

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY
RESEARCH ACCREDITATION PANEL

Minute

Tuesday 8 June 2021

Present

Committee Members

Professor Paul Boyle (Chair)
Mark Brewin (HM Revenue & Customs)
Chris Dibben (Independent member)
Emma Gordon (UK Research and Innovation)
Roger Halliday (Scottish Government)
Sarah Henry (ONS)
Stephanie Howarth (Welsh Government)
Alex Singleton (Independent Member)
Misa Tanaka (Independent member)
Nicky Tarry (Deputising for Paul Lodge, Department for Work & Pensions)

Advisors

Andy Wall (Chief Security Officer, ONS)
Ross Young (Data Protection Officer, UK Statistics Authority)

UK Statistics Authority

Sophie Gwilym
Lily O'Flynn
Grazia Ragone

In Attendance

Joe Edwards (Security and Information Management, ONS), for item 5
Bill South (Research Services & Data Access, ONS), for item 5
Peter Stokes (Integrated Data Programme and Service, ONS), for item 2

Apologies

Siobhan Carey (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)
Andrew Garrett (Independent member)
Tricia Dodd (Independent member)

1. Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed the members to the twenty-first meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel.

1.2 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2021.

1.3 The Panel thanked Sarah Mathieson for her contributions to the work of the Research Accreditation Panel as Sarah has now stepped down from her role as an independent member of the Panel. With Sarah's departure from the RAP, the Panel agreed for the advertisement and appointment of new independent members to the RAP.

ACTION: The Secretariat to advertise for and appoint new independent members to support the Panel's work going forward, following agreement from the Chair.

- 1.4 Lily O'Flynn updated the meeting with progress on actions from previous meetings. All actions were complete or otherwise in progress.
- 1.5 The Panel requested the presentation of a guidance piece setting out governance processes for data that are outside of the scope of the Research strand of the Digital Economy Act, to support the RAP in making accreditation decisions for research projects that are accessing data via multiple legal gateways.

ACTION: The Secretariat to present guidance to the Research Accreditation Panel setting out the sequence of governance processes for research projects that access data available through multiple legal gateways.

2. Discussion of the Integrated Data Programme

- 2.1 Peter Stokes presented the Panel with an outline of the Office for National Statistics' (ONS) plan for the creation and operationalisation of an Integrated Data Programme (IDP). Peter Stokes welcomed the Panel's input due to its expertise and oversight function for providing access to data via the Research powers in the Digital Economy Act. The IDP has the potential to maximise the use of the DEA Research powers, as the DEA will be the default legal gateway under which the IDP will provide research access to linked data controlled by multiple public authorities.
- 2.2 The Panel thanked Peter Stokes for the presentation and raised the following points during the discussion:
- i. The Panel welcomed confirmation that non-government researchers would access data in the IDP via the established DEA Research route. Further detail was requested on the planned research governance and ethics arrangements that would be applied to researchers from across government accessing data in the IDP;
 - ii. The RAP wished to understand whether its role as an independent oversight body for the DEA Research powers would change or expand to ensure appropriate governance of access to data under the DEA Research powers in the IDP infrastructure;
 - iii. It was understood that different categories of users would follow different governance routes to access data in the IDP. The Panel advised that these categories of researchers are very clearly defined so that the appropriate safeguards are in place for each group, and so individuals from across the research community are aware of the expectations on them in order to access data;
 - iv. Assurance was requested that legal obligations are regularly considering throughout the design of the IDP to ensure processing of and access to data in the environment is legally compliant; and,
 - v. The Panel advised that better access to and use of government data for public good research would require the use of common identifiers on administrative data records across the UK, which has not yet been achieved.
- 2.3 Peter agreed to update the RAP on the planned research governance and ethics arrangements that would be applied to researchers from across government accessing data in the IDP. This would include confirmation of that the RAP's role would be in providing oversight of this process.

ACTION: Peter Stokes to present a paper on the IDP's governance arrangements at a future RAP meeting, outlining the arrangements for both government and non-government analysts and what the role of the RAP would be in having oversight of these accreditation processes, where independent scrutiny is needed.

2.4 Peter Stokes welcomed the Panel's comments and offered to set up additional discussions outside of this meeting to allow the RAP to discuss elements of the IDP and the role of RAP in more detail, where required.

ACTION: The Secretariat to facilitate further discussions outside of the RAP where Panel members feel this would be useful.

3. Project Accreditation: Implementation of the Project Accreditation Tool

3.1 Lily O'Flynn presented the Panel with a report on progressing the operationalisation of the new framework for research project accreditation under the Digital Economy Act, which enables accredited processing environments and the UK Statistics Authority to accredit certain research project applications on the RAP's behalf. The Panel supported this development as an effective means of upholding robust governance of research projects under the DEA Research powers, while ensuring that projects are exposed to independent scrutiny when needed.

3.2 The RAP requested that a new process is implemented to monitor compliance with the agreed framework at regular intervals through the RAP's online collaboration platform.

ACTION: The Secretariat to set up a process to monitor compliance in regular intervals through the RAP's online collaboration platform.

4. Metrics Report

4.1 Lily O'Flynn and Grazia Ragone presented the Panel with a metrics report showing how the DEA Research powers have been implemented so far and their impact on improving research access to public authority data.

4.2 The Panel recognised the progress made in both increasing the number of datasets available for accredited research purposes and increasing the availability of data under the DEA across multiple locations in all four countries of the UK.

4.3 The RAP noted the majority of the data being accessed via the DEA Research powers remains ONS controlled, although recognised recent progress in making the Longitudinal Educational Outcomes linked dataset available for research purposes via the DEA. The RAP agreed that it is important to learn from the experiences for DEA Accreditation Processing Environments acquiring such data to support further conversations with government data owners seeking to make data made available for accredited research to broaden the use and impact of the DEA.

ACTION: The Secretariat to bring a broader report back to the Panel at a future meeting to show next steps for increasing impact of DEA powers.

5. Processor Accreditation: UDKA, NISRA RSU & UK Data Archive

5.1 Bill South (UKSA Capability) and Joe Edwards (UKSA Security) presented the Panel with their findings of the UKDA, EPCC, NISRA RSU & UK Data Archive's annual reviews. The Panel welcomed the annual reviews and the progress being made but requested better coordination of Devolved Administrations' annual processors reviews.

ACTION: The Secretariat to help coordinate Scottish and Welsh infrastructures' annual processors review to have all organisations being assessed at the same time moving forward.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Ross Young informed the Panel of the upcoming 3-year review that the ICO were undertaking of all Chapter 5 Digital Economy Act powers, for which the Research powers

will be within scope. The Panel welcomed this information and requested that the Secretariat will present a dedicated paper at the next RAP meeting setting out the scope of this review and any findings relating to the DEA Research powers.

ACTION: The Secretariat to bring a paper to the next meeting of the Research Accreditation Panel setting out the scope of and any early findings from the ICO's review of the Chapter 5 Digital Economy Act 2017 powers.

6.2 Lily O'Flynn presented the paper amending the tracking of outputs to better understand the impact of data following the accreditation of research projects. The Panel accepted the modification of research project applications as proposed.

ACTION: The Secretariat to update DEA accredited researcher applications and DEA research project applications as proposed.

6.3 Lily O'Flynn made the Panel aware of the temporary extension of accredited researchers agreed by the UK Statistics Authority on behalf of RAP, due to the volume of researchers expiring at the same time. An online solution to researcher accreditation is currently in development to support the re-accreditation of researchers, as DEA accreditation expires every 5 years.

6.4 Lily O'Flynn presented the paper authored by the Secretariat, which is due for publication on the UK Statistics Authority website. The paper provides answers to 'Frequently Asked Questions' from the research community, which relate to the DEA Research powers and the work of the RAP.

6.5 The Panel welcomed the paper and agreed to provide comments to the Secretariat via correspondence if necessary. The Panel agreed for the paper to be published on the UK Statistics Authority website, once comments submitted via correspondence had been addressed.

ACTION: The Secretariat to publish the Frequently Asked Questions paper on the UK Statistics Authority website once RAP member comments has been addressed.

6.6 The Panel requested an updated information piece setting out the governance route for research projects that use a dual legal gateway approach to access legally protected data that can be made available via different legal gateways. The Secretariat agreed to provide this information via correspondence.

ACTION: The Secretariat to produce and circulate an information pack to make clear the governance route for projects that use multiple legal gateways, to clarify the remit of the RAP in reviewing such projects.