ensure minimum variability of EC<sub>50</sub>, PC<sub>50</sub> and PC<sub>10</sub> values, consistent use of materials for cell culturing is essential. The four concurrent reference chemicals, which should be included

<sup>1</sup> JCRB Cell Bank : National Institute of Biomedical Innovation, 7-6-8 Asagi Saito, Ibaraki-shi, Osaka 567-0085, Japan Fax: +81-72-641-9812

in each experiment (conducted under the same conditions including the materials, passage level of cells and technicians), can ensure the sensitivity of the assay because the PC<sub>10</sub>s of the three positive reference chemicals should fall within the acceptable range, as should the PC<sub>50</sub>s and EC<sub>50</sub>s where they can be calculated (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** Acceptable range values of the 4 reference chemicals for the STTA assay (means  $\pm$  2 standard deviations)(SD).

Name	logPC <sub>50</sub>	logPC <sub>10</sub>	logEC <sub>50</sub>	Hill slope	Test range
17 $\beta$ -Estradiol (E2) CAS No: 50-28-2	-11.4 ~ -10.1	<-11	-11.3 ~ -10.1	0.7 ~ 1.5	10 <sup>-14</sup> ~ 10 <sup>-8</sup> M
17 $\alpha$ -Estradiol CAS No: 57-91-0	-9.6 ~ -8.1	-10.7 ~ -9.3	-9.6 ~ -8.4	0.9 ~ 2.0	10 <sup>-12</sup> ~ 10 <sup>-6</sup> M
Corticosterone CAS No: 50-22-6	-	-	-	-	10 <sup>-10</sup> ~ 10 <sup>-4</sup> M
17 $\alpha$ -Methyltestosterone CAS No: 58-18-4	-6.0 ~ -5.1	-8.0 ~ -6.2	-	-	10 <sup>-11</sup> ~ 10 <sup>-5</sup> M

#### *Positive and Vehicle Controls*

14. The positive control (PC) (1 nM of E2) should be tested at least in triplicate in each plate. The vehicle that is used to dissolve a test chemical should be tested as a vehicle control (VC) at least in triplicate in each plate. In addition to this VC, if the PC uses a different vehicle than the test chemical, another VC should be tested at least in triplicate on the same plate with the PC.

#### *Fold-induction*

15. The mean luciferase activity of the PC (1 nM E2) should be at least 4-fold that of the mean VC on each plate. This criterion is established based on the reliability of the endpoint values from the validation study (historically between four- and 30-fold).

16. With respect to the quality control of the assay, the fold-induction corresponding to the PC<sub>10</sub> value of the concurrent PC (1 nM E2) should be greater than 1+2SD of the fold-induction value (=1) of the concurrent VC. For prioritisation purposes, the PC<sub>10</sub> value can be useful to simplify the data analysis required compared to a statistical analysis. Although a statistical analysis provides information on significance, such an analysis is not a quantitative parameter with respect to concentration-based potential, and so is less useful for prioritisation purposes.

**Chemicals to Demonstrate Laboratory Proficiency** (see paragraph 14 and Table 2 in «**ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS**» of this Test Guideline (pages 6-14)).

#### *Vehicle*

17. Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), or appropriate solvent, at the same concentration used for the different positive and negative controls and the test chemicals should be used as the concurrent VC. Test substances should be dissolved in a solvent that solubilizes that test substance and is miscible with the cell medium. Water, ethanol (95% to 100% purity) and DMSO are suitable vehicles. If DMSO is used, the level should

not exceed 0.1% (v/v). For any vehicle, it should be demonstrated that the maximum volume used is not cytotoxic and does not interfere with assay performance.

### *Preparation of Test Chemicals*

18. Generally, the test chemicals should be dissolved in DMSO or other suitable solvent, and serially diluted with the same solvent at a common ratio of 1:10 in order to prepare solutions for dilution with media.

### *Solubility and Cytotoxicity: Considerations for Range Finding.*

19. A preliminary test should be carried out to determine the appropriate concentration range of chemical to be tested, and to ascertain whether the test chemical may have any solubility and cytotoxicity problems. Initially, chemicals are tested up to the maximum concentration of 1 µL/mL, 1 mg/mL, or 1 mM, whichever is the lowest. Based on the extent of cytotoxicity or lack of solubility observed in the preliminary test, the first definite run should test the chemical at log serial dilutions starting at the maximum acceptable concentration (*e.g.* 1 mM, 100 µM, 10 µM, etc.) and the presence of cloudiness or precipitate or cytotoxicity noted. Concentrations in the second, and if necessary third run should be adjusted as appropriate to better characterise the concentration-response curve and to avoid concentrations which are found to be insoluble or to induce excessive cytotoxicity.

20. For ER agonists, the presence of increasing levels of cytotoxicity can significantly alter or eliminate the typical sigmoidal response and should be considered when interpreting the data. Cytotoxicity testing methods that can provide information regarding 80% cell viability should be used, utilising an appropriate assay based upon laboratory experience.

21. Should the results of the cytotoxicity test show that the concentration of the test substance has reduced the cell number by 20% or more, this concentration should be regarded as cytotoxic, and the concentrations at or above the cytotoxic concentration should be excluded from the evaluation.

### *Chemical Exposure and Assay Plate Organisation*

22. The procedure for chemical dilutions (Steps 1 and 2) and exposure to cells (Step-3) can be conducted as follows:

Step-1: Each test chemical should be serially diluted in DMSO, or appropriate solvent, and added to the wells of a microtitre plate to achieve final serial concentrations as determined by the preliminary range finding test (typically in a series of, for example 1 mM, 100 µM, 10 µM, 1 µM, 100 nM, 10 nM, 1 nM, 100 pM, and 10 pM ( $10^{-3}$ - $10^{-11}$  M)) for triplicate testing.

Step-2: Chemical dilution: First dilute 1.5 µL of the test chemical in the solvent to a concentration of 500 µL of media.

Step-3: Chemical exposure of the cells: Add 50 µL of dilution with media (prepared in Step-2) to an assay well containing  $10^4$  cells/100 µL/well.

The recommended final volume of media required for each well is 150 µL.

Test samples and reference chemicals can be assigned as shown in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2:** Example of plate concentration assignment of the reference chemicals in the assay plate

Row	17 $\alpha$ -Methyltestosterone			Corticosterone			17 $\alpha$ -Estradiol			E2		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	conc 1 (10 $\mu$ M)	→	→	100 $\mu$ M	→	→	1 $\mu$ M	→	→	10 nM	→	→
B	conc 2 (1 $\mu$ M)	→	→	10 $\mu$ M	→	→	100 nM	→	→	1 nM	→	→
C	conc 3 (100 nM)	→	→	1 $\mu$ M	→	→	10 nM	→	→	100 pM	→	→
D	conc 4 (10 nM)	→	→	100 nM	→	→	1 nM	→	→	10 pM	→	→
E	conc 5 (1 nM)	→	→	10 nM	→	→	100 pM	→	→	1 pM	→	→
F	conc 6 (100 pM)	→	→	1 nM	→	→	10 pM	→	→	0.1 pM	→	→
G	conc 7 (10 pM)	→	→	100 pM	→	→	1 pM	→	→	0.01 pM	→	→
H	VC	→	→	→	→	→	PC	→	→	→	→	→

Plate controls = VC: Vehicle control (DMSO); PC: Positive control (1 nM E2)

23. The reference chemicals (E2, 17 $\alpha$ -Estradiol, 17 $\alpha$ -methyl testosterone and corticosterone) should be tested in every run (Table 2). PC wells treated with 1 nM of E2 that can produce maximum induction of E2 and VC wells treated with DMSO (or appropriate solvent) alone should be included in each test assay plate (Table 3). If cells from different sources (*e.g.* different passage number, different lot, etc.) are used in the same experiment, the reference chemicals should be tested for each cell source.

**Table 3:** Example of plate concentration assignment of test and plate control chemicals in the assay plate

Row	Test Chemical 1			Test Chemical 2			Test Chemical 3			Test Chemical 4		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	conc 1 (10 $\mu$ M)	→	→	1 nM	→	→	1 $\mu$ M	→	→	10 nM	→	→
B	conc 2 (1 $\mu$ M)	→	→	100 $\mu$ M	→	→	100 nM	→	→	1 nM	→	→
C	conc 3 (100 nM)	→	→	10 $\mu$ M	→	→	10 nM	→	→	100 pM	→	→
D	conc 4 (10 nM)	→	→	1 $\mu$ M	→	→	1 nM	→	→	10 pM	→	→
E	conc 5 (1 nM)	→	→	100 nM	→	→	100 pM	→	→	1 pM	→	→
F	conc 6 (100 pM)	→	→	10 $\mu$ M	→	→	10 pM	→	→	0.1 pM	→	→
G	conc 7 (10 pM)	→	→	1 nM	→	→	1 pM	→	→	0.01 pM	→	→
H	VC	→	→	→	→	→	PC	→	→	→	→	→

24. The lack of edge effects should be confirmed, as appropriate, and if edge effects are suspected, the plate layout should be altered to avoid such effects. For example, a plate layout excluding the edge wells can be employed.

25. After adding the chemicals, the assay plates should be incubated in a 5% CO<sub>2</sub> incubator at 37 $\pm$ 1°C for 20-24 hours to induce the reporter gene products.

26. Special considerations will need to be applied to those compounds that are highly volatile. In such cases, nearby control wells may generate false positives, and this should be considered in light of expected and historical control values. In the few cases where volatility may be of concern, the use of “plate sealers” may help to effectively isolate individual wells during testing, and is therefore recommended in such cases.

27. Repeat definitive tests for the same chemical should be conducted on different days, to ensure independence.

*Luciferase assay*

28. A commercial luciferase assay reagent [*e.g.* Steady-Glo® Luciferase Assay System (Promega, E2510, or equivalents)] or a standard luciferase assay system (Promega, E1500, or equivalents) can be used for the assay, as long as the acceptability criteria is met. The assay reagents should be selected based on the sensitivity of the luminometer to be used. When using the standard luciferase assay system, Cell Culture Lysis Reagent (Promega, E1531, or equivalents) should be used before adding the substrate. The luciferase reagent should be applied following the manufacturers' instructions.

**ANALYSIS OF DATA**

29. To obtain the relative transcriptional activity to PC (1 nM of E2), the luminescence signals from the same plate can be analysed according to the following steps (other equivalent mathematical processes are also acceptable):

Step 1. Calculate the mean value for the VC.

Step 2. Subtract the mean value of the VC from each well value to normalise the data.

Step 3. Calculate the mean for the normalised PC.

Step 4. Divide the normalised value of each well in the plate by the mean value of the normalised PC (PC=100%).

The final value of each well is the relative transcriptional activity for that well compared to the PC response.

Step 5. Calculate the mean value of the relative transcriptional activity for each concentration group of the test chemical. There are two dimensions to the response: the averaged transcriptional activity (response) and the concentration at which the response occurs (see following section).

***EC<sub>50</sub>, PC<sub>50</sub> and PC<sub>10</sub> induction considerations***

30. The full concentration-response curve is required for the calculation of the EC<sub>50</sub>, but this may not always be achievable or practical due to limitations of the test concentration range (for example due to cytotoxicity or solubility problems). However, as the EC<sub>50</sub> and maximum induction level (corresponding to the top value of the Hill-equation) are informative parameters, these parameters should be reported where possible. For the calculation of EC<sub>50</sub> and maximum induction level, appropriate statistical software should be used (*e.g.* Graphpad Prism statistical software).

31. If the Hill's logistic equation is applicable to the concentration response data, the EC<sub>50</sub> should be calculated by the following equation (7).

$$Y = \text{Bottom} + (\text{Top} - \text{Bottom}) / (1 + 10^{\exp((\log EC_{50} - X) \times \text{Hill slope}))}$$

Where:

X is the logarithm of concentration; and,

Y is the response and Y starts at the Bottom and goes to the Top in a sigmoid curve.

Bottom is fixed at zero in the Hill's logistic equation.

32. For each test chemical, the following should be provided:

(i) The RPC<sub>Max</sub> which is the maximum level of response induced by a test chemical, expressed as a percentage of the response induced by 1 nM E2 on the same plate, as well as the PCMax (concentration associated with the RPC<sub>Max</sub>); and



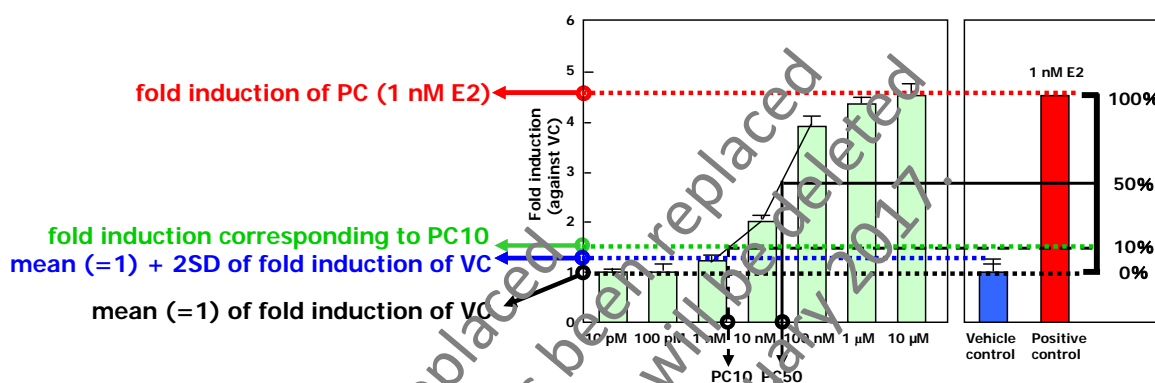
(ii) For positive chemicals, the concentrations that induce the PC<sub>10</sub> and, if appropriate, the PC<sub>50</sub>.

33. The PC<sub>x</sub> value can be calculated by interpolating between 2 points on the X-Y coordinate, one immediately above and one immediately below a PC<sub>x</sub> value. Where the data points lying immediately above and below the PC<sub>x</sub> value have the coordinates (a,b) and (c,d) respectively, then the PC<sub>x</sub> value may be calculated using the following equation:

$$\log[\text{PC}_x] = \log[c] + (x-d)/(d-b)$$

34. Descriptions of PC values are provided in [Figure 1](#) below.

**Figure 1:** Example of how to derive PC-values. The PC (1 nM of E2) is included on each assay plate



35. The results should be based on two (or three) independent runs. If two runs give comparable and therefore reproducible results, it is not necessary to conduct a third run. To be acceptable, the results should:

- Meet the acceptability criteria:
  - The mean luciferase activity of the PC (1 nM E2) should be at least 4-fold that of the mean VC on each plate
  - The fold induction corresponding to the PC<sub>10</sub> value of the concurrent PC (1 nM E2) should be greater than +2SD of the fold induction value (=1) of the VC.
  - The results of 4 reference chemicals should be within the acceptable range ([Table 1](#)).
- Be reproducible.

#### Data Interpretation Criteria

**Table 4:** Positive and negative decision criteria

<b>Positive</b>	If the $\text{RPC}_{\text{Max}}$ is obtained that is equal to or exceeds 10% of the response of the positive control in at least two of two or two of three runs.
<b>Negative</b>	If the $\text{RPC}_{\text{Max}}$ fails to achieve at least 10% of the response of the positive control in two of two or two of three runs.

36. Data interpretation criteria are shown in [Table 4](#). Positive results will be characterised by both the magnitude of the effect and the concentration at which the effect occurs. Expressing results as a concentration at which a 50% (PC<sub>50</sub>) or 10% (PC<sub>10</sub>) of PC values are reached accomplishes both of these goals. However, a test chemical is determined to be positive, if the maximum response induced by the test

chemical ( $RPC_{Max}$ ) is equal to or exceeds 10% of the response of the PC in at least two of two or two of three runs, while a test chemical is considered negative if the  $RPC_{Max}$  fails to achieve at least 10% of the response of the positive control in two of two or two of three runs.

37. The calculations of  $PC_{10}$ ,  $PC_{50}$  and  $PC_{Max}$  can be made by using a spreadsheet available with the Test Guideline on the OECD public website<sup>2</sup>.

38. It should be sufficient to obtain  $PC_{10}$  or  $PC_{50}$  values at least twice. However, should the resulting base-line for data in the same concentration range show variability with an unacceptably high coefficient of variation (CV; %) the data may not be considered reliable and the source of the high variability should be identified. The CV of the raw data triplicates (*i.e.* luminescence intensity data) of the data points that are used for the calculation of  $PC_{10}$  should be less than 20%.

39. Meeting the acceptability criteria indicates the assay system is operating properly, but it does not ensure that any particular run will produce accurate data. Duplicating the results of the first run is the best insurance that accurate data were produced, see paragraphs 37 and 38.

40. Where more information is required in addition to the screening and prioritisation purposes of this TG for positive test compounds, particularly for  $PC_{10}$ - $PC_{49}$  chemicals, as well as chemicals suspected to over-stimulate luciferase, it can be confirmed that the observed luciferase activity is solely an  $ER\alpha$ -specific response, using an  $ER\alpha$  antagonist (see [Appendix 1](#)).

#### TEST REPORT

41. See paragraph 20 of “ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS” (Pages 6-14 of this Test Guideline)

<sup>2</sup> [<http://www.oecd.org/env/testguidelines>]

## LITERATURE

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Replaced  
This version has been replaced  
on 28 July 2015 and will be deleted  
effectively on 28 January 2017

## Appendix 1

**False positives: Assessment of non-receptor mediated luminescence signals**

1. False positives might be generated by non-ER-mediated activation of the luciferase gene, or direct activation of the gene product or unrelated fluorescence. Such effects are indicated by an incomplete or unusual dose-response curve. If such effects are suspected, the effect of an ER antagonist (*e.g.* 4-hydroxytamoxifen (OHT) at non-toxic concentration) on the response should be examined. The pure antagonist ICI 182780 may not be suitable for this purpose as a sufficient concentration of ICI 182780 may decrease the VC value, and this will affect the data analysis.

2. To ensure validity of this approach, the following needs to be tested in the same plate:

- Agonistic activity of the unknown chemical with / without 10  $\mu$ M of OHT
- VC (in triplicate)
- OHT (in triplicate)
- 1 nM of E2 (in triplicate) as agonist PC
- 1 nM of E2 + OHT (in triplicate)

3. *Data interpretation criteria*

Note: All wells should be treated with the same concentration of the vehicle.

- If the agonistic activity of the unknown chemical is NOT affected by the treatment with ER antagonist, it is classified as “Negative”.
- If the agonistic activity of the unknown chemical is completely inhibited, apply the decision criteria.
- If the agonistic activity at the lowest concentration is equal to, or is exceeding, PC<sub>10</sub> response the unknown chemical is inhibited equal to or exceeding PC<sub>10</sub> response. The difference in the responses between the non-treated and treated wells with the ER antagonist is calculated and this difference should be considered as the true response and should be used for the calculation of the appropriate parameters to enable a classification decision to be made.

4. *Data analysis*

Check the performance standard.

Check the CV between wells treated under the same conditions.

1. Calculate the mean of the VC
2. Subtract the mean of VC from each well value **not** treated with OHT
3. Calculate the mean of OHT
4. Subtract the mean of the VC from each well value treated with OHT
5. Calculate the mean of the PC
6. Calculate the relative transcriptional activity of all other wells relative to the PC.

## Appendix 2

### Preparation of Serum treated with Dextran Coated Charcoal (DCC)

1. The treatment of serum with dextran-coated charcoal (DCC) is a general method for removal of estrogenic compounds from serum that is added to cell medium, in order to exclude the biased response associated with residual estrogens in serum. 500 mL of fetal bovine serum (FBS) can be treated by this procedure.

#### Components

2. The following materials and equipment will be required:

##### *Materials*

- Activated charcoal
- Dextran
- Magnesium chloride hexahydrate ( $\text{MgCl}_2 \cdot 6\text{H}_2\text{O}$ )
- Sucrose
- 1 M HEPES buffer solution (pH 7.4)
- Ultrapure water produced from a filter system

##### *Equipment*

- Autoclaved glass container (size should be adjusted as appropriate)
- General Laboratory Centrifuge (that can set temperature at 4°C)

#### Procedure

3. The following procedure is adjusted for the use of 50 mL centrifuge tubes:

[Day-1] Prepare dextran-coated charcoal suspension with 1 L of ultrapure water containing 1.5 mM of  $\text{MgCl}_2$ , 0.25 M sucrose, 2.5 g of charcoal, 0.25 g dextran and 5 mM of HEPES and stir it at 4°C overnight.

[Day-2] Dispense the suspension in 50 mL centrifuge tubes and centrifuge at 10000 rpm at 4°C for 10 minutes. Remove the supernatant and store half of the charcoal sediment at 4°C for the use on Day-3. Suspend the other half of the charcoal with FBS that has been gently thawed to avoid precipitation, and heat-inactivated at 56°C for 30 minutes, then transfer into an autoclaved glass container such as an Erlenmeyer flask. Stir this suspension gently at 4°C, overnight.

[Day-3] Dispense the suspension with FBS into centrifuge tubes for centrifugation at 10000 rpm at 4°C for 10 minutes. Collect FBS and transfer into the new charcoal sediment prepared and stored on Day-2. Suspend the charcoal sediment and stir this suspension gently in an autoclaved glass container at 4°C, overnight.

[Day-4] Dispense the suspension for centrifugation at 10000 rpm at 4°C for 10 minutes and sterilise the supernatant by filtration through 0.2 µm sterile filter. This DCC treated FBS should be stored at -20°C and can be used for up a year.

ANNEX 3**BG1Luc Estrogen Receptor Transactivation Test Method for Identifying Estrogen Receptor Agonists****INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND LIMITATIONS** (See also **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**, page 1)

1. This assay uses the BG1Luc4E2 cell line. It has been validated by the National Toxicology Program Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods (NICEATM), and the Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM) (1). The BG1Luc cell lines predominantly express endogenous ER $\alpha$  and a minor amount of endogenous ER $\beta$  (2) (3) (4).
2. This assay is applicable to a wide range of substances, provided they can be dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO; CASRN 67-68-5), do not react with DMSO or the cell culture medium, and are not cytotoxic at the concentration being tested. If use of DMSO is not possible, another vehicle such as ethanol or water may be used (see paragraph 14). The demonstrated performance of the BG1Luc ER TA agonist test method suggests that data generated with this test method may inform upon ER mediated mechanisms of action and could be considered for prioritization of substances for further testing.
3. This test method is specifically designed to detect ER $\alpha$  and ER $\beta$ -mediated TA by measuring chemiluminescence as the endpoint. Chemiluminescence use in bioassays is widespread because luminescence has a high signal-to-background ratio (10). However, the activity of firefly luciferase in cell-based assays can be confounded by compounds that inhibit the luciferase enzyme, causing both apparent inhibition or increased luminescence due to protein stabilization (10). In addition, in some luciferase-based ER reporter gene assays, non-receptor-mediated luminescence signals have been reported at phytoestrogen concentrations higher than 1  $\mu$ M due to the over-activation of the luciferase reporter gene (9) (11). While the dose-response curve indicates that true activation of the ER system occurs at lower concentrations, luciferase expression obtained at high concentrations of phytoestrogens or similar compounds suspected of producing phytoestrogen-like over-activation of the luciferase reporter gene needs to be examined carefully in stably transfected ER TA assay systems (see Annex 2).
4. The “**GENERAL INTRODUCTION**” and “**ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS**” (pages 1-13) should be read before using this test method for regulatory purposes. Definitions and abbreviations used in this TG are described in Annex 1.

**PRINCIPLE OF THE TEST METHOD** (See also **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**, page 1)

5. The assay is used to indicate ER ligand binding, followed by translocation of the receptor-ligand complex to the nucleus. In the nucleus, the receptor-ligand complex binds to specific DNA response elements and transactivates the reporter gene (*luc*), resulting in the production of luciferase and the subsequent emission of light, which can be quantified using a luminometer. Luciferase activity can be quickly and inexpensively evaluated with a number of commercially available kits. The BG1Luc ER TA utilizes an ER responsive human ovarian adenocarcinoma cell line, BG-1, which has been stably transfected with a firefly *luc* reporter construct under control of four estrogen response elements placed upstream of the mouse mammary tumor virus promoter (MMTV), to detect substances with *in vitro* ER

agonist activity. This MMTV promoter exhibits only minor cross-reactivity with other steroid and non-steroid hormones (8). Criteria for data interpretation are described in detail in paragraph 37. Briefly, a positive response is identified by a concentration-response curve containing at least three points with nonoverlapping error bars (mean  $\pm$  SD), as well as a change in amplitude (normalized relative light unit [RLU]) of at least 20% of the maximal value for the reference substance (17 $\beta$ -estradiol [E2; CASRN 50-28-2]).

## PROCEDURE

### *Cell Line*

6. The stably transfected BG1Luc4E2 cell line should be used for the assay. The cell line is available with a technical licensing agreement from the University of California, Davis, California, USA<sup>3</sup>, and from Xenobiotic Detection Systems Inc., Durham, North Carolina, USA<sup>4</sup>.

### *Stability of the Cell Line*

7. To maintain the stability and integrity of the cell line, the cells should be grown for more than one passage from the frozen stock in cell maintenance media (see paragraph 9). Cells should not be cultured for more than 30 passages. For the BG1Luc4E2 cell line, 30 passages will be approximately three months.

### *Cell Culture and Plating Conditions*

8. Procedures specified in the Guidance on Good Cell Culture Practice (5) (6) should be followed to assure the quality of all materials and methods in order to maintain the integrity, validity, and reproducibility of any work conducted.

9. BG1Luc4E2 Cells are maintained in RPMI 1640 medium supplemented with 0.9% Pen-Strep and 8.0% fetal bovine serum (FBS) in a dedicated tissue culture incubator at 37°C  $\pm$  1°C, 90%  $\pm$  5% humidity, and 5.0%  $\pm$  1% CO<sub>2</sub>/air.

10. Upon reaching ~80% confluence, BG1Luc4E2 cells are subcultured and conditioned to an estrogen-free environment for 48 hours prior to plating the cells in 96-well plates for exposure to test substances and analysis of estrogen dependent induction of luciferase activity. The estrogen-free medium (EFM) contains Dulbecco's Modification of Eagle's Medium (DMEM) without phenol red, supplemented with 4.5% charcoal/dextran-treated FBS, 1.9% L-glutamine, and 0.9% Pen-Strep. All plasticware should be free of estrogenic activity [see detailed protocol (7)].

### *Acceptability Criteria*

11. Acceptance or rejection of a test is based on the evaluation of reference standard and control results from each experiment conducted on a 96-well plate. Each reference standard is tested in multiple concentrations and there are multiple samples of each reference and control concentration. Results are compared to quality controls (QC) for these parameters that were derived from the historical databases generated by each laboratory during the demonstration of proficiency. The historical databases are updated

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<sup>4</sup> Xenobiotic Detection Systems Inc. 1601 East Geer Street, Suite S, Durham NC, 27704 USA, email: [info@dioxins.com](mailto:info@dioxins.com), Telephone: 919-688-4804, Fax: 919-688-4404

with reference standard and control values on a continuous basis. Changes in equipment or laboratory conditions may necessitate generation of updated historical databases.

#### *Range Finder Test*

12. Acceptability criteria for the range finder test are as follows:

- Induction: Plate induction should be measured by dividing the average highest E2 reference standard relative light unit (RLU) value by the average DMSO control RLU value. Five-fold induction is usually achieved, but for purpose of acceptance, induction should be greater than or equal to four-fold.
- DMSO control results: Solvent control RLU values should be within 2.5 times the standard deviation of the historical solvent control mean RLU value.
- An experiment that fails either acceptance criterion should be discarded and repeated.

#### *Comprehensive Test*

13. It should include acceptability criteria from the range finder test and the following:

- Reference standard results: The E2 reference standard concentration-response curve should be sigmoidal in shape and have at least three values within the linear portion of the concentration-response curve.
- Positive control results: Methoxychlor control RLU values should be greater than the DMSO mean plus three times the standard deviation from the DMSO mean.
- An experiment that fails any single acceptance criterion should be discarded and repeated.

#### **Reference Standards, Positive, and Vehicle Controls**

##### *Vehicle Control*

14. The vehicle that is used to dissolve the test substances should be tested as a vehicle control. The vehicle used during the validation of the BG-Luc ER-TA assay was 1% (v/v) dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO, CASRN 67-68-5) (see paragraph 21). If a vehicle other than DMSO is used, all reference standards, controls, and test substances should be tested in the same vehicle, if appropriate.

##### *Reference Standard (Range Finder)*

15. The reference standard is E2 (CASRN 50-28-2). For range finder testing, the reference standard is comprised of a serial dilution of four concentrations of E2 ( $1.84 \times 10^{-10}$ ,  $4.59 \times 10^{-11}$ ,  $1.15 \times 10^{-11}$  and  $2.87 \times 10^{-12}$  M), with each concentration tested in duplicate wells.

##### *Reference Standard (Comprehensive)*

16. E2 for comprehensive testing is comprised of a 1:2 serial dilution consisting of 11 concentrations (ranging from  $3.67 \times 10^{-10}$  to  $3.59 \times 10^{-13}$  M) of E2 in duplicate wells.

##### *Weak Positive Control*

17. The weak positive control is  $9.06 \times 10^{-6}$  M *p,p'*-methoxychlor (methoxychlor; CASRN 72-43-5) in EFM.

##### *Fold-Induction*



18. The induction of luciferase activity of the reference standard (E2) is measured by dividing the average highest concentration E2 reference standard RLU value by the average DMSO control RLU value, and the result should be greater than four-fold.

#### ***Demonstration of Laboratory Proficiency***

19. To demonstrate proficiency with the BG1Luc ER TA test method, a laboratory should compile historical databases with reference standard and control data generated from at least 10 independent experiments, conducted on different days. These experiments are the foundation for reference standards and the historical controls. Future acceptable results should be added to enlarge the database. A successful demonstration of proficiency will be achieved by producing values that are no more than 2.5 standard deviations of the historical controls (see paragraph 11).

20. Once the historical databases are compiled, the proficiency substances listed in Table 2 of “ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS” (Page 6 of this Test Guideline) should be tested.

#### ***Vehicle***

21. Test Substances should be dissolved in a solvent that solubilizes the test substance and is miscible with the cell medium. Water, ethanol (95% to 100% purity) and DMSO are suitable vehicles. If DMSO is used, the level should not exceed 1% (v/v). For any vehicle, it should be demonstrated that the maximum volume used is not cytotoxic and does not interfere with the assay performance. Reference standards and controls are dissolved in 100% solvent and then diluted down to appropriate concentrations in EFM.

#### ***Preparation of Test Substances***

22. The test substances are dissolved in 100% DMSO (or appropriate solvent), and then diluted down to appropriate concentrations in EFM. All test substances should be allowed to equilibrate to room temperature before being dissolved and diluted. Test substance solutions should be prepared fresh for each experiment. Solutions should not have noticeable precipitate or cloudiness. Reference standard and control stocks may be prepared in bulk; however, final reference standard, control dilutions and test substances should be freshly prepared for each experiment and used within 24 hours of preparation.

#### ***Solubility and Cytotoxicity: Considerations for Range Finding***

23. Range finder testing consists of seven point - 1:10 serial dilutions run in duplicate. Initially, test substances are tested up to the maximum concentration of 1 mg/mL (~1 mM). Range finder experiments are used to determine the following:

- Test substance starting concentrations to be used during comprehensive testing
- Test substance dilutions (1:2 or 1:5) to be used during comprehensive testing

24. An assessment of cell viability/cytotoxicity is included in the test method protocol (7) and is incorporated into range finder and comprehensive testing. The cytotoxicity method that was used to assess cell viability during the validation of the BG1Luc ER TA (1) was a scaled qualitative visual observation method, however, a quantitative method for the determination of cytotoxicity can be used (see protocol (7)). Data from test substance concentrations that cause more than 20% reduction in viability cannot be used.

#### ***Test Substance Exposure and Assay Plate Organization***

25. Cells are counted and plated into 96-well tissue culture plates ( $2 \times 10^5$  cells per well) in EFM and incubated for 24 hours to allow the cells to attach to the plate. The EFM is removed and replaced with test

and reference chemicals in EFM and incubated for 19-24 hours. Special considerations will need to be applied to those compounds that are highly volatile since nearby control wells may generate false positive results. In such cases, “plate sealers” may help to effectively isolate individual wells during testing, and are therefore recommended.

### Range Finder Tests

26. Range finder testing uses all wells of the 96-well plate to test up to six substances as seven point 1:10 serial dilutions in duplicate (see [Figure 1](#)). It uses four concentrations of E2 ([Figure 1](#)) in duplicate as the reference standard and four replicate wells for the DMSO control.

**Figure 1: Range Finder Test 96-well Plate Layout**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	TS1-1	TS1-1	TS2-1	TS2-1	TS3-1	TS3-1	TS4-1	TS4-1	TS5-1	TS5-1	TS6-1	TS6-1
B	TS1-2	TS1-2	TS2-2	TS2-2	TS3-2	TS3-2	TS4-2	TS4-2	TS5-2	TS5-2	TS6-2	TS6-2
C	TS1-3	TS1-3	TS2-3	TS2-3	TS3-3	TS3-3	TS4-3	TS4-3	TS5-3	TS5-3	TS6-3	TS6-3
D	TS1-4	TS1-4	TS2-4	TS2-4	TS3-4	TS3-4	TS4-4	TS4-4	TS5-4	TS5-4	TS6-4	TS6-4
E	TS1-5	TS1-5	TS2-5	TS2-5	TS3-5	TS3-5	TS4-5	TS4-5	TS5-5	TS5-5	TS6-5	TS6-5
F	TS1-6	TS1-6	TS2-6	TS2-6	TS3-6	TS3-6	TS4-6	TS4-6	TS5-6	TS5-6	TS6-6	TS6-6
G	TS1-7	TS1-7	TS2-7	TS2-7	TS3-7	TS3-7	TS4-7	TS4-7	TS5-7	TS5-7	TS6-7	TS6-7
H	E2-1	E2-2	E2-3	E2-4	VC	VC	VC	VC	E2-1	E2-2	E2-3	E2-4

Abbreviations: E2-1 to E2-4 = concentrations of the E2 reference standard (from high to low); TS1-1 to TS1-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 1 (TS1); TS2-1 to TS2-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 2 (TS2); TS3-1 to TS3-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 3 (TS3); TS4-1 to TS4-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 4 (TS4); TS5-1 to TS5-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 5 (TS5); TS6-1 to TS6-7 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 6 (TS6); VC = vehicle control (DMSO [1% v/v EFM.]).

27. The recommended final volume of media required for each well is 200  $\mu$ L. Only use test plates in which the cells in all wells give a viability of 80% and above.

28. Determination of starting concentrations for comprehensive testing are described in depth in the protocol (7). Briefly, the following criteria are used:

- If there are no points on the test substance concentration curve that are greater than the mean plus three times the standard deviation of the DMSO control, comprehensive testing will be conducted using an 11-point 1:2 serial dilution starting at the maximum soluble concentration.
- If there are points on the test substance concentration curve that are greater than the mean plus three times the standard deviation of the DMSO control, the starting concentration to be used for the 11-point dilution scheme in comprehensive testing should be one log higher than the concentration giving the highest adjusted RLU value in the range finder. The 11-point dilution scheme will be based on either 1:2 or 1:5 dilutions according to the following criteria:

An 11-point 1:2 serial dilution should be used if the resulting concentration range will encompass the full range of responses based on the concentration response curve generated in the range finder test. Otherwise, use a 1:5 dilution.

- If a substance exhibits a biphasic concentration response curve in the range finder test, both phases should also be resolved in comprehensive testing.

### Comprehensive Tests

29. Comprehensive testing consists of 11-point serial dilutions (either 1:2 or 1:5 serial dilutions based on the starting concentration for comprehensive testing criteria) with each concentration tested in triplicate wells of the 96-well plate (see Figure 2). Comprehensive testing uses 11 concentrations of E2 (Table 2) in duplicate as the reference standard. Four replicate wells for the DMSO control and four replicate wells for the methoxychlor control ( $9.06 \times 10^{-6}$  M) are included on each plate.

**Figure 2: Comprehensive Test 96-well Plate Layout**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
A	TS1-1	TS1-2	TS1-3	TS1-4	TS1-5	TS1-6	TS1-7	TS1-8	TS1-9	TS1-10	TS1-11	VC
B	TS1-1	TS1-2	TS1-3	TS1-4	TS1-5	TS1-6	TS1-7	TS1-8	TS1-9	TS1-10	TS1-11	VC
C	TS1-1	TS1-2	TS1-3	TS1-4	TS1-5	TS1-6	TS1-7	TS1-8	TS1-9	TS1-10	TS1-11	VC
D	TS2-1	TS2-2	TS2-3	TS2-4	TS2-5	TS2-6	TS2-7	TS2-8	TS2-9	TS2-10	TS2-11	VC
E	TS2-1	TS2-2	TS2-3	TS2-4	TS2-5	TS2-6	TS2-7	TS2-8	TS2-9	TS2-10	TS2-11	Meth
F	TS2-1	TS2-2	TS2-3	TS2-4	TS2-5	TS2-6	TS2-7	TS2-8	TS2-9	TS2-10	TS2-11	Meth
G	E2-1	E2-2	E2-3	E2-4	E2-5	E2-6	E2-7	E2-8	E2-9	E2-10	E2-11	Meth
H	E2-1	E2-2	E2-3	E2-4	E2-5	E2-6	E2-7	E2-8	E2-9	E2-10	E2-11	Meth

Abbreviations: TS11-1 to TS1-11 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 1; TS2-1 to TS2-11 = concentrations (from high to low) of test substance 2; E2-1 to E2-11 = concentrations of the E2 reference standard (from high to low); Meth = p,p' methoxychlor weak positive control; VC = DMSO (1% v/v) ERM vehicle control

30. Repeat comprehensive tests for the same chemical should be conducted on different days, to ensure independence. At least two comprehensive tests should be conducted. If the results of the tests contradict each other (e.g., one test is positive, the other negative), or if one of the tests is inadequate, a third additional test should be conducted.

### Measure of Luminescence

31. Luminescence is measured in the range of 300 to 650 nm, using an injecting luminometer and with software that controls the injection volume and measurement interval (7). Light emission from each well is expressed as RLU per well.

## ANALYSIS OF DATA

### EC<sub>50</sub> Determination

32. The EC<sub>50</sub> value (half maximal effective concentration of a test substance) is determined from the concentration-response data. For substances that are positive at one or more concentrations, the concentration of test substance that causes a half-maximal response (EC<sub>50</sub>) is calculated using a Hill function analysis or an appropriate alternative. The Hill function is a four-parameter logistic mathematical model relating the substance concentration to the response (typically following a sigmoidal curve) using the equation below:

$$Y = \text{Bottom} + \frac{(\text{Top} - \text{Bottom})}{1 + 10^{(\lg \text{EC}_{50} - X)\text{Hillslope}}}$$

where Y = response (i.e., RLU); X = the logarithm of concentration; Bottom = the minimum response; Top = the maximum response;  $\lg \text{EC}_{50}$  = the logarithm of X as the response midway between Top and Bottom; and Hillslope describes the steepness of the curve. The model calculates the best fit for the Top, Bottom, Hillslope, and  $\text{EC}_{50}$  parameter. For the calculation of  $\text{EC}_{50}$  values, appropriate statistical software should be used (e.g. Graphpad Prism<sup>R</sup> statistical software).

### ***Determination of Outliers***

33. Good statistical judgment could be facilitated by including (but not limited to) the Q-test (see protocol (7) for determining “unusable” wells that will be excluded from the data analysis.

34. For E2 reference standard replicates (sample size of two), any adjusted RLU value for a replicate at a given concentration of E2 is considered an outlier if its value is more than 20% above or below the adjusted RLU value for that concentration in the historical database.

### ***Collection and Adjustment of Luminometer Data for Range Finder Testing***

35. Raw data from the luminometer should be transferred to a spreadsheet template designed for the test method. It should be determined whether there are outlier data points that need to be removed. (See Test Acceptance Criteria for parameters that are determined in the analyses.) The following calculations should be performed:

- Step 1 Calculate the mean value for the DMSO vehicle control (VC).
- Step 2 Subtract the mean value of the DMSO VC from each well value to normalize the data.
- Step 3 Calculate the mean fold induction for the reference standard (E2).
- Step 4 Calculate the mean  $\text{EC}_{50}$  value for the test substances.

### ***Collection and Adjustment of Luminometer Data for Comprehensive Testing***

36. Raw data from the luminometer should be transferred to a spreadsheet template designed for the test method. It should be determined whether there are outlier data points that need to be removed. (See Test Acceptance Criteria for parameters that are determined in the analyses.) The following calculations are performed:

- Step 1 Calculate the mean value for the DMSO VC.
- Step 2 Subtract the mean value of the DMSO VC from each well value to normalize the data.
- Step 3 Calculate the mean fold induction for the reference standard (E2).
- Step 4 Calculate the mean  $\text{EC}_{50}$  value for E2 and the test substances.
- Step 5 Calculate the mean adjusted RLU value for methoxychlor.

### ***Data Interpretation Criteria***

37. The BG1Luc ER TA is intended as part of a weight of evidence approach to help prioritize substances for ED testing *in vivo*. Part of this prioritization procedure will be the classification of the test

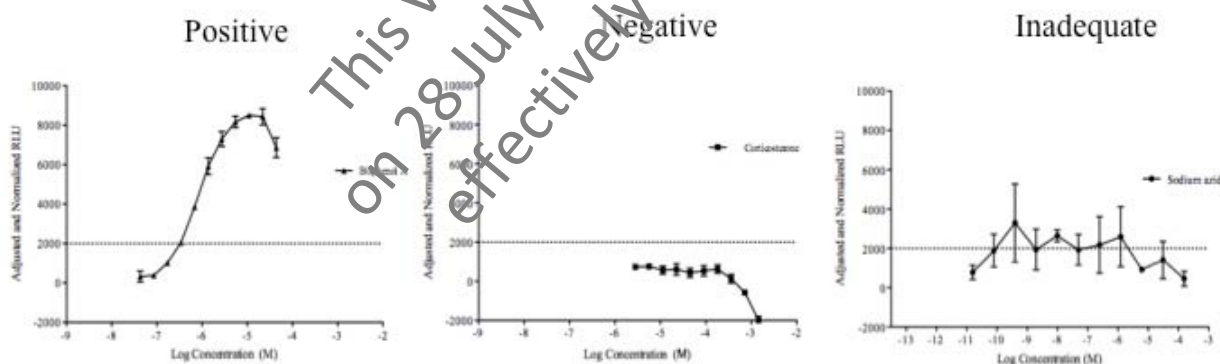
substance as positive or negative for ER agonist activity. The positive and negative decision criteria used in the BG1Luc ER TA validation study is described in [Table 1](#).

**Table 1: Positive and Negative Decision Criteria**

<b>Positive</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All test substances classified as positive for ER agonist activity should have a concentration–response curve consisting of a baseline, followed by a positive slope, and concluding in a plateau or peak. In some cases, only two of these characteristics (baseline–slope or slope–peak) may be defined.</li> <li>The line defining the positive slope should contain at least three points with nonoverlapping error bars (mean <math>\pm</math> SD). Points forming the baseline are excluded, but the linear portion of the curve may include the peak or first point of the plateau.</li> <li>A positive classification requires a response amplitude, the difference between baseline and peak, of at least 20% of the maximal value for the reference substance, E2 (i.e. 2000 RLU or more when the maximal response value of the reference substance [E2] is adjusted to 10,000 RLU).</li> <li>If possible, an EC<sub>50</sub> value should be calculated for each positive substance.</li> </ul>
<b>Negative</b>	The average adjusted RLU for a given concentration is at or below the mean DMSO control RLU value plus three times its standard deviation.
<b>Inadequate</b>	Data that cannot be interpreted as valid for showing either the presence or absence of activity because of major qualitative or quantitative limitations are considered inadequate and cannot be used to determine whether the test substance is positive or negative.

38. Data interpretation criteria are shown in [Table 1](#). Positive results will be characterized by both the magnitude of the effect and the concentration at which the effect occurs, where possible. Examples of positive, negative and inadequate data are shown in [Figure 3](#).

**Figure 3: Examples: Positive, Negative and Inadequate Data**



Dashed line indicates 20% of E2 response, 2000 adjusted and normalized RLU.

39. The calculations of EC<sub>50</sub> can be made using a four-parameter Hill Function (see protocol for more details (7)). Meeting the acceptability criteria indicate the system is operating properly, but it does not ensure that any particular run will produce accurate data. Duplicating the results of the first run is the best assurance that accurate data were produced.

**Test Report**

40. See paragraph 20 of “ER TA TEST METHOD COMPONENTS” (Page 6 of this Test Guideline)

Replaced  
This version has been replaced  
on 28 July 2015 and will be deleted  
effectively on 28 January 2017.

## LITERATURE

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Appendix B1, BG1Luc ER TA – Agonist Protocol  
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