

National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Standards for Economic Statistics

NSCASE(25)06

Future of NSCASE

Introduction

1. This paper outlines the future role of the National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Economic Statistics (NSCASE) and related advisory panels.
2. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) will enhance our user engagement for economic statistics with the following approach:
 - i. NSCASE will continue, meet less frequently, and evolve to have a focus on international statistical standards, with a remit to consider the impact of deviation from relevant international standards related to economic statistics;
 - ii. A new Advisory Panel on National Accounts (APoNA), will be created to focus on implementation issues and seek user views on topics relevant to the production and use of National Accounts data.
3. The members of NSCASE are invited to:
 - i. Note the update on the future of economic statistics advisory panels;
 - ii. Express their interest, either in this meeting or separately to the NSCASE secretariate, to continue their involvement in NSCASE; and
 - iii. Express their interest, either in this meeting or separately to the NSCASE secretariat, for availability to be considered to sit on the new National Accounts panel.

Background

4. NSCASE is coming to a natural renewal point given the end of the ONS funding commitment and Committee members' contracts.
5. The ONS have been discussing the incredible value of stakeholder forums and their impact on ensuring quality and independent scrutiny. This includes the existing advisory panels already in place for Prices and Labour Market topics.
6. ONS have determined that that all economic advisory boards should be brought onto the same basis, following similar remits and terms of references.
7. The System of National Accounts (SNA25) and Balance of Payments (BPM7) consultation period on the updated international manuals, which has been the primary focus and dominated agenda items for NSCASE, is now at an end with the recent endorsement at the United Nations. The advice for ONS needed going forward for National Accounts topics will be more in-line with existing advisory forums already established for Consumer Prices and the Labour Market.
8. The recent independent Lievesley Review recognised and acknowledged the role and output of NSCASE. The review states: "The UKSA should also build on the work that has been done by the National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Standards for Economic Statistics established post-EU Exit."¹ ONS is committed to delivering a high standard of scrutiny and stakeholder consultation. This will be evident in the development of the new panel, and the continuation of NSCASE (albeit with a revised remit and approach).
9. NSCASE will continue in a revised format to provide advice on the standards of international statistical manuals and offer conceptual advice of where deviation would be

¹ Lievesley Review, page 61

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ef2f733649a23451ed63a9/UKSA_Review.pdf

recommended to ensure the highest standard of UK statistics to ensure accurate representation of the UK economy.

NSCASE revised

Roles and Responsibilities

10. On issues identified by the National Statistician, NSCASE will be responsible for providing strategic, independent advice to the National Statistician on international standards, guidelines, and classifications to produce economic statistics in the UK.
11. Specifically, NSCASE will be responsible for providing advice to the National Statistician on internationally focused areas of:
 - i. The identification of topic areas for which the UK should influence the development of future international statistical standards and guidelines.
 - ii. Which international standards the UK should adopt in future, to meet the specific measurement needs of the UK economy, while seeking to ensure appropriate international comparability.

Membership

12. The Committee will comprise independent and trusted experts, with varied experience and skills.

Meetings

13. NSCASE Committee will meet a minimum of once a year. The Chair of NSCASE, in discussion and agreement with ONS, may convene additional meetings as necessary.

Payment

14. In line with other advisory boards, both Committees will move towards a non-paid model.
15. The National Statistician has the discretion to pay the Chairs of the committees.

Conclusion

16. Ongoing user, stakeholder and expert input and engagement is crucial for credible and trustworthy economic data. The new advisory panel, alongside a revised NSCASE, will continue to provide ONS and the National Statistician with a high standard of assurance for economic outputs.
17. The NSCASE Secretariat, in collaboration with ONS business areas, will provide additional guidance on how NSCASE will work with the other existing economic advisory panels in providing advice on international standards and guidelines.

Grant Fitzner, Director of Macroeconomic and Environment Statistics and Analysis

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List of Annexes

Annex A Current Terms of Reference.

Annex B Technical Advisory Panel for Classifications

Annex A Current NSCASE Terms of Reference

Overview

1. The National Statistician's Committee for Advice on Standards for Economic Statistics (NSCASE) will play a central role in the governance of economic statistics, by supporting decisions about the guidance used in the compilation of these statistics.

Introduction

2. At the UK Statistics Authority Board meeting on 30 September 2021, the Authority Board agreed to establish NSCASE, which would be advisory to the National Statistician.

3. NSCASE was established in June 2022. Its function is to support the National Statistician in ensuring its processes for influencing, adopting, and monitoring progress against international statistical standards are of a high standard.

Roles and Responsibilities

4. On issues identified by the National Statistician, NSCASE is responsible for providing strategic, independent advice to the National Statistician on standards, guidelines, and classifications to produce economic statistics.

5. Specifically, NSCASE is responsible for providing advice to the National Statistician on:

- The suitability of current standards across the Office for National Statistics (ONS) suite of economic statistics.
- The methods by which the UK should influence the development of future international statistical standards and guidelines.
- Which standards the UK should adopt in future, to meet the specific measurement needs of the UK economy, while seeking to ensure appropriate international comparability.

6. NSCASE will provide advice by consensus where possible or by majority vote.

7. To facilitate timely advice, NSCASE can consider proposals via correspondence. Advice on these projects will be provided by consensus once the stated period for consideration has expired.

Reporting and Governance

8. NSCASE provides strategic advice to the National Statistician, who is also the Chief Executive of the UK Statistics Authority, leader of the Analysis Function and head of the Government Statistical Service.

9. The Chair of NSCASE provides regular, public advice to the National Statistician on Committee discussions. The National Statistician in turn responds publicly to NSCASE and decides whether specific matters need to be discussed by the UK Statistics Authority Board, in line with the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

10. The agenda will be prepared by the Secretariat in accordance with any determination of the National Statistician and the Chair.

11. The NSCASE Secretariat will provide reports following each of its meetings to the National Statistician. At least seven days prior to its meetings, NSCASE will receive reports on:

- proposals for new ONS statistical methodology or guidance, or amendments to existing standards
- relevant projects and programmes and other information as it requires; and
- reports from any sub-committees.

12. Where expedited review is sought and NSCASE approve the proposal by correspondence, a minute of the discussion via correspondence will be presented at NSCASE's next meeting and published on the UK Statistics Authority website.

13. NSCASE will operate transparently. Meeting minutes and a list of projects considered will be made publicly available on the UK Statistics Authority website.

14. NSCASE will provide an annual report on its activities in the National Statistician's annual report.

Chairing

15. The Chair of NSCASE is appointed via open competition for a three-year term. The position of the Chair is remunerated via a formal contract. Reappointment is permitted.

16. The Chair also represents NSCASE publicly, as necessary.

17. The Committee may appoint a Deputy Chair from among its members.

18. The Deputy Chair may fulfil the functions of the Chair if the latter is unavailable.

Membership

19. The Committee will comprise independent and trusted experts, with varied experience and skills. Members will be remunerated via a formal contract.

20. Members of the panel are appointed via open competition for fixed terms of three years, by the Chair and the National Statistician. As this is a new Committee, members' end dates will be staggered to ensure continuity of work and experience. Reappointments are permitted. The composition of the Panel will be reviewed periodically by the Chair, in partnership with the National Statistician.

21. The role of each member of NSCASE is to participate in consideration of the full range of issues within the Committee's remit.

22. The Chair may invite other relevant experts as appropriate to advise NSCASE and/or observers to attend.

Meetings

23. NSCASE will meet at least four times a year. The Chair of NSCASE may convene additional meetings as necessary.

24. NSCASE meetings will be considered quorate when four or more members are present, including the Chair or the Deputy Chair.

- Substitutes will not be permitted to attend meetings.
- For a proposal to be formally approved at a meeting a quorum the Chair (or the Deputy Chair) and three members must be present.
- For a proposal to be formally approved by correspondence a quorum the Chair (or the Deputy Chair) and three members would need to respond.

Secretariat

25. The Secretariat will be provided by representatives of the UK Statistics Authority's Central Policy Secretariat.

Transparency and confidentiality

26. NSCASE will operate transparently. Meeting agenda, papers and minutes will be published shortly after each meeting. Papers that are draft versions of scheduled publications, or which include pre-released data, will not be published ahead of their scheduled date, but the minutes will clearly state when the final document is expected to be published. Papers that are deemed to be market sensitive will be withheld from publication.

26. Panel members will have the opportunity to comment on minutes before their publication, on issues of accuracy. The NSCASE Chair will have the final approval of minutes. Minutes will be made publicly available within six weeks of the meeting date.

Inclusion and Diversity

28. NSCASE are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion in the running of the committee and their advice.

28. The Committee will seek the advice and involvement of ONS's diversity networks in their work. This will include inviting representatives to attend meetings or sections of meetings, should this be relevant, and sharing minutes or papers, as agreed by the committee.

30. The Secretariat will ensure that all meetings and materials are accessible.

Review

31. The Committee will review the effectiveness of its meetings and its Terms of Reference annually. These reviews are published.

Annex B Technical Advisory Panel for Classifications

ONS is developing a Technical Advisory Panel for economic statistics classifications. This panel will provide advice on individual classification recommendations considered by the ONS Economic Statistics Classifications Committee (ESCC) to be especially complex or novel, or which have a very large impact on economic statistics.

In accordance with NSCASE's remit, ONS has previously brought for NSCASE's consideration the UK adoption of specific guidance, including the Manual on Government Deficit and Debt: 2022 Edition, and a Eurostat Clarification Note on Public-Private Partnerships. ONS has not brought individual classification assessments to NSCASE meetings. The responsibility for classification assessments will continue to lie with the ESCC and will be supported by the Technical Advisory Panel soon to be established and will be supported by the Technical Advisory Panel soon to be established. We continue to see an important role for NSCASE in determining the appropriate statistical guidance which should be adopted in the UK.

We can provide NSCASE with an overview of the classifications process, including the role and remit of the Technical Advisory Panel, once established. There will be no restrictions on membership of this panel which would preclude NSCASE members applying.