

ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION OF EXPERIMENTAL STATISTICS

The Statistics Authority's approach to assessing and designating as National Statistics official statistics currently labelled as 'Experimental Statistics' is consistent with that for any other official statistics. We will approach the assessment and designation of experimental statistics (ES) in the following way:

- If the producer body had not already conducted, or was not planning, its own evaluation of the ES, then we would require it (in relation to the relevant part(s) of Principle 4 or Protocol 1 of the Code of Practice) to do so at an appropriate point;
- If the producer body has evaluated its ES and considered them to be of poor quality and beyond improvement we would not designate them as National Statistics (in relation to Principle 4 Practice 2 of the Code of Practice). In practice, we would expect producer bodies to have ceased to have published any such statistics once they were aware of their significant shortcomings (i.e. prior to an assessment), so this scenario is unlikely to arise;
- If the producer body has undertaken an evaluation of the ES and users have said that it is too soon for them to judge the merits of the ES definitively, we would – as part of the assessment – either require a producer body to continue the process of evaluation and to commit to a further evaluation (in relation to Principle 4 Practices 2 and 5 of the Code of Practice), or we would endorse its published plan to do so. We may additionally make requirements about quality, documentation, or any other aspects of the Code, as with any other assessment. All of these circumstances would lead to the designation as new National Statistics once the requirements had been met. The timescale to meet the requirements would be determined on a case-by-case basis, as with any other assessment, and would take into account the timing of the producer body's own evaluation where appropriate; and,
- If users are satisfied that the statistics meet their needs, then (assuming more general compliance with the Code, and assuming that the producer body was committed to publishing a summary of its evaluation of the ES), we would expect to offer an unconditional designation as new National Statistics following our assessment. We would also require the producer body to remove the ES label. This does not preclude a producer body from itself deciding, in the light of its own evaluation, that the ES label should be removed. Indeed, we would expect this to be the norm, and for the removal of the ES label to be coincident with the designation as National Statistics only where there is a coincidence of timing of an assessment and the producer body undertaking its own evaluation.

As at present, we will continue to note in Assessment Reports which of the statistics are, or have been, published as experimental statistics.

In the case of existing National Statistics that are undergoing, or where producers plan to undertake, significant developments, the producer body should consult the Statistics Authority to

discuss whether a re-assessment would be appropriate, and to discuss whether the National Statistics designation should be suspended or qualified for the period of the re-development.