

REPORTING A BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STATISTICS

1. Core Information

Title and link to statistical output	Annual Qualifications Market Report 2016 to 2017 academic year https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/annual-qualifications-market-report-academic-year-2016-to-2017
Name of statistical producer	The Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual)
Name and contact details of person dealing with report	Vikas Dhawan Vikas.dhawan@ofqual.gov.uk 02476 716824
Link to published statement about the breach (if relevant)	
Date of report	23 February 2018

2. Circumstances of breach

Relevant principle and practice	Trustworthiness: Statistics should be released to all users at 9.30am on a weekday (T3.6)
Date of occurrence of breach	22 February 2018
<p>This statistical release (Official Statistics), and documents related to it, could not be published at the scheduled time 9:30am on the GOV.UK statistics page.</p> <p>This happened due to some technical issue with GOV.UK. Ofqual's communications team (Comms) promptly made the release available to users via an alternative GOV.UK link at 9:41am and raised this with the GOV.UK User Support team at 9:47am. The Comms team also published the documents as a news story of Ofqual's webpage around 9:50am.</p> <p>In summary, access to the release was delayed by 11 minutes.</p> <p>The actual link started working at around 10am. All the documents have been available as normal from that point onwards.</p> <p>The GOV.UK User Support team informed us at 10:03am that they had republished the documents and cleared the caches which had fixed the immediate problem.</p>	

3. Impact of the breach

Users did not get access to the release at 9:30am.
Access to the release was delayed by 11 minutes.

4. Corrective actions (taken or planned) to prevent re-occurrence

Ofqual uploaded the report to a different part of GOV.UK, and tweeted the link to the report at 9:41am.
The documents were also published as a news story of Ofqual's webpage around 9:50am.

We had faced similar issue when publishing another statistical release on 5 January 2018 (breach report available at this [link](#)). This is a technical issue with GOV.UK publishing over which Ofqual has no control.

On our part we were able to swiftly deal with it as we had planned for this contingency after the previous incidence on 5 January. At that time the GOV.UK User Support team had informed us that they had been unable to find any reasons why the publication was not published on time and that they were going to do some additional monitoring to understand the root cause if other publications were also not published on GOV.UK at their scheduled time.

It appears that the issue has still not been resolved by the Government Digital Service (GDS) who manages the GOV.UK platform.

GOV.UK User Support team informed us that “*There was a delay of almost 2 minutes (118275 milliseconds) before this actually made it to the servers that host our content. Because of that delay, some caches had continued to pick up the Coming Soon page.*”

We recognise we have issues in this area occasionally and are working on adding new monitoring and instrumentation (hence now being able to report the internal delay) to allow us to investigate the problem further. We plan to use an aggregate of these delays as a metric and do work to improve it over time. We'll also investigate why the caches picked up and carried on serving the Coming Soon page.”

We informed the GSS Good Practice Team (GPT) of the breach at 17:49 on 22 February. GPT confirmed that they and the Office for Statistics Regulation are in discussion with GDS about the impact of caching issues on the GOV.UK website and are investigating how many statistical publications and departments are being affected by this issue. GDS have been asked to draft a consolidated breach report of affected publications (to date, and going forward if this problem persists) together with a clear plan of how this issue is being addressed and the steps being taken by GDS to resolve it.

Ofqual look forward to GDS resolving this issue at the earliest opportunity and welcome the publication of a consolidated breach report to understand the likely impact of this issue across the Government Statistical Service.