

ONS Quality Management Strategy

1. Introduction

The ONS Quality Management Strategy¹ (QMS) sets out our commitment to quality, our organisational approach to quality and our quality goals.

The strategy is further supported by the ONS statistical quality framework (Annex A), which sets out a description of the corporate quality initiatives that support, improve and assure the quality of our statistical products.

2. Our commitment to quality

As an organisation we are committed to further developing a culture of quality to ensure that we:

- produce statistical outputs that meet user needs to a level of quality that is fit-for-purpose
- explain the quality of our statistics to our users by providing up-to-date metadata
- improve the quality of our statistical outputs and processes through standardisation, continuous improvement and quality reviews

Our commitment to quality is in line with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics² and the strategic objectives of the UK Statistics Authority³.

3. Organisational approach to quality

The organisational approach to quality can be described through the following themes:

Governance and leadership

- The ONS Business Group owns this strategy. It will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- The ONS Chief Methodology Officer (Tricia Dodd) is the ONS Quality Champion.
- There is a senior sponsor (Debra Prestwood) for the ONS Principle “We put quality first”.

Capability

- All staff have a responsibility for understanding the importance of quality for their work and will be supported through:
 - Receiving training in quality management and how it can be applied
 - The availability of a central database (Standards and Guidance database) to store desk instructions, descriptions of processes and methodologies. The use of this database will be promoted and monitored.

Environment

¹ This strategy replaces the previous Quality Management Strategy which came to an end in March 2015.

² <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/code-of-practice-for-official-statistics.pdf>

³ <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/about-the-authority/strategy-and-business-plan/uk-statistics-authority-statement-of-strategy-2015-2020-better-statistics-better-decisions.pdf>

- Quality Centre operates as a centre of expertise for statistical quality and quality management, providing advice and support to business areas and having responsibility for carrying out quality reviews and related initiatives.
- The Continuous Improvement Zone is a centre of expertise encouraging a culture of continuous improvement. It also provides support to practitioners and assistance to Divisional Continuous Improvement Champions in the development and delivery of Continuous Improvement initiatives for their area.
- Internal Audit is in place to provide independent assurance of processes and procedures.

Co-ordination

- Quality Centre will co-ordinate, promote and communicate the Quality Management Strategy across ONS and will report on progress to the ONS Business Group on a six-monthly basis.
- A network of quality champions, with a representative from each division, is maintained and co-ordinated by Quality Centre.

Communication

- The results from user engagement activities and UK Statistics Authority assessments will inform if our statistics are of the level of quality required by our users.
- Quality Centre will share examples of good practice across the ONS, and more widely across the Government Statistical Service.

4. Quality Initiatives

The QMS is supported by a statistical quality framework, which sets out the initiatives in place at an organisational level for:

- Quality assurance
- Quality control
- Quality reporting
- Quality improvement

In addition, following the launch of this strategy, Quality Centre will support divisions to develop a division-level quality framework that sets out any additional local activities, carried out at a divisional level, against the four headings shown above.

5. Goals

To further establish our commitment to quality, we have three quality goals that we will work towards achieving over the next three years:

1. Continue to embed a culture where quality is seen as everyone's responsibility
2. Improve how we communicate quality to users
3. Further harmonise and standardise statistical processes and outputs where appropriate

Annex A

ONS Statistical Quality Framework

The ONS statistical quality framework sets out the corporate initiatives that support, improve and assure the quality of our statistical products. This framework sits alongside the ONS Quality Management Strategy, which sets out the organisational commitment to quality.

This framework describes the day-to-day activities that are in place at an organisational level for quality assurance, quality control, quality reporting and quality improvement. Many of these activities are managed by Quality Centre. The accompanying table describes these initiatives in more detail.

This framework, in line with the Quality Management Strategy, will be reviewed annually to ensure it is up-to-date and represents the activities taking place.

Quality Assurance – describes how we anticipate and avoid problems

- Divisional Director (DD) walkthroughs of statistical outputs take place at least once every three years.
- Quality Centre will lead on further developing and rolling out guidance on quality assurance practices.
- A training course “refresher” in quality assurance is offered to output managers.

Quality Control – describes how we respond to observed problems

- A policy is in place that describes how corrections are handled and is owned by the Chief Publishing Officer (Laura Dewis).
- A policy is in place that describes how revisions are handled and is owned by the Chief Methodology Officer (Tricia Dodd).

Quality Improvement – describes how we make improvements to statistical quality

- All statistical outputs undergo a Regular Quality Review on a 3-yearly cycle.
- A programme of National Statistics Quality Reviews is in place to carry out in depth methodological reviews of two statistical outputs per year.

Quality Reporting – describes how we inform users of the quality of our statistics

- All statistical outputs have published Quality and Methodology Information reports.
- Statistical bulletins include “dynamic” quality information that is specific to the statistical release.

		Regular Quality Reviews		Quality Assurance checklists	Quality Reporting		National Statistics Quality Reviews
		Methods Review Meeting	DD walkthrough		QMI	Dynamic Quality information	
Why?	Why is it conducted?	To ensure methods are reviewed, suitable and robust	To ensure QA procedures are reviewed, suitable and robust	To ensure QA checks are followed and to raise issues early	To provide users with quality information to inform their use of statistics	To provide users with quality information specific to a release	To ensure ONS methods are fit for purpose
What?	What is it?	A face-to-face meeting with a methodologist	A meeting between an output manager and their DD	A list of quality assurance checks with identified owners	A report on the ONS website, linked to from Statistical Bulletin(s)	Information on quality included within the statistical bulletin	In-depth methodological review
	What does it cover?	A review of methods which leads to bespoke recommendations	A review of QA checks, which leads to DD sign off	All QA checks carried out in preparation for publication	A description of methods in relation to quality dimensions	The quality information that changes between bulletins	Whether methods are fit for purpose and meet international standards
Who?	Who is involved?	Output manager, Methodologists and Quality Centre	Output managers and their DD	Output managers and their teams. QC support to set up checklists where needed	Output managers and their teams, DD and QC sign off	Output managers and their teams	A lead reviewer (methodologist) with project support from Quality Centre
	Who is it for?	DDs, Output managers and their teams	DDs	Output managers and their teams	Users	Users	Users, output areas and NSEG
Where?	Where does it sit in GSBPM?	Build, Collect, Process, Analyse	Process, Analyse	Process, Analyse	Dissemination	Dissemination	Specify Needs, Design, Build, Collect, Process, Analyse, Disseminate
When?	When is it done?	Every 3 years	Every 3 years	Used in each publication round and updated when processes change	Renewed annually	Included in each statistical bulletin	Quality Centre proposes candidates to be agreed by NSEG

DD – Divisional Director
 GSBPM – Generic Statistical Business Process Model

NSEG – National Statistics Executive Group
 QC – Quality Centre