

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Research Accreditation Panel

Minutes

Friday 28 June 2024

London Boardroom/ Hybrid Meeting

10:00-11:00

Members Present

Paul Boyle (Chair)
Sue Bateman (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Ann Berrington (Independent Member)
Martin Bowyer (Central Digital and Data Office)
Mark Brewin (HM Revenue & Customs)
Michael Chapman (NHS England)
Tricia Dodd (Independent Member)
Emma Gordon (Administrative Data Research UK)
Andrew Garrett (Independent Member)
Roger Halliday (Independent Member)
Sarah Henry (Office for National Statistics)
Andrew McHugh (Independent Member)
Rhys Nadin (UK Statistics Authority)
Keith Nicholson (Security Advisor, Office for National Statistics)
Jason Riches (Legal Advisor, UK Statistics Authority)
Alexander Singleton (Independent Member)

Other Attendees

Edward Bextor (Items 3, 4, 5 and 6)
Colin Farrell (Office for National Statistics) (Items 3, 4, and 6)
Emma Rourke (Office for National Statistics)
Bill South (Office for National Statistics)
Ross Young

Secretariat

Daniel Beck (UK Statistics Authority)
Lewis Hopcroft (UK Statistics Authority)

Apologies

Chris Dibben (Independent Member)
Stephanie Howarth (Welsh Government)
Geraint Jowers (HM Revenue & Customs)
Paul Lodge (Department for Work & Pensions)
Alistair McAlpine (Scottish Government)
Philip Wales (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency)

1. Minute and matters arising from the previous meeting

- 1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were received from Chris Dibben, Stephanie Howarth, Geraint Jowers, Paul Lodge, Alistair McAlpine and Philip Wales.
- 1.2 The minutes of the meeting on 25 March were agreed, and actions were reviewed.

2. Project Accreditation: Five Year Project Re-Accreditation Policy

- 2.1 Daniel Beck and Lewis Hopcroft introduced a paper which proposed options to implement a policy to renew the Digital Economy Act (DEA) accreditation of a project beyond the initial five-year allowance.
- 2.2 RAP discussed the option of developing a lighter-touch application form which researchers would need to have approved by the UK Statistics Authority (the Authority) or RAP before the research project could be extended. The following points were considered in discussion:
 - i. the need to ensure there have not been any changes to the research proposal since its original DEA accreditation, taking into consideration any approved change requests;
 - ii. that if either significant changes or scope creep is identified, Secretariat should ensure the project re-applies using a new full project application form;
 - iii. the need to ensure all data owner approvals are in place and current for the re-accreditation of the research proposal;
 - iv. a justification from the research team for the extension of the DEA accredited research proposal past its 5-year accreditation period is required; and
 - v. that the re-accreditation time-period is for a maximum of 3 years, with exceptions to this requirement considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 2.3 RAP agreed with the option of developing a lighter-touch application form and that the Secretariat would incorporate RAP's feedback into a draft form and share this via correspondence with RAP for sign off.

3. Processor Accreditation: Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency Research Support Unit (NISRA RSU)'s Full Re-Accreditation Review

- 3.1 Colin Farrell and Edward Bextor introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcomes of the assessment under the Digital Economy Act 2017 (DEA) requirements for a decision on the accreditation of the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency – Research Support Unit (NISRA RSU).
- 3.2 RAP discussed whether there is a risk of Trusted Research Environments (TREs) not having enough incentive to improve their accreditation scoring to mature, and what potential improvements could be made to the security framework to incentivise TREs to improve their accreditation scoring. RAP also queried the visibility of TRE accreditation scoring and considered how this could be made clearer to the wider research community.
- 3.3 RAP agreed to re-accredit NISRA RSU for the preparation and provision of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

4. Processor Accreditation: Office for National Statistics Secure Research Service (ONS SRS)'s Full Re-Accreditation Review

- 4.1 Colin Farrell and Edward Bextor introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcomes of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the accreditation of the ONS Secure Research Service (SRS).
- 4.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to re-accredit ONS SRS for the provision of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

5. Processor Accreditation: UK Data Archive (UKDA) Limited Scope Preparation of Data Accreditation Review

- 5.1 Colin Farrell and Edward Bextor introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcome of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the limited scope of data accreditation of the UK Data Archive (UKDA) as instructed by RAP in March 2024 meeting.
- 5.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to accredit UKDA for a limited scope of preparation of data in line with their existing accreditation for the provision of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

6. Processor Accreditation: Bespoke Review Policy

- 6.1 Colin Farrell and Edward Bextor introduced a paper providing RAP with an overview of a new policy developed by the DEA Assessors with regards to carrying out bespoke reviews of TREs outside of the standard accreditation assessment cycle. Members were invited to approve the Bespoke Review Policy.
- 6.2 Members were informed that:
 - i. the development of this policy has not been prompted by any specific incident, actions of any TRE, or due to the belief that a bespoke review is required;
 - ii. the policy is being proposed as part of a broader programme of developing a comprehensive governance framework around the DEA accreditation scheme; and
 - iii. the specific purpose of the Bespoke Review Policy is to provide documented processes if a one-off assessment is required, particularly to substantiate the actions taken by the Authority in case of appeal or legal challenge by the TRE being assessed.
- 6.3 Members discussed that the Policy would need to explicitly define whether the removal of accreditation could be enacted because of a bespoke policy and that RAP approval would be required any time the DEA accreditation assessors wish to enact a bespoke review.
- 6.4 The Panel were supportive of developing a comprehensive governance framework and approved the policy for bespoke reviews outside of the standard accreditation assessment cycle. It was agreed that an updated version of the policy would be shared with members via correspondence prior to sign off.

7. Any Other Business

- 7.1 Ed Bextor facilitated a discussion on a new technology being adopted by the DEA accredited processor, UK Longitudinal Linkage Collaboration (UK LLC), called UK LLC Explore. Members were informed that the use of this technology was in line with the DEA and their existing accreditation. The Panel discussed this new technology being adopted by UK LLC and recommended inviting them to present this at a future RAP meeting.
- 7.2 RAP would next meet on Friday 20 September.