

BREACH OF THE CODE OF PRACTICE FOR OFFICIAL STATISTICS

A breach of the Code of Practice for Official Statistics occurs where one or more provisions of the Code were not followed in situations where an exemption or exception had not been approved by the UK Statistics Authority's Head of Assessment, as required in paragraph (xii) of the Code's preamble. Rules on pre-release access to statistics are covered in the relevant Pre-Release Access to Official Statistics Orders; the Code applies as if it includes these orders.

1 Background Information

Name of Statistical Output (including web link if relevant)

Government Expenditure and Revenue Scotland 2007-08
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Economy/GERS>

Name of Producer Organisation

Scottish Government – Office of the Chief Economic Adviser

Name and contact details of person submitting this report, and date of report

Rob Wishart, Room 1.N03, St Andrews House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG – 4 August 2009

2 Circumstances of Breach

Relevant Principle/Protocol and Practice

Breach of Protocol/Practice 2.4.

Date of occurrence

18 June 2009

Nature of breach (including links with previous breaches, if any)

Date and timing of the GERS publication had been originally scheduled for 9:30 on Friday 19 June. The Scottish Government's Chief Economist requested that we brought the publication forward a few hours to Thursday 18 June at 15:00 as he wanted to host a Press Launch. 15:00 on 18 June was the only time available to the Chief Economist without delaying the publication.

Reasons for breach

Publication at 15:00 breaches Protocol/Practice 2.4.

3 Reactions and Impact

While the GERS report is a National Statistics publication, it is a joint publication between statisticians and economists in the Scottish Government. Given the significant attention and comment that this publication receives, we felt it was essential for the Scottish Government's Chief Economic Adviser to head the Press launch. We believe this event helped to promote the integrity of the analysis and help to secure balanced coverage in the media.

We consulted members of the ScotStat network who had registered an interest in the publication (nearly 400 members) about the change in timing. We have received no comments or concerns then or since.

4 Corrective Actions Taken (include short-term actions, and long-term changes made to procedures)

We shall ensure that this publication is always released at 9:30 in future.

5 Any other relevant supporting material (including link to published statements about this breach)