

UK STATISTICS AUTHORITY

Research Accreditation Panel

Minutes

Wednesday 04 December 2024

Microsoft Teams

15:30-17:30

Members Present

Paul Boyle (Chair)
Ann Berrington (Independent Member)
Martin Bowyer (Central Digital and Data Office)
Mark Brewin (HM Revenue & Customs)
Michael Chapman (NHS England)
Chris Dibben (Independent Member)
Andrew Garrett (Independent Member)
Emma Gordon (Administrative Data Research UK)
Roger Halliday (Independent Member)
Sarah Henry (Office for National Statistics)
Stephanie Howarth (Welsh Government)
Alistair McAlpine (Scottish Government)
Andrew McHugh (Independent Member)
Alexander Singleton (Independent Member)

Advisers

Rhys Nadin (Data Protection Officer, UK Statistics Authority)
Keith Nicholson (Security Advisor, Office for National Statistics)
Matthew Ford (Deputising for Jason Riches (Legal Advisor, UK Statistics Authority))

Other Attendees

Colin Farrell (Office for National Statistics) (Items 4, 5, 6, and 7)
Jo-Anna Hagen (UK Statistics Authority) (Items 4, 5, and 6)
Barnaby Watts (Office for National Statistics) (Item 2)

Secretariat

Daniel Beck (UK Statistics Authority)
Amy Curtis (UK Statistics Authority)
Lewis Hopcroft (UK Statistics Authority)
Stephanie Jacobs (UK Statistics Authority)

Apologies

Sue Bateman (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs)
Tricia Dodd (Independent Member)
Geraint Jowers (HM Revenue & Customs)
Paul Lodge (Department for Work & Pensions)
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 Sue Bateman, Tricia Dodd, Geraint Jowers, Paul Lodge and Philip Wales.
- 1.2 The minutes for the meeting on 23 September were agreed, and actions were reviewed.

2. Programmatic Access to Administrative Data – Test Case Example

- 2.1 Daniel Beck and Barnaby Watts provided a test case example of a programme of work seeking accreditation under the Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017. RAP members were invited to:
 - i. review the test case example proposal to consider whether the programme of research could be accredited under the DEA;
 - ii. inform the Secretariat of any minor or major revisions that would be required to accredit the proposal; and
 - iii. establish the parameters for accrediting a programme of research under the DEA.
- 2.2 RAP discussed the proposal and considered the following points in discussion:
 - i. RAP members are supportive of the idea of a programme of research however, it was agreed further detail would be required for the example proposal as it was too broad in scope;
 - ii. the Secretariat were informed of revisions required before the example proposal could be considered by RAP for accreditation under the DEA;
 - iii. a programme of research should outline research questions using a hierarchical approach to detail the initial set of specified questions under a broader question;
 - iv. a programme of research should detail the methodology for either a research question or set of research questions;
 - v. a programme of research requires transparency through regular progress reports to understand the key findings of research undertaken and next phase of research questions;
 - vi. a new light-touch process is required to expand research and enable the approval of new research questions whilst ensuring additional approvals are in place (such as ethical review and data owner approval); and
 - vii. although RAP recognised that different types of researchers have different requirements, any distinction made when establishing the parameters of a programme of research must be made carefully to ensure all researchers are treated fairly.
- 2.3 RAP determined the test case example of a programme of research was too broad to accredit the research under the DEA and provided feedback on the revisions required. RAP recommended the Secretariat assist the Integrated Data Service (IDS) with submitting a revised proposal by narrowing the scope with a plan to broaden the research going forward.

ACTION: Secretariat to collaborate with the Integrated Data Service (IDS) to ensure further detail is provided in the test case example programme of research proposal prior to submitting it for accreditation under the Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017.

ACTION: Secretariat to develop a light-touch process for expanding research questions for a programme of research and provide a proposal to the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) for approval.

ACTION: Secretariat to establish guidance for accrediting programmes of research under the Digital Economy Act (DEA) 2017 following the submission of the revised test case example for accreditation.

3. Feedback from Digital Economy Act 2017 Challenges or Barriers User Consultation and Next Steps

- 3.1 Daniel Beck presented a paper to the RAP providing initial findings following a review of feedback received from the DEA Challenges or Barriers User Consultation. This paper highlighted challenges or barriers faced by a range of researchers requesting access to administrative data across all the DEA accredited Trusted Research Environments (TREs).
- 3.2 Members of RAP were invited to consider the initial findings from the consultation and endorse the Secretariat's proposed approach to organise a workshop for TREs to address challenges or barriers faced by users of the project application process prior to presenting proposed improvement actions at the March 2025 Strategic Workshop.
- 3.3 RAP considered the initial findings and endorsed the proposal for a collaborative workshop with TREs to consider how challenges or barriers could be addressed.

ACTION: Secretariat to host a workshop with Trusted Research Environments (TREs) to review the findings from the Challenges or Barriers User Consultation and provide proposals for improvements to the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP) at the March 2025 Strategic Workshop.

4. Processor Accreditation: Office for National Statistics - Data Access Platform, Preparation of Data Annual Review

- 4.1 Colin Farrell and Jo-Anna Hagen introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcome of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the accreditation of the Data Access Platform (DAP).
- 4.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to continue the accreditation of DAP for the preparation of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

5. Processor Accreditation: National Records of Scotland, Preparation of Data Annual Review

- 5.1 Colin Farrell and Jo-Anna Hagen introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcome of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the preparation of data accreditation of National Records of Scotland (NRS).
- 5.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to continue the accreditation of DHCW for the preparation of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

6. Processor Accreditation: electronic Data Research and Innovation Service, Provision of Data Annual Review

- 6.1 Colin Farrell and Jo-Anna Hagen introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcome of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the provision of data accreditation of electronic Data Research and Innovation Service (eDRIS).
- 6.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to continue the accreditation of eDRIS for the provision of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

7. Processor Accreditation: Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre, Provision of Data Review

- 7.1 Colin Farrell introduced a paper updating RAP with the outcome of the assessment under the DEA requirements for a decision on the provision of data accreditation of the Edinburgh Parallel Computing Centre (EPCC).
- 7.2 The Panel were supportive of the findings and recommendation provided by the DEA assessors and agreed to continue the accreditation of EPCC for the provision of data under Chapter 5 of Part 5 of the DEA, based on the evidence provided in the accreditation report.

ACTION: Secretariat to correspond with Trusted Research Environments to inform them of their DEA accreditation review report outcomes.

8. End of Year Research Accreditation Metrics Overview

- 8.1 Amy Curtis presented a paper to provide the RAP with a range of key end of year metrics, showing the performance of the research accreditation service in 2024. RAP were invited to review the end of year metrics and provide any recommendations for presenting further information which may be helpful for future end of year metrics overviews.
- 8.2 RAP discussed the end of year metrics and informed the Secretariat that it is helpful to view the metrics provided.
- 8.3 The Panel recommended that further metrics are presented at future meetings to reflect the end-to-end data access journey and researcher turnaround times for accessing administrative data under the DEA. Panel members also requested clarification on a research accreditation process and were informed that there will be an item at the March 2025 Strategic Workshop to cover this.

ACTION: Secretariat to develop a proposal for a single-track system for tracking metrics which reflect the end-to-end data access journey for researchers and consider how these are presented to the Panel.

ACTION: Secretariat to present an item on the project accreditation process at the March 2025 Strategic Workshop.

9. RAP Annual Self-Review of Effectiveness

- 9.1 Lewis Hopcroft introduced a paper providing RAP with findings following a review of the responses from the annual self-review of effectiveness questionnaire. RAP members were invited to review the findings and provide recommendations in addition to those provided via the questionnaire to improve the effectiveness of the Panel.
- 9.2 RAP members discussed where improvements could be made and recommended the following topics the upcoming Strategic Workshop, scheduled in March 2025:
 - i. a review of the methodology section of the application form; and
 - ii. considering a one-step approach for approving research proposals with data owners and health data providers.

ACTION: Research Accreditation Panel to consider how the methodology section of the project application form could be improved.

ACTION: Research Accreditation Panel to consider how a one-step project approval process with data owners could be developed.

10. Research Accreditation Panel Membership Review

- 10.1 Daniel Beck presented a paper providing RAP with a summary of findings from the Secretariat's membership review and provided proposed updates to the membership based on these findings. RAP members were invited to review the findings from the membership review and consider them with a view to approve the proposals outlined in the paper.
- 10.2 RAP members considered the findings and proposals outlined in the paper and approved the following:
 - i. the appointment of a deputy chair for RAP;
 - ii. the expectation that RAP members would attend at least three of the four RAP meetings per year, and if appropriate send a delegate if they were unable to attend; and
 - iii. the expectation that the RAP members review of project applications would be in accordance with the agreed Service Level Agreements.

10.3 RAP members provided the Secretariat with the following considerations necessary for improving the effectiveness of the RAP:

- i. while the introduction of tenure for RAP members is necessary, there should be consideration of whether this should only apply to independent members as there is value in maintaining membership from government departments;
- ii. a skills matrix should be produced to understand the current expertise within the Panel; and
- iii. a sub-group of RAP members and experts is required to consider the best approach for a one-step approval process for health data.

ACTION: The Secretariat to invite Expressions of Interest from Panel members to establish a deputy chair for the Research Accreditation Panel (RAP).

ACTION: Secretariat to produce a Research Accreditation Panel skills matrix.

ACTION: Secretariat to establish a sub-group of Research Accreditation Panel members and experts to consider the best approach for a one-step approval process for health data and include an item at the March 2025 Strategic Workshop to present the proposal.

11. Any Other Business

11.1 The RAP recommended the Secretariat invite Research Data Scotland to the March 2025 Strategic Workshop to consider their model and how it could be applied under the DEA.

11.2 The RAP were invited to review the forward agenda and provide feedback to the Secretariat to ensure important discussions are scheduled.

11.3 The next RAP meeting and in-person Strategic Workshop is scheduled for 31 March 2025.

ACTION: Secretariat to invite Paul Jackson from Research Data Scotland to the March 2025 Strategic Workshop to present their new model.