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General Notice

NAMIBIA STATISTICS AGENCY

No. 231

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NAMIBIA QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK FOR STATISTICS (NQAFS)

The Namibia Quality Assurance Framework for Statistics (NQAFS) was issued by the Statistician-General in line with the provisions of Part VI of the Statistic Act No. 9 of 2011, dealing with the Coordination of the National Statistical System (NSS). In particular, section 34, sub-section 1 and 2(b) dealing with the issuance of a Code of Practice aimed at establishing and maintaining public confidence in official statistics which may impose requirements with respect to, inter alia, measures to ensure the optimum quality and comparability of official and other statistics and section 36 dealing with the issuance of statistical standards.

The Framework was developed with comprehensive consultations with the users and producers of statistics in the NSS and in line with the Guidelines for the Template for a United Nations Generic Quality Assurance Framework and the World Bank Data Quality Assessment Framework. Furthermore, the Framework sets out clear guidelines and specifications under which quality statistics must be produced, evaluated and designated into the official statistics. Satisfactory implementation of the Framework is therefore hoped to lead to an increase user trust in the producing institutions of official statistics and hence increase the demand and coverage of use.

The Framework is therefore applicable to all data producers in Namibia and shall be implemented fully without any delay.

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Abbreviations

ESAR	Executive Self-Assessment Report
ESCoP	European Statistics Code of Practice
HSAR	Head of Statistical Undertaking Self-Assessment Report
IQAP	Independent Quality Assessment Panel
NQAFS	Namibia Quality Assurance Framework for Statistics
NSA	Namibia Statistics Agency
NSS	National Statistical System
OSD	Official Statistics Designation
DQA	Data Quality Assurance and NSS Coordination department
SG	Statistician-General
UN NQAF	Guidelines for the Template for a United Nations Generic Quality Assurance Framework

1. The quality context

Production of high quality statistics cannot be over emphasized for planning and policy making for national development and for monitoring national and sub-national, regional and international development agendas, for business decisions, informed and effective participation of the population in national discourse.

The Namibian Government is committed to the production of high quality statistics and to ensure this, it enacted the Statistics Act (Statistics Act No. 9 of 2011) and established the Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) as an autonomous body with responsibilities inter alia “to make statistical standards relating to the quality criteria with which statistical collections and statistics must comply” (Statistics

Act 36(i) (a)(iii)) and a mandate to issue a Code of Practice aimed at establishing and maintaining public confidence in official statistics which “may impose requirements with respect to, inter alia, measures to ensure the optimum quality and comparability of official and other statistics (Statistics Act 34 (1) and (2) (b)). The NSA and other statistics producers in the National Statistical System (NSS) all aim to produce high quality statistics.

The Statistics Act also provides for the Statistician-General (SG) to designate statistics as “official statistics” (Statistics Act (37) (1)); in this context the Act provides that:

- (1) The Statistician-General may designate as official statistics any statistics or class of statistics produced from statistical collections by -
 - (a) the Agency; or
 - (b) any government body, after consultation with the head of the government body concerned¹.

According to the Act (4 (2)) Official statistics must be:

- (a) relevant, accurate, reliable and timely;
- (b) objective and comprehensive;
- (c) compiled, produced and analysed in a scientific and transparent manner;
- (d) disseminated impartially;
- (e) accessible;
- (f) in accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications; and
- (g) sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region and similar socioeconomic features.

The Act tasks the NSA with developing standards relating to “the criteria and the classification and certifying procedures for the designation of statistics as “official” statistics”. (36 (1) (a) (i)).

In support of producing high quality statistics, the NSA developed the Namibia Statistics Policy which states² that “The NSS will focus on the improvement and maintenance of the quality of Namibian statistics in all its aspects” and defines quality as incorporating: “strong institutional support, assurances of integrity, sound methodology and statistical procedures, accuracy and reliability, and serviceability including relevance, timeliness, and accessibility”.

In accordance with the mandate in the Statistics Act (Statistics Act 34 (1) and (2) (b)), the NSA developed and issued a Code of Practice which imposes requirements with respect to inter alia:

- (a) Ethical and professional standards that must be adhered to in the collection, production, analysis and dissemination of statistics; and
- (b) Measures to ensure the optimum quality and the comparability of official and other statistics.”³

¹ “any statistics or class of statistics produced from statistical collections” is understood to relate to statistics derived from censuses, surveys and administrative records.

² Namibia Statistics Policy, Namibia Statistics Agency, March 2014, Section 6.3.i, page 12.

³ Code of practice: Professional and ethical standards applicable to statistics producers; Namibia Statistics Agency; November, 2014; Preface, page 6.

In this context, this document sets out a Namibia Quality Assurance Framework for Statistics (NQAFS). The approach is consistent with the provisions of the Statistics Act and is based on the United Nations Principles of Official Statistics, the United Nations Generic Data Quality Assurance Framework (UN NQAF) and the European Statistics Code of Practice (ESCoP), the International Monetary Fund's Data Quality Assessment Framework (DQAF), Statistics Canada's Quality Assurance Framework as presented in its 2010 Report to the United Nations Statistical Commission, and the Proposal for the Structure of a Regional Code of Good Statistical Practice for Latin America and the Caribbean. This approach provides a robust platform for the NQAFS. Application of the NQAFS is aimed at improving and maintaining the quality of statistics that are produced by the NSA and other producers in the NSS. It is also aimed at ensuring/promoting confidence and trust in Namibian statistics on the part of users and the public. Statistics may be designated as "official" statistics if they are assessed to be in compliance with the practices listed under the NQAFS.

2. The aims and general uses of the Framework

The NQAFS provides a rational, transparent and sustainable methodology for quality assurance of Namibian statistics; the Framework provides for procedures for quality assurance, quality assessment and designating of statistics as "official" statistics. The Framework is made up of tools to assure and assess the quality of a Statistical Undertaking⁴ as well as designate a Statistical Undertaking as "official" statistics. Assurance is carried out by applying the Framework in a forward-looking way to ensure that the current and planned statistical processes support quality statistics. Assessment is carried out "after the event" e.g. after a survey or census or collection of administrative records or after a cycle of a statistical domain, to assess the actual performance in relation to quality maintenance. The Framework can assist the NSS in:

- (a) reviewing the quality of current statistics;
- (b) providing a basis for planning to improve quality through application of good practices;
- (c) monitoring the quality of statistics over time;
- (d) identifying quality gaps in data and aiming to ensure sufficient comprehensiveness of statistics to meet user needs; and
- (e) providing evidence for considering the Official Statistics Designation (OSD) of statistics.

OSD is aimed at providing confidence to the public that the designated statistics meet the highest quality standards in their production and dissemination. The Framework may be used, inter alia, for assessment by statistics producers (self-assessment, external assessment, peer review) and by international organisations. It may be applied informally by a statistics producer to assess or guide improvement of their statistics or more formally in the context of OSD. The Framework may be applied to statistics issued by government and private institutions and those having national or sub-national coverage.

The Framework (or parts of it) can be applied in assuring the quality of a Statistical Undertaking such as surveys, censuses or collection of administrative records as a whole or individual sections of the Undertaking such as managing institutional environment or managing statistical processes on a stepwise basis.

⁴ Statistical undertaking is considered to be any census, survey, collection of administrative records or any domain of statistics.

3. Assuring quality of a Statistical Undertaking

The UN NQAF recognised that there are several general definitions of quality from a statistical perspective and in particular noted the most commonly used and succinct definition “fitness for use” or “fitness for purpose”⁵. The UN NQAF also recognised that recent definitions of statistical quality portray it as multi-dimensional⁶. The UN NQAF defines product quality in terms of the following Components⁷: relevance, accuracy and reliability, timeliness and punctuality, coherence and comparability, accessibility and clarity, it includes the following four process quality Components⁸: methodological soundness, cost-effectiveness, soundness of implementation and respondent burden, it also includes Components at the institutional level that affect the quality of products and processes and issues of managing the statistical system (in support of quality statistics).

The NQAFS adopts a broad view of the UN NQAF of covering product quality, process quality, institutional environment and system-wide management. This broad view is compatible with the definition of quality that was developed by the NSA and included in the Namibia Statistics Policy i.e. strong institutional support, assurances of integrity, sound methodology and statistical procedures, accuracy and reliability, and serviceability including relevance, timeliness, and accessibility⁹.

3.1 Components of Quality

The NQAFS¹⁰ adopts 4 sections and 18 Components of quality assurance in total. While the UN NQAF recognises that a country may deviate from the list of the 19 Components¹¹, the list below has been determined to be useful for application in the Namibian context in order to achieve a comprehensive assurance and assessment of quality. The list of the quality Components of the NQAFS are as follows:

A. Managing the statistical system

[NQAFS 1] Coordinating the national statistical system

[NQAFS 2] Managing relationships with stakeholders

[NQAFS 3] Managing statistical standards

B. Managing the institutional environment

[NQAFS 4] Assuring professional independence

[NQAFS 5] Assuring impartiality and objectivity

[NQAFS 6] Assuring transparency

[NQAFS 7] Assuring statistical confidentiality and security

[NQAFS 8] Assuring the quality commitment

[NQAFS 9] Assuring adequacy of resources

C. Managing statistical processes

[NQAFS 10] Assuring methodological soundness

[NQAFS 11] Assuring cost-effectiveness

[NQAFS 12] Assuring soundness of implementation

[NQAFS 13] Managing the respondent burden

⁵ UN NQAF page 2

⁶ UN NQAF page 2

⁷ UN NQAF page 48

⁸ UN NQAF page 49

⁹ See Footnote 3.

¹⁰ The Components of quality for the NQAFS are those listed under Section 3 of the Template for a Generic National Quality Assurance Framework in the UN NQAF; Page 4.

¹¹ UN NQAF page 1

D. Managing statistical outputs

[NQAFS 14] Assuring relevance

[NQAFS 15] Assuring accuracy and reliability

[NQAFS 16] Assuring timeliness and punctuality

[NQAFS 17] Assuring accessibility and clarity

[NQAFS 18] Assuring coherence and comparability

These Components are linked to the Dimensions of quality included in the NSA definition of quality, allowing analysis and reporting according to the two alternative arrangements (NQAFS Components and NSA definition). The linkages are set out in detail in table 3.1 below.

Table 3.1: Linkage of the NSA Dimensions of Quality to the Components of NQAFS

NSA Dimensions of quality	Components of NQAFS
1. Strong institutional support	1 Coordinating the National Statistical System 4 Assuring professional independence 5 Assuring impartiality and objectivity 6 Assuring transparency 7 Assuring statistical confidentiality and security 8 Assuring the quality commitment 9 Assuring adequacy of resources
2. Assurances of integrity	4 Assuring professional independence 5 Assuring impartiality and objectivity 6 Assuring transparency
3. Sound methodology	3 Managing statistical standards 10 Assuring methodological soundness
4. Sound statistical procedures	12 Assuring soundness of implementation
5. Accuracy and reliability	2 Managing relationships with stakeholders (data providers) 4 Assuring professional independence 5 Assuring impartiality and objectivity 7 Assuring statistical confidentiality and security 8 Assuring the quality commitment 10 Assuring methodological soundness 12 Assuring soundness of implementation 13 Managing the respondent burden 15 Assuring accuracy and reliability 18 Assuring coherence and comparability
6. Relevance	2 Managing relationships with stakeholders (data users) 14 Assuring relevance
7. Timeliness	13 Managing the respondent burden 16 Assuring timeliness and punctuality
8. Accessibility	17 Assuring accessibility and clarity

Cutting across the 18 Components are requirements of appropriate recruitment, training and development of staff; the staff are critical to the maintenance of quality in statistics. They require appropriate technical knowledge and skills on all matters that impact on quality of statistics. They are further required to adopt a culture of continuous improvement and a culture of sensitivity to building and maintaining quality. In addition, it is very important to develop metadata to describe process and achievements at each Components and Elements for transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. The NSA must ensure these pre-requisites are in place and maintained.

While all Components should be considered in a quality assessment each of them is not necessarily to be equally weighted, as the importance of each Component may vary depending on the data source and context for a particular assessment. Assessors should consider which Components are most relevant and important for the particular purpose. For example, if the credibility and trustworthiness of the data source are particularly important, then a careful examination of the Institutional Environment Component will be especially important and this may have more weight in making an overall quality assessment. It is a matter of judgment as to the relative importance of each Component.

The Components are generally indirectly applicable to the institution (i.e. NSA) through their applicability to the Statistical Undertakings; and hence institutions that are found to meet all Components of the Statistical Undertakings are viewed as supportive of the production of quality statistics. The specification of Components would be different (but related) for other institutions of the NSS and their Statistical Undertakings e.g. other institutions are not seen as having a role in relation to Coordinating the National Statistical System and Managing statistical standards.

3.2 Guidelines/Elements for assuring quality

The 18 Components are accompanied by Guidelines (made up of Elements) for assuring the quality of the Statistical Undertaking. The Guidelines are a modified set of the UN NQAF Guidelines and Elements to allow for a more feasible implementation of the NQAFS. They “provide examples and guidance”¹² on the possible ways to operationalize the Components i.e. actions to be taken (good practices) or circumstances or situations to be present to assure quality under each Component, and influence or determine the level of achievement of quality of a statistics producing organisation or Statistical Undertaking. The Guidelines include a number of quality and performance indicators to be calculated in respect of the Undertakings where relevant e.g. response rates, sampling errors and other indicators. The Guidelines are presented as a list of “Elements to be assured” and the indicators to be calculated.

Equally, the Guidelines provide a reference for assessing the level of achievement of quality in respect of each Component. The Guidelines are to be implemented by the NSA and other statistics producers in the NSS. There are 82 Elements in total for assuring the quality of a Statistical Undertaking, which are considered to be an adequate number of data points or amount of information necessary to provide a good assessment of the quality of the Statistical Undertaking. These Guidelines are presented as follows:

Guidelines for Quality Assurance of a Statistical Undertaking

SECTION A: Managing the statistical system

NQAFS 1: Coordinating the National Statistical System

- 1.1 Duplication of work with other Undertakings is avoided.
- 1.2 Good statistical practices, technical knowledge and data are identified and shared with and received from other Undertakings.

NQAFS 2: Managing relationships with stakeholders

In regard to users/user groups

- 2.1 Consultations and communications with users or user groups take place concerning their needs and to keep them updated about the Undertaking

In regard to data providers/respondents

- 2.2 Consultations and communications with data providers/respondents or provider groups take place to, inter alia, increase awareness of the value of the statistics and the reason for the collection, raise trust among respondents, inform them of the legal basis for the Undertaking, respond to respondent burden concerns, and assure them about confidentiality protection, to promote full provision of requested data.

In regard to the media

- 2.3 The media are informed about the intention to carry out the Undertaking and the availability of the results so it can advertise the Undertaking and play a role in disseminating statistics to a wider audience.

¹² UN NQAF page 1

In regard to the funding agencies

- 2.4 The work plans and budgets of the Undertaking are shared with the funding agencies to ensure mutual understanding of funding requirements.

NQAFS 3: Managing statistical standards

- 3.1 Detailed concordances to corresponding international and national statistical standards are available and are provided.
- 3.2 Detailed concordances to previous statistical standards are available and are provided.
- 3.3 The statistical Undertaking collects and retains information at the fundamental or most detailed level of each standard classification in order to provide maximum flexibility in aggregation and facilitate retrospective reclassification as needs change.

SECTION B: Managing the institutional environment**NQAFS 4: Assuring professional independence**

- 4.1 Laws, formal policies, procedures or organisational culture for dealing with actual, perceived, or potential interference with NSA 's obligation to develop, produce and disseminate statistics without outside interference, and for dealing with conflicts of interest, are adhered to.

NQAFS 5: Assuring impartiality and objectivity

- 5.1 A declaration or code of conduct or code of ethics which governs statistical practices (e.g. Code of Practice, declaration on professional ethics, and/or other guidelines, etc.) for assuring impartiality and objectivity is adhered to.
- 5.2 The statistics are produced on an objective basis which is determined only by statistical considerations.
- 5.3 The sources, concepts, methods, processes and data dissemination paths are chosen on the basis of statistical considerations, national and international principles and best practices.
- 5.4 A date is announced in advance for the dissemination of the statistics (Advanced Release Calendar). If the deadline will not be met, notification is given in advance together with an explanation and a new date for publication communicated to the public.
- 5.5 Results are disseminated to all users as soon as the work is completed and as soon as possible after the reference period so there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.
- 5.6 Information is made available to all users at the same time, but if access to statistics prior to their release is allowed, it is controlled and made known publicly.
- 5.7 Statistical releases and statements from the Undertaking, for example in press conferences, are objective and non-partisan.

NQAFS 6: Assuring transparency

- 6.1 Standards, classifications, methods and processes used to produce the statistics (metadata) are fully documented, archived and disseminated
- 6.2 Advance notice of changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques is given and explained to users.
- 6.3 Any revisions that are made to previously published figures are announced in advance, and follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures which are communicated to users along with the revised figures.
- 6.4 Errors that are detected are corrected as soon as possible and users are informed about those errors.
- 6.5 Statistical releases and statements from the Undertaking, for example in press conferences, are clearly distinguished from political/policy statements and issued separately from them.

NQAFS 7: Assuring statistical confidentiality and security

- 7.1 A law or some other formal provision or policy (e.g. confidentiality policy) guaranteeing the proper management, with regard to privacy and security, of information received from data providers is adhered to. National privacy laws are respected.

- 7.2 The staff of the Undertaking sign legal confidentiality agreements or declarations or oath of secrecy covering their obligations.
- 7.3 Appropriate physical and information technology security procedures and organisational/management guidelines are in place for ensuring the protection of statistical information relating to individual respondents.
- 7.4 There are appropriate penalties or sanctions for any wilful breaches of confidentiality and users of confidential information are made aware of them.
- 7.5 Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

NQAFS 8: Assuring the quality commitment

- 8.1 The NSA's policy about its commitment to quality in statistics is followed.
- 8.2 Quality management is implemented for the entire statistical process (development, production and dissemination).
- 8.3 Information on the quality of the statistics from the Undertaking is made available to users.
- 8.4 Periodic quality reviews (such as audits and self-assessments and external reviews) of key products are conducted.
- 8.5 User reactions and feedback on the "fitness for purpose" of the statistics from the Undertaking are regularly collected and followed-up, for example, by user satisfaction surveys.

NQAFS 9: Assuring adequacy of resources

- 9.1 Human resources are sufficient in magnitude and quality to implement the Undertaking.
- 9.2 Financial resources are sufficient to implement the Undertaking.
- 9.3 Technological resources (hardware, software, networks etc.) are sufficient to support the Undertaking.

SECTION C: Managing statistical processes**NQAFS 10: Assuring methodological soundness**

- 10.1 Cooperation with the scientific community (experts and users) to discuss methodology, information technology and innovation, to improve methodology and the effectiveness of the methods implemented is undertaken regularly.
- 10.2 Standard concepts, definitions, units and classifications are consistently used and conform to the corresponding international or national standards and if there are divergences from the corresponding international or national statistical standards any necessary exemptions are obtained and the divergences are documented and explained.
- 10.3 A systematic approach for updating the survey frame is followed.

NQAFS 11: Assuring cost-effectiveness

- 11.1 Alternative data sources (such as existing survey data and administrative data) are always explicitly considered before a new cycle of the Undertaking is commenced.
- 11.2 Standardized solutions that increase effectiveness and efficiency are implemented in key areas of the statistical process, such as sampling, registers, data collection and data exchange.
- 11.3 The productivity potential of information and communications technology is optimized for data collection, processing and dissemination with routine clerical operations (e.g. data capture, coding, validation, etc.) being automated wherever possible.
- 11.4 The costs of producing the statistics at each stage of the statistical process (survey para-data) are accurately measured and assessed to evaluate their cost-effectiveness, and are well documented.
- 11.5 Review is conducted for assessing whether the Undertaking is still operating in the most cost-effective way to meet its stated requirements in terms of meeting the needs of users and the results of the reviews are documented.

NQAFS 12: Assuring soundness of implementation

- 12.1 Training materials and manuals are developed; and consultations take place with the staff that are directly involved in the implementation process,

- 12.2 Procedures for monitoring and improving interviewers' skills are followed.
- 12.3 The data collection process takes into consideration the ethnicity and language of respondents before the data collection instruments are developed, and when the staff (especially the interviewers) are being selected and trained.
- 12.4 Appropriate implementation instruments are in place, including resource and material plans, the supervisory structure, attainable schedules, operations, procedures and checks, training, the publicity surrounding the collection, etc.
- 12.5 When administrative data are used it is periodically verified that the concepts, definitions units and classifications used conform to the corresponding international or national standards, that the population is consistent with the statistical output requirements, and that the administrative data are complete and up to date.
- 12.6 Survey design, sample selection and estimation methods are well-based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.
- 12.7 The questionnaire is systematically tested prior to data collection
- 12.8 Data collection (including follow-ups), data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.
- 12.9 Appropriate editing validating, and imputation methods are used and regularly reviewed revised and updated as required
- 12.10 Activity and cost indicators (survey para-data, data capture and processing errors and non-sampling errors) are produced, analysed, reported to different levels (managers, implementation personnel, users and stakeholders) and properly documented in order to be used by the Undertaking in monitoring and managing the current and future collection processes.

NQAFS 13: Managing the respondent burden

- 13.1 The necessity to continue the Undertaking (or undertake any new statistical survey) is assessed taking into account, inter alia, user needs.
- 13.2 The questionnaire asks the minimum number of questions consistent with meeting the objectives of the survey.
- 13.3 The data collection process is designed to reduce or distribute the respondent burden while increasing response rates, in particular by applying sound methods and different modes of data collection including use of electronic response

SECTION D: Managing statistical outputs

NQAFS 14: Assuring relevance

- 14.1 Consultations with users or user groups/committees take place so that the Undertaking can ensure that users' priority current and emerging needs, are known and addressed to the extent possible.
- 14.2 Strategic goals and work programme plans for the Undertaking reflect users' priority needs.
- 14.3 Data on users and their utilization of the statistical products are analysed (e.g. by evaluating downloads, subscriptions to reports, requests for Information etc.) to help ascertain their needs and support priority setting and user consultation.
- 14.4 Quality indicators on statistical relevance such as data completeness rate are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

NQAFS 15: Assuring accuracy and reliability

- 15.1 Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.
- 15.2 An analysis of revisions is performed and used to improve the statistical process.
- 15.3 Quality indicators on accuracy and reliability such as sampling error-indicators, non-sampling error (over-coverage rate, unit non-response rate, item non-response rate, imputation rate, common units proportion) and Revision practice (data revision-average size) are regularly calculated, documented, monitored and published and methods and tools for preventing and reducing those kinds of errors are implemented as a result.

NQAFS 16: Assuring timeliness and punctuality

- 16.1 The timeliness and periodicity of the Undertaking's statistics complies with IMF data dissemination standards or other relevant timeliness targets.
- 16.2 Procedures for following-up to ensure timely receipt of data from providers of the raw data are adhered to and properly documented.
- 16.3 User requirements are taken into account when the periodicity and timeliness of the statistics is being decided.
- 16.4 The possibility and usefulness of releasing preliminary data is regularly considered; preliminary data of acceptable accuracy are released when considered useful; they are clearly identified as preliminary, and users are provided with appropriate metadata to be able to assess the quality of the preliminary data.
- 16.5 Regular monitoring and evaluation of the punctuality of the Undertaking's release according to the set timetable is undertaken and action plans are developed.
- 16.6 Divergences from any pre-announced times are published in advance with explanations of the reasons for the delays; a new release time is announced.
- 16.7 Quality indicators on timeliness (Time lag-first results, and Time lag-final results) and punctuality (Punctuality - delivery and publication) are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

NQAFS 17: Assuring accessibility and clarity

- 17.1 The public is informed about the data outputs and services, and is made aware that custom-designed outputs can be provided on request when feasible.
- 17.2 User support services are made available to give prompt assistance to users, by knowledgeable staff, to help them access and interpret the data.
- 17.3 Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes, subject to specific rules or protocols.
- 17.4 Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented in a clear form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons, are archived and made available to users.
- 17.5 Modern information and communication technology is used for disseminating statistics (i.e. statistical databases, the NSA's website, electronic releases etc.) and traditional hard copy and other services are provided when appropriate.
- 17.6 Preliminary and revised data, when released, are clearly identified as such; the reasons for revisions are explained; users are provided with appropriate information to be able to assess the quality of the data.
- 17.7 Quality indicators on accessibility and clarity such as Metadata-consultations, Data tables-consultations and Metadata completeness rate are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

NQAFS 18: Assuring coherence and comparability

- 18.1 The statistics are internally coherent and consistent i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities are maintained.
- 18.2 Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.
- 18.3 Statistics are compared with other statistics available from different sources or with different periodicities and divergences are identified and reconciled.
- 18.4 Technical knowledge is shared with and received from other Undertakings.
- 18.5 Quality indicators on coherence and comparability such as Comparability over time - length of comparable time series, and Comparability –geographical (over countries, regions etc. –A- symmetry for mirror flows statistics coefficient), are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

Annex 1 presents a detailed descriptions of the NQAFS Components and their respective supporting mechanisms. The number of Elements contributing to each Component of quality for Assuring quality for a Statistical Undertaking is shown in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Number of Elements contributing to each Component of quality for Assuring Quality for a Statistical Undertaking

Component of quality	Number of Elements
A. Managing the statistical system	
[NQAFS 1] Coordinating the National Statistical System	2
[NQAFS 2] Managing relationships with stakeholders	4
[NQAFS 3] Managing statistical standards	3
B. Managing the institutional environment	
[NQAFS 4] Assuring professional independence	1
[NQAFS 5] Assuring impartiality and objectivity	7
[NQAFS 6] Assuring transparency	5
[NQAFS 7] Assuring statistical confidentiality and security	5
[NQAFS 8] Assuring the quality commitment	5
[NQAFS 9] Assuring adequacy of resources	3
C Managing statistical processes	
[NQAFS 10] Assuring methodological soundness	3
[NQAFS 11] Assuring cost-effectiveness	5
[NQAFS 12] Assuring soundness of implementation	10
[NQAFS 13] Managing the respondent burden	3
D Managing statistical outputs	
[NQAFS 14] Assuring relevance	4
[NQAFS 15] Assuring accuracy and reliability	3
[NQAFS 16] Assuring timeliness and punctuality	7
[NQAFS 17] Assuring accessibility and clarity	7
[NQAFS 18] Assuring coherence and comparability	5
Number of Elements	82

4. Official Statistics

The definition of Official Statistics in the Namibian context as set out in the Statistics Act (Section 4(2)) requires that statistics must be:

- (a) relevant, accurate, reliable and timely
- (b) objective and comprehensive
- (c) compiled, produced and analysed in a scientific and transparent manner
- (d) disseminated impartially
- (e) accessible
- (f) in accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications and
- (g) sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region and similar socioeconomic features

In this Guideline the Dimensions of Official Statistics have been re-arranged for the purpose of assessment but continue to have the same coverage as in the Statistics Act. The Dimensions are re-arranged as follows:

- (a) Relevant, comprehensive and Sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region and similar socioeconomic features;
- (b) Accurate and reliable;
- (c) Timely;
- (d) Compiled, produced and analysed in an objective, scientific and transparent manner;
- (e) Disseminated impartially;
- (f) accessible; and
- (g) In accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications.

The linkage of the above Dimensions of Official Statistics to the Components of the NQAFS Elements is presented in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Linkage of the Dimensions of Official Statistics to the Components of NQAFS

Dimensions of Official Statistics	Components of NQAFS
1. Relevant, comprehensive and Sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region, and similar socio-economic features	2 Managing relationships with stakeholders (data users) 2.1 Consultations and communications with users..... 3 Managing statistical standards 3.3most detailed level..... 14 Assuring relevance
2. Accurate and reliable	2 Managing relationships with stakeholders (data providers) 2.2 Consultations and communications with data providers ... 7 Assuring statistical confidentiality and security 8 Assuring the quality commitment 10 Assuring methodological soundness 10.1 scientific community..... 10.3 updating the survey frame..... 12 Assuring soundness of implementation 13 Managing the response burden 13.2...questionnaire...minimum number of questions... 13.3...reduce or distribute.... 15 Assuring accuracy and reliability 18 Assuring coherence and comparability
3. Timely	16 Assuring timeliness and punctuality
4. Compiled produced and analysed in an objective, scientific and transparent manner	4 Assuring professional independence 5 Assuring impartiality and objectivity 5.1 ... code of conduct... 5.2 ...objective basis... 5.3statistical considerations..... 5.7 Statistical releases... objective and non-partisan ... 6 Assuring transparency 19 Managing metadata
5. Disseminated impartially	5 Assuring impartiality and objectivity 5.4 A date is announced.... 5.5 ... as soon as the work is completed. 5.6... to all users at the same time...
6. Accessible	17 Assuring accessibility and clarity
7. In accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications	3 Managing statistical standards 3.1 corresponding international ... standards.... 3.2 ... previous statistical standards ... 10 Assuring methodological soundness 10.2 Standard concepts, definitions

The Guidelines for Designating a Statistical Undertaking as Official Statistics which serve as a reference for evaluating and informing a decision on possible OSD for a Statistical Undertaking is presented below. There are 69¹³ Elements in total that are considered to be an adequate number of data points or amount of information required for OSD.

4.1 Guidelines/Elements for OSD

Guidelines for Designating a Statistical Undertaking as Official Statistics

1. Relevant, comprehensive and sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region, and similar socio-economic features

NQAFS 2: Managing relationships with stakeholders (Users)

- 2.1 Consultations and communications with users or user groups take place concerning their needs and to keep them updated about the Undertaking

NQAFS 3: Managing statistical standards

- 3.3 The statistical Undertaking collects and retains information at the fundamental or most detailed level of each standard classification in order to provide maximum flexibility in aggregation and facilitate retrospective reclassification as needs change.

NQAFS 14: Assuring relevance

- 14.1 Consultations with users or user groups/committees take place so that the Undertaking can ensure that users' priority current and emerging needs, are known and addressed to the extent possible.
- 14.2 Strategic goals and work programme plans for the Undertaking reflect users' priority needs.
- 14.3 Data on users and their utilization of the statistical products are analysed (e.g. by evaluating downloads, subscriptions to reports, requests for Information etc.) to help ascertain their needs and support priority setting and user consultation.
- 14.4 Quality indicators on statistical relevance such as data completeness rate are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

2. Accurate and reliable

NQAFS 2: Managing relationships with stakeholders (data providers)

- 2.2 Consultations and communications with data providers/respondents or provider groups take place to, inter alia, increase awareness of the value of the statistics and the reason for the collection, raise trust among respondents, inform them of the legal basis for the Undertaking, respond to respondent burden concerns, and assure them about confidentiality protection, to promote full provision of requested data.

NQAFS 7: Assuring statistical confidentiality and security

- 7.1 A law or some other formal provision or policy (e.g. confidentiality policy) guaranteeing the proper management, with regard to privacy and security, of information received from data providers is adhered to. National privacy laws are respected.
- 7.2 The staff of the Undertaking sign legal confidentiality agreements or declarations or oath of secrecy covering their obligations.

¹³ 13 Elements from Guidelines for Quality Assurance of a Statistical Undertaking are not relevant for the Elements for the Guidelines for Designating a Statistical Undertaking as Official Statistics based on the definition of official statistics. This comprises the 2 Elements from [NQAFS 1] Coordinating the National Statistical System, 2 Elements from [NQAFS 2] Managing relationships with stakeholders (Media and Funding Agencies), 1 Element from [NQAFS 13] Managing the respondent burden, the 3 Elements from [NQAFS 9] Assuring adequacy of resources and the 5 Elements from [NQAFS 11] Assuring cost-effectiveness.

- 7.3 Appropriate physical and information technology security procedures and organisational/management guidelines are in place for ensuring the protection of statistical information relating to individual respondents.
- 7.4 There are appropriate penalties or sanctions for any wilful breaches of confidentiality and users of confidential information are made aware of them.
- 7.5 Strict protocols apply to external users accessing statistical microdata for research purposes.

NQAFS 8: Assuring the quality commitment

- 8.1 The NSA's policy about its commitment to quality in statistics is followed.
- 8.2 Quality management is implemented for the entire statistical process (development, production and dissemination).
- 8.3 Information on the quality of the statistics from the Undertaking is made available to users.
- 8.4 Periodic quality reviews (such as audits and self-assessments and external reviews) of key products are conducted.
- 8.5 User reactions and feedback on the "fitness for purpose" of the statistics from the Undertaking are regularly collected and followed-up, for example, by user satisfaction surveys.

NQAFS 10: Assuring methodological soundness

- 10.1 Cooperation with the scientific community (experts and users) to discuss methodology, information technology and innovation, to improve methodology and the effectiveness of the methods implemented is undertaken regularly.
- 10.3 A systematic approach for updating the survey frame is followed.

NQAFS 12: Assuring soundness of implementation

- 12.1 Training materials and manuals are developed, and consultations take place with the staff that are directly involved in the implementation process,
- 12.2 Procedures for monitoring and improving interviewers' skills are followed.
- 12.3 The data collection process takes into consideration the ethnicity and language of respondents before the data collection instruments are developed, and when the staff (especially the interviewers) are being selected and trained.
- 12.4 Appropriate implementation instruments are in place, including resource and material plans, the supervisory structure, attainable schedules, operations, procedures and checks, training, the publicity surrounding the collection, etc.
- 12.5 When administrative data are used it is periodically verified that the concepts, definitions units and classifications used conform to the corresponding international or national standards, that the population is consistent with the statistical output requirements, and that the administrative data are complete and up to date.
- 12.6 Survey design, sample selection and estimation methods are well-based and regularly reviewed and revised as required.
- 12.7 The questionnaire is systematically tested prior to data collection
- 12.8 Data collection (including follow-ups), data entry, and coding are routinely monitored and revised as required.
- 12.9 Appropriate editing validating, and imputation methods are used and regularly reviewed revised and updated as required
- 12.10 Activity and cost indicators (survey para-data, data capture and processing errors and non-sampling errors) are produced, analysed, reported to different levels (managers, implementation personnel, users and stakeholders) and properly documented in order to be used by the Undertaking in monitoring and managing the current and future collection processes.

NQAFS 13: Managing the respondent burden

- 13.2 The questionnaire asks the minimum number of questions consistent with meeting the objectives of the survey.
- 13.3 The data collection process is designed to reduce or distribute the respondent burden while increasing response rates, in particular by applying sound methods and different modes of data collection including use of electronic response

NQAFS 15: Assuring accuracy and reliability

- 15.1 Source data, intermediate results and statistical outputs are regularly assessed and validated.
- 15.2 An analysis of revisions is performed and used to improve the statistical process.
- 15.3 Quality indicators on accuracy and reliability such as sampling error-indicators, non-sampling error (over-coverage rate, unit non-response rate, item non-response rate, imputation rate, common units proportion) and Revision practice (data revision-average size) are regularly calculated, documented, monitored and published and methods and tools for preventing and reducing those kinds of errors are implemented as a result.

NQAFS 18: Assuring coherence and comparability

- 18.1 The statistics are internally coherent and consistent i.e. arithmetic and accounting identities are maintained.
- 18.2 Statistics are comparable over a reasonable period of time.
- 18.3 Statistics are compared with other statistics available from different sources or with different periodicities and divergences are identified and reconciled.
- 18.4 Technical knowledge is shared with and received from other Undertakings.
- 18.5 Quality indicators on coherence and comparability such as Comparability over time - length of comparable time series, and Comparability –geographical (over countries, regions etc. –A- symmetry for mirror flows statistics coefficient), are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

3. Timely**NQAFS 16: Assuring timeliness and punctuality**

- 16.1 The timeliness and periodicity of the Undertaking's statistics complies with IMF data dissemination standards or other relevant timeliness targets.
- 16.2 Procedures for following-up to ensure timely receipt of data from providers of the raw data are adhered to and properly documented.
- 16.3 User requirements are taken into account when the periodicity and timeliness of the statistics is being decided.
- 16.4 The possibility and usefulness of releasing preliminary data is regularly considered; preliminary data of acceptable accuracy are released when considered useful; they are clearly identified as preliminary, and users are provided with appropriate metadata to be able to assess the quality of the preliminary data.
- 16.5 Regular monitoring and evaluation of the punctuality of the Undertaking's release according to the set timetable is undertaken and action plans are developed.
- 16.6 Divergences from any pre-announced times are published in advance with explanations of the reasons for the delays; a new release time is announced.
- 16.7 Quality indicators on timeliness (Time lag-first results, and Time lag-final results) and punctuality (Punctuality - delivery and publication) are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

4. Compiled, produced and analysed in an objective, scientific and transparent manner**NQAFS 4: Assuring professional independence**

- 4.1 Laws, formal policies, procedures or organisational culture for dealing with actual, perceived, or potential interference with NSA 's obligation to develop, produce and disseminate statistics without outside interference, and for dealing with conflicts of interest, are adhered to.

NQAFS 5: Assuring impartiality and objectivity

- 5.1 A declaration or code of conduct or code of ethics which governs statistical practices (e.g. Code of Practice, declaration on professional ethics, and/or other guidelines, etc.) for assuring impartiality and objectivity is adhered to.
- 5.2 The statistics are produced on an objective basis which is determined only by statistical considerations.

- 5.3 The sources, concepts, methods, processes and data dissemination paths are chosen on the basis of statistical considerations, national and international principles and best practices.
- 5.7 Statistical releases and statements from the Undertaking, for example in press conferences, are objective and non-partisan.

NQAFS 6: Assuring transparency

- 6.1 Standards, classifications, methods and processes used to produce the statistics (metadata) are fully documented, archived and disseminated
- 6.2 Advance notice of changes in methodology, source data, and statistical techniques is given and explained to users.
- 6.3 Any revisions that are made to previously published figures are announced in advance, and follow standard, well-established and transparent procedures which are communicated to users along with the revised figures.
- 6.4 Errors that are detected are corrected as soon as possible and users are informed about those errors.
- 6.5 Statistical releases and statements from the Undertaking, for example in press conferences, are clearly distinguished from political/policy statements and issued separately from them.

5. Disseminated impartially

NQAFS 5: Assuring impartiality and objectivity

- 5.4 A date is announced in advance for the dissemination of the statistics (Advanced Release Calendar). If the deadline will not be met, notification is given in advance together with an explanation and a new date for publication communicated to the public.
- 5.5 Results are disseminated to all users as soon as the work is completed and as soon as possible after the reference period so there is no opportunity, or perception of opportunity, for the release to be withheld or delayed.
- 5.6 Information is made available to all users at the same time, but if access to statistics prior to their release is allowed, it is controlled and made known publicly.

6. Accessible

NQAFS 17: Assuring accessibility and clarity

- 17.1 The public is informed about the data outputs and services, and is made aware that custom-designed outputs can be provided on request when feasible.
- 17.2 User support services are made available to give prompt assistance to users, by knowledgeable staff, to help them access and interpret the data.
- 17.3 Access to microdata is allowed for research purposes, subject to specific rules or protocols.
- 17.4 Statistics and the corresponding metadata are presented in a clear form that facilitates proper interpretation and meaningful comparisons, are archived and made available to users.
- 17.5 Modern information and communication technology is used for disseminating statistics (i.e. statistical databases, the NSA's website, electronic releases etc.) and traditional hard copy and other services are provided when appropriate.
- 17.6 Preliminary and revised data, when released, are clearly identified as such; the reasons for revisions are explained; users are provided with appropriate information to be able to assess the quality of the data.
- 17.7 Quality indicators on accessibility and clarity such as Metadata-consultations, Data tables-consultations and Metadata completeness rate are regularly calculated, monitored and published.

7. In accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications

NQAFS 3: Managing statistical standards

- 3.1 Detailed concordances to corresponding international and national statistical standards are available and are provided.

- 3.2 Detailed concordances to previous statistical standards are available and are provided.

NQAFS 10: Assuring methodological soundness

- 10.2 Standard concepts, definitions, units and classifications are consistently used and conform to the corresponding international or national standards and if there are divergences from the corresponding international or national statistical standards any necessary exemptions are obtained and the divergences are documented and explained.

Table 4.3: Number of Elements contributing to each Dimension of Official Statistics (same coverage as in the Statistics Act, but re-arranged)

Dimensions of Official Statistics	Number of Elements
1. Relevant, comprehensive and Sensitive to distribution by gender, disability, region, and similar socio-economic features	6
2. Accurate and reliable	33
3. Timely	7
4. Compiled produced and analysed in an objective, scientific and transparent manner	10
5. Disseminated impartially	3
6. Accessible	7
7. In accordance with appropriate national and international standards and classifications	3
Number of Elements	69

5. Assessments and Designations

5.1 Preparation for the quality assessment and OSD in the NSA

The SG in consultation with the Executives will set up a programme for quality assessment and OSD for the Statistical Undertakings to be assessed. Executives in charge of the Statistical Undertakings may also take the initiative and request for assessment and designation of Statistical Undertakings under their jurisdictions. This consultation must be done at least one month in advance of the particular assessment.

5.1.1 Constituting an Independent Quality Assessment Panel

Once the programme for quality assessment is finalized, the SG shall then constitute an Independent Quality Assessment Panel (IQAP) whose terms of reference are presented in Annex 2. The IQAP shall consist of experts in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed and whose objective is to undertake an independent assessment of quality and OSD of the Statistical Undertaking using the assessment rating forms as provided by the NSA. In this guideline, **an expert is thus defined as a professional who has acquired comprehensive or authoritative knowledge and skills through study and practice over time, in a particular field or subject, to the extent that his or her opinion may be helpful in fact finding, problem solving, or understanding of a situation.** In terms of education background, a Master degree or higher in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed or related areas with a minimum working period of 15 years uninterrupted in the respective areas.

The members of IQAP shall be acquainted with the Guidelines for assessment and the criterion for quality as well as OSD templates. The appointment of the experts could raise the confidence and instils in the statistics users and public, trust on the credibility of the quality assessment and OSD process. The composition of IQAP shall comprised of the following personnel:

- (a) Executive Data Quality Assurance and NSS Coordination (QA) of the NSA,
- (b) The Executive of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed and,

- (c) Three experts in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed.

The SG shall appoint as the chairperson of IQAP, a member from amongst the experts. The SG shall then officially release in the public domain by way of press conference and or publication in the NSA website and other dissemination platforms of the NSA the Statistical Undertaking(s) to be assessed, the period of the assessment, the composition of the IQAP and the Chairperson of that particular IQAP.

5.1.2 Quality assessment of a Statistical Undertakings from the NSA

The Executive responsible for the Statistical Undertaking must carry out a self-assessment of the NQAFS using the Self-Assessment Rating Form for a Statistical Undertaking. The process includes collection of relevant documentations, research including any previous reviews, input from users on their evaluation of the Undertaking's output, information from other stakeholders such as providers of raw data, and media publications. The Executive would rate the level achieved in the implementation of each Element (as either Fully in place (F), Substantially in place (S), Partially in place (P), Not in place (N) and Not applicable (NA)) and describe what has been done and also provide evidence(s). The Executive would identify quality-related strengths and weaknesses of the Undertaking and develop improvement plans. This process would result in an Executive Self-Assessment Report (ESAR). It must cover all 18 Components of the NQAFS. No grading of overall quality of an Undertaking are proposed as the aim is not to grade but to channel efforts to improve quality at the production level. Once satisfied with the outcome of the self-assessment rating, the Executive shall make a submission to the SG on the readiness of the Statistical Undertaking to be officially assessed.

5.1.3 OSD for Statistical Undertakings in NSA

Following the completion of the self-assessment rating of an Undertaking and submission to the SG, the SG shall initiate the official assessment and designation process. Submission to IQAP is then prepared and made by the Secretariat¹⁴ under the supervision of the SG.

The IQAP would then congregate to independently assess and make recommendations to the SG with regard to the status of quality and OSD. Forming part of the recommendations is a statement in writing that would be provided to the Executive on the required areas of improvements for strengthening compliance with the quality and official statistics requirements. The SG on the basis of the IQAP recommendation would decide on a designation status under the authority given to him by the Statistics Act. The SG's decision will then be communicated to the NSA Board of Directors for their noting.

The Undertaking shall be designated as quality statistics and OSD if it complies 100 percent with Elements relating to quality or those relating to official statistics. This is to be understood as the Undertaking receiving a substantiated "Fully in Place" rating for all required Elements as reflected in the Guideline for quality assurance of Statistical Undertaking and the Guideline for OSD. If compliance is 80 percent and above but not 100 percent, then the Undertaking shall be **provisionally** designated as quality statistics or in the case of OSD as "official statistics".

5.2 Quality assessment and OSD in other statistics producing organisations.

The SG shall set up a programme of quality assessment and OSD in consultation with the heads of statistics producing organisations. For these organisations the process would involve undertaking a self-assessment rating following similar process to the NSA and producing a head¹⁵ of Statistical Undertaking self-assessment report (HSAR). The organisation can then lodge an application for quality and OSD with the SG. The SG upon receipt of the application will then embark upon the

¹⁴ See Annex 2 for the Role of the Secretariat

¹⁵ The head of a Statistical Undertaking in the NSS is the Manager, Director, Chief Executive Officer or Permanent Secretary responsible for statistical production.

process as outlined in section 5.1. For this assessment, the head of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed should form part of the IQAP in the same manner as the Executive in the event of the NSA. Therefore, the new composition of IQAP will now consist of:

- (a) The Executive DQA & NSS Coordination from NSA
- (b) The Head of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed and
- (c) Three industry experts in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed.

The assessments would be based on the list of Elements from the NQAFS that the NSA and producer organisation agreed are relevant to the assessments (not all Elements need be relevant to a particular institution). The information required for the assessment and the resulting reports produced would be similar to those described in section 5.1 above for the Undertakings from the NSA. The SG would formally convey the outcome of the OSD to the head of the producer organisation in writing.

6. The future

6.1. In the event that the OSD is granted

6.1.1 Recognition of quality and OSD

The SG must ensure that the Undertaking(s) that passed the quality and OSD test must be gazetted in the Government of the Republic of Namibia Gazette, prior to its official release in the public domain. Once gazetted, the SG and the head of the Statistical Undertaking or head of the producer organisation that has achieved OSD status must jointly make a public announcement of the achievement through the media and other dissemination platforms. The NSA and other producer organisations would then be entitled to include the quality and the “official” statistics seals (logos) and the SG’s formal statement of the quality designation and the granting of OSD in future publications concerning the Statistical Undertakings which have been designated as quality statistics and granted OSD status.

6.1.2 Periodic reviews

Routine periodic reviews shall be determined by the SG in consultation with the Executives or heads of the producer organisations or head of the Statistical Undertakings. These reviews, covering both quality assessment and OSD, shall be conducted independently by an IQAP team to maintain attention to quality and confirm the status of continued compliance of the Undertaking with the standards for quality and OSD. The reviews might also be conducted if circumstances suggest otherwise e.g. an error observed or change in methodologies announced. Upon completion of the reviews, the SG and the Executive or head of the organisation or Undertaking reviewed, must then release in the public domain the outcome of the review(s). Undertakings that are found not to be in compliance with the quality and or OSD standards after the review are at risk of having their OSD status revoked (withdrawn) by the SG after a maximum grace period of 6 months (after which violation was not addressed) and hence de-gazetted from the Government Gazette.

6.1.3 Quality and OSD Reporting

The SG must publish a list of Statistical Undertakings designated as quality and granted OSD status in the NSA annual report to the Minister of Economic Planning and Director General of the National Planning Commission and the public. NSA must also publish the resulting reports of the assessments of the Statistical Undertaking for which quality and OSD were designated on its website for ease of access by the general public.

6.2. In the event that quality and OSD is not granted

There are two ways in which the quality or OSD status cannot be granted. Firstly, an outright rejection in the case where the assessment fails to meet the 80 percent compliance criteria and secondly, when provisional status is granted (80% and above but not 100% compliance). In both cases, the report from the IQAP would incorporate a list of issues contravening quality and or OSD requirements and

thus resulting in quality and or OSD not granted. The Executive or head of the assessed Undertaking is then expected to develop an improvement plan from the IQAP report as soon as possible and oversee its execution to its logical conclusion.

In the case of the outright rejection, the re-submission would start from scratch. However, in the case of provisional status, the Executive or head of the Undertaking or organisation will be granted a maximum period of 6 months to implement the corrective measures. Once satisfactorily done and on time, a re-submission to IQAP can then be made as discussed in section 5.1. An Undertaking may be denied the quality or OSD status if the Executive or head of the Undertakings fails to address the identified issues within the stipulated time frame. In the event of provisional designation of the Statistical Undertaking, no seals and formal statement by the SG would be granted until the identified shortcomings are resolved, and the Undertaking re-assessed for quality and OSD status granted.

7. Tools

In the implementation of this Guideline, a number of tools were developed to assist with the process of quality assurance, assessment and designation of the OSD. These tools are discussed in details in the following sub-sections.

7.1 Descriptions and Supporting Mechanisms

For each Component of the NQAFS prepared, the Descriptive and Supporting Mechanisms¹⁶ (extracted from the UN NQAF) provides descriptions of the coverage of each Component and a list of actions that are compatible with and would contribute to achieving quality under each Component.

7.2. Self-Assessment Rating Form for a Statistical Undertaking

The Self-Assessment Rating Form provides the formats for assembling information on the status of quality. The rating form is structured according to the Elements to be assured. It further provides for rating the level achieved in implementation of each Element (as Fully in place (F), Substantially in place (S), Partially in place (P), Not in place (N) and Not applicable (NA)) and for describing what has been done for implementation. The form can be used, with modifications, for other statistics producers. There is no rating form for Official Statistics as the OSD process will be based on the results of the self-assessment rating form for a Statistical Undertaking.

8. Endorsement of the NQAFS and the Future

This guideline has immensely benefitted from further consultations with producers and users of statistics. However, the NQAFS and the provisions for OSD may be further refined over time; reviews must be conducted periodically every after 3 years or as the need arise. The Framework will further be kept current in response to new developments in both national and international statistical spheres.

¹⁶ Available as a separate file in Annex 1.

References

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- [18] United Nations Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics; United Nations Statistical Commission April, 1994; United Nations Economic and Social Council, July 2013; United Nations General Assembly, January, 2014
- [19] United Nations; Guidelines for the Template for a Generic National Quality Assurance Framework; February, 2012

Annex 1 NQAFS Descriptions and Supporting Mechanisms

SECTION 3A: Managing the statistical system

NQAF 1: Coordinating the National Statistical System

Description:

Coordination of the work of the members of the National Statistical System is essential for improving and maintaining the quality of official statistics produced by the various statistical agencies.

Supporting mechanisms:

The coordination of the national statistical system is likely to be more effectively managed if the following supporting mechanisms are in place: These are examples of good practices; enquire if they are in place.

- A statistical law or other formal provision that establishes the national statistical system and designates a coordinating body.
- Guidelines, methodological manuals and handbooks on recommended practices.
- Regularly held meetings for members of the system to develop statistical standards and guidelines, exchange technical knowledge, identify good statistical practices, etc. (e.g. committees, working groups, etc.).
- Training courses for members of the system to update knowledge on the contents and application of recommended standards, methodologies, etc.
- Processes for identifying and resolving cases of duplication of efforts in the production of statistics.
- Arrangements for facilitating regular and timely user-producer consultations and dialogues.
- Processes for the standardized evaluation of the quality of statistical outputs.
- Guidelines on quality management of statistics produced by outsourced agencies.

NQAF 2: Managing relationships with data users and data providers

Description:

The statistical agencies should build and sustain very good relationships with all of their key stakeholders, including users, data providers, funding agencies, senior government officials, relevant community organisations, and the media.

The user, or recipient of statistical information, transforms it into knowledge needed for decision making or research. As the ultimate client of the statistical agency, the user makes the judgment as to whether its data or services are “fit for purpose”. Delivering quality outputs to the client and obtaining quality feedback are processes that need specific relationship management objectives and supporting processes.

Government departments or other organisations, as providers of administrative data, are essential partners in the provision of statistics that meet the test of fitness for purpose. Administrative data can be very useful to create registers and frames, edit or impute survey data, or validate survey data or outputs. Where the administrative data are of sufficient quality and the data available adequately match the concepts being measured, they can be used instead of a direct survey collection. This in turn creates efficiencies by reducing the size of the survey sample required and also reduces respondent burden. The most important strategy for managing a range of risks with the use of administrative data is the maintenance of ongoing relationships with the data custodians of the source data. These relationships should be established to varying degrees at all levels from the Chief Executive down to operational staff.

Funding agencies need to have a good understanding of the resource pressures facing the statistical agency and the trade-offs that need to be made in matching the high priority demands for statistics with the resources that are likely to be available.

Senior government officials need to understand the importance of good statistics for informed decision-making and the critical importance of their production in accordance with the UN Fundamental Principles of Official statistics. The media plays a critical role in disseminating statistics to a wide audience. The media can also play a crucial role in framing public opinion about the quality of available statistics and the professional standing of the agency producing them.

Other stakeholders, such as non-government agencies and other community organisations, as users of statistics as well as information providers, can also play a critical role in shaping views on the quality and integrity of official statistics. Stakeholder expectations are varied and should be explicitly managed at all stages in the statistical production process.

Supporting mechanisms:

The management of relationships with data users and data providers is likely to be more effective if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Appropriate legal mandates and guarantees are provided.
- A cross-cutting statistics advisory committee exists to advice on overall statistical priorities.
- Up-to-date information on data providers and users exists.
- Subject-specific user committees are in place.
- Consultative and “intelligence-gathering” processes and regular stakeholder reviews are in place (e.g. periodic high-level discussions with users; user-producer dialogues; producer-provider dialogues; analysis of media coverage; customer satisfaction surveys; client and stakeholder feedback mechanisms).
- Policies exist for informing users of data quality and methodology, i.e. to inform users of the concepts and methodology used in collecting, processing and analysing data, to inform them about the accuracy of these data, and of any other features that affect their quality or “fitness for use”.
- Media relations groups, charged with developing high-level strategies for managing media relations, are established.
- Support services are in place to handle special requests and provide other assistance to users.
- Mechanisms related to managing statistical processes are in place (for example, specialized resource and support centres for certain functions; peer and institutional reviews; active management of response burden; promotion of the value and uses of statistics).

NQAF 3: Managing statistical standards

Description:

Standards refer to a comprehensive set of statistical concepts, and definitions and classifications used to achieve uniform treatment of statistical issues within a survey or across surveys, and across time and space. Standards assist in maximizing the effectiveness of statistical outputs and the efficiency of the production process in terms of inter-temporal, national and international comparability and coherence (i.e. the capacity for integration) of the statistics.

While comparability and coherence are important for any dataset, they are particularly important where data are obtained from multiple sources and have to be combined or where outputs are used in a wide variety of contexts. For example, the use of standard collection units (e.g. families, households, businesses, etc.) helps the compilation, comparison and dissemination of statistics for these standardized units.

There are basically two broad types of standards – those that are applied to the structure and content of data, and those that are applied to the structure and content of metadata. Statistical agencies should aim to use consistent names and definitions for populations, statistical units, concepts, variables, and classifications in their statistical programmes/domains.

Supporting mechanisms:

The management of statistical standards is likely to be more effective if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Central organisational units or senior level groups responsible to lead and coordinate the development, implementation, maintenance and use of statistical standards.
- Statistical programmes/domains based on conceptual frameworks or data integration frameworks that rely heavily on statistical standards.
- Active participation of both data users and data providers in the development and approval of statistical standards.
- Active participation with other national and international organisations in the development, review, promotion and implementation of statistical standards (e.g. employees attend workshops, conferences and seminars at the national and international levels on the application of standards, classifications, e.t.c.).
- Correspondence tables for classifications exist and are kept up-to-date and made available to the public with explanatory information.

SECTION 3B: Managing the institutional environment**NQAF 4: Assuring professional independence****Description:**

Statistical agencies should develop, produce and disseminate statistics without any political or other interference or pressure from other government agencies or policy, regulatory or administrative departments and bodies, the private sector or any other persons or entities which may be considered as potential conflicts of interest. Such professional independence and freedom from inappropriate influence ensures the credibility of official statistics. This should apply to national statistical offices and may or may not apply to statistical units within ministries, central banks, etc.

Supporting mechanisms:

Professional independence is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- A national statistical law or other formal policies are in place which specify the statistical agency's independence in terms of: a) Development (activities aiming at setting up, strengthening and improving the statistical methods, standards and procedures used for the production and dissemination of statistics as well as at designing new statistics and indicators); b) Production (i.e. the selection of techniques, definitions, methodologies and sources relating to the collection, storage, processing and analysis necessary for compiling statistics); and c) Dissemination (i.e. the content and timing of all forms of dissemination) of statistics and the roles and responsibilities of the statistical agencies.
- The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are made public.
- The procedures to be followed for the appointment and dismissal of heads of the agencies are publicly available.
- A code or declaration on ethics exists (e.g. the International Statistical Institute's Declaration on Professional Ethics) to enable the statistician's individual ethical judgments and decisions to be informed by shared values and experience.
- Appropriate internal and external communication strategies exist that include recognizable logos, designs or formats for statistical agencies' products to identify them as not being associated with the political or policy bodies.
- Policies or established procedures for preventing and addressing misuse or misinterpretations of official statistics are in place.
- Policies and procedures for dealing with actual or perceived, or potential conflicts of interest are in place.

- Documentation on concepts, sources and methods that describe, among other things, the design decisions and trade-offs made in the development of the statistical product, are available for individual statistical programmes.

NQAF 5: Assuring impartiality and objectivity

Description:

Statistical agencies should develop, produce and disseminate statistics respecting scientific independence and in a manner that is professional, transparent, neutral and unbiased, in which all users are treated equitably.

Supporting mechanisms:

Impartiality and objectivity are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- A law or other formal policies specify the statistical agency's impartiality and objectivity with regard to the development, production and dissemination of statistical information.
- The laws, regulations and measures under which the statistical systems operate are made public.
- A declaration or code of conduct or ethics which governs statistical practices exists (e.g. a code of practice, declaration on professional ethics, etc.).
- An effective human resources system to objectively manage the appointment and promotion of the agency's staff.
- The choices made for developing, producing and disseminating statistical information are publicly available.
- Guidelines that specify how to ensure impartiality and objectivity in individual statistical programmes are produced and followed up.
- Institutional reviews (e.g. reviews of statistical products and publications by peers and senior management) are performed to ensure that the information produced is impartial and objective.
- The policy for data dissemination is publicly available.
- Advanced release calendar which announces the dates and timing of major statistical releases is prepared and made known in advance to users.
- Information on any major methodological changes, data revisions and correction of errors is prepared and provided to users in a timely manner.
- Policies and procedures exist for dealing with actual or perceived, or potential conflicts of interest.

NQAF 6: Assuring transparency

Description:

The statistical agencies' statistical policies and practices and the terms and conditions under which their statistics are developed (including the legal basis and purposes for which the data are required), produced, and disseminated (and, if applicable, subsequently revised) should be documented and available to users, survey respondents and the public. Products of statistical agencies/units should be clearly identified as such.

Supporting mechanisms:

Transparency is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- A law or other formal policy requiring the dissemination of the statistical policies and practices, and outlining the dissemination process. The terms and conditions incorporated in such laws/policies may refer to the relationship of the statistical unit to the larger department or ministry of which it is a part (if relevant), the legal authority to collect data, the requirement to publish data it has collected, the terms of reference for the chief statistician/director, and procedures and processes related to confidentiality of individual responses.
- The compilation of a listing of persons or officials holding designated positions within the government, but outside the agency producing the data, who have pre-release access to the

data and the dissemination of the schedule according to which they receive access. This practice is intended to grant full transparency to any pre-release access deemed necessary by the government.

- The existence of a transparent planning process, including a strategic plan which explicitly identifies longer term priorities for public scrutiny.
- Metadata which are necessary for the proper understanding of the statistics and the appropriate uses to which they can be put (such as the underlying concepts and definitions, origins of the data, the variables and classifications used, the methodology of data collection and processing, and indications of the quality of the statistical information) are made available to the public.
- Release calendars and changes in them are communicated to the public.
- Clear attribution of the statistical agency's products, though, for instance, the use of a logo or other insignia.

NQAF 7: Assuring statistical confidentiality and security

Description:

Statistical agencies should guarantee that the privacy of data providers (persons, households, enterprises, administrations and other respondents) will be protected and that the information they provide will be kept confidential, will not be able to be accessed by unauthorized internal or external users, and will be used for statistical purposes only. Statistics shall be considered confidential when they allow statistical units to be identified, either directly or indirectly, thereby disclosing individual information. Examples of purposes that are not exclusively statistical include administrative, legal or tax purposes.

Note: National statistics laws usually spell out the exceptions to the general rule regarding non-release of identifiable unit record data, e.g. where informed consent has been given by a business that its data may be released.

Supporting mechanisms:

Statistical confidentiality and security are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Legal arrangements are in place to protect confidentiality and security of information.
- The staff signs legal confidentiality agreements or declarations covering their obligations upon appointment.
- Legally enforceable contracts regarding the use of microdata/public use files exist.
- Policies and procedures and staff training that elaborate the legal arrangements are made known.
- Guidelines and instructions are provided to staff on the protection of statistical confidentiality in the production and dissemination processes.
- Penalties are prescribed against persons who wilfully violate the law by breaching statistical confidentiality.

NQAF 8: Assuring the quality commitment

Description:

Statistical agencies should be dedicated to assuring quality in their work, and systematically and regularly identify strengths and weaknesses to continuously improve process and product quality. Processes, staff and facilities should be in place for ensuring that the data produced are commensurate with their quality objectives.

Supporting mechanisms:

The commitment to quality is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- A written quality policy, declaration or commitment statement is publicly available.
- A staff awareness "campaign" is undertaken to emphasize the statistical agency's commitment to quality.

- A quality manager, quality committee, unit or group of coaches or advisers is assigned responsibility for quality management.
- Guidelines, methodological manuals and handbooks on recommended practices are made available.
- The use of TQM, ISO 9000, quality initiatives of the European Statistical System, independent evaluations and/or IMF ROSC evaluations is promoted.
- The Generic Statistical Business Process Model is followed for guidance for managing and monitoring the quality of each stage of the statistical development, production and dissemination process.
- Programmes or strategies are in place for regularly carrying out user- and producer-oriented quality reports, self-assessments, and/or audits on statistical operations in order to monitor and report on quality over time.
- External experts conduct quality reviews, e.g. reviews of key statistical domains (for example IMF's ROSCs) or other reviews such as peer reviews, external audits, and rolling reviews.
- User satisfaction surveys are carried out and reports on the results are made publicly available.
- Work plans, schedules and standard forms or templates are used for facilitating the updating of the documentation on quality in a consistent way.
- The statistical agency's training programme includes regularly held training courses designed to support its quality policy and to ensure that the internal auditors have proper training in auditing techniques.
- IT staff, methodologists and other specialists (e.g. in questionnaire design) participate in assisting subject matter units; appropriate software is provided.
- Validation techniques are widely promoted and applied.
- Expert group meetings on relevant quality subjects are held regularly.
- User-oriented quality reports are made available to the public.
- Documentation on methods, concepts and definitions is available for all major fields of statistics

NQAF 9: Assuring adequacy of resources

Description:

The financial, human, and technological (IT) resources available to statistical agencies should be adequate both in magnitude and quality, and sufficient to meet their needs with regard to the development, production and dissemination of statistics.

Supporting mechanisms:

The adequacy of resources is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Strategic planning for setting priorities.
- Management accounting standards and techniques.
- Standardization of procedures and tools for statistical production and dissemination in order to increase efficiency.
- User groups for helping to determine priorities when resources are limited.

SECTION 3C: Managing statistical processes

NQAF 10: Assuring methodological soundness

Description:

In developing and compiling statistics, a statistical agency should use sound statistical methodologies based on internationally agreed standards, guidelines or best practices and consistent with established scientific principles. Effective and efficient statistical procedures should be implemented throughout the statistical production chain.

Supporting mechanisms:

Methodological soundness is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Standard definitions of concepts, variables and classifications for common subject-matter areas.
- Regular training courses, for staff in production units, on methodologies for statistical production stages (e.g. data collection techniques, data editing, imputation, etc.).
- A unit and/or a group of experts in charge of defining and updating methodologies and providing support to production units.
- Specialized resource and support centres for certain functions (e.g. questionnaire design and testing, seasonal adjustment, data analysis, etc.).
- The use of specialized staff for subject-matter, methodology, operations and systems to participate in programme design.
- Quality guidelines, methodological manuals and recommended practices handbooks that list considerations and provide guidance in design decisions.
- Internal budgeting and accounting systems so that the real costs of alternative collection approaches can be assessed.
- Appropriate staffing arrangements that facilitate effective respondent conduct and survey processing.
- Standard survey frames for major populations, e.g. the business register, the population register or population survey area sample, the address register, etc.
- Peer and institutional reviews.

NQAF 11: Assuring cost-effectiveness

Description:

Statistical agencies should assure that resources are effectively used. They should be able to explain to what extent the set objectives were attained and that the results were achieved at a reasonable cost consistent with the principal purposes for which the statistics will be used.

Supporting mechanisms:

Cost-effectiveness is likely to be more effectively realized if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Indicators of human and financial resources are monitored centrally and regularly reported to management.
- Accounting systems allow allocation of resources to statistical operations.
- Human resources are evaluated annually in line with office-wide guidelines. The evaluation covers allocation, performance and training needs of the staff.
- Ex-ante cost calculation procedures are available for statistical operations.
- Centralized IT and methodological units provide possibilities for the pooling of resources and investments and the identification of innovation/modernization potential.
- An appropriate IT architecture and strategy exists and is regularly updated.
- IT infrastructure is reviewed regularly.
- Data linking and integration methods are proactively pursued subject to data security considerations.
- Standardization programmes and procedures are defined and implemented in key areas, such as sampling, registers, data collection and data exchange according to the business process model.
- Policies, procedures and tools exist to promote automatic techniques for data capture, data coding and validation.
- The use of automated processing techniques is regularly reviewed.
- Appropriate arrangements (e.g. service level agreements or national legislation) are signed with owners of administrative data collections and regularly updated. The statistical agency seeks to be involved in the design of administrative data collections.
- An assessment of possible administrative data sources is carried out prior to launching any new survey.
- Quality indicators are developed and compiled to improve the use of administrative data for statistical purposes.
- Procedures are in place to measure and manage the respondent burden.

- Staff opinion surveys are conducted regularly.

NQAF 12: Assuring soundness of implementation

Description:

In order to produce timely, reliable and accurate statistics, a NSA should carefully plan the implementation process of its statistical activities based on internationally agreed standards and guidelines and the application of sound and scientific methods. The implementation process refers to all activities which lead to the production of statistics including design and preparations, data collection, data processing (coding, editing, imputation, etc.), assessment and compilation.

Supporting mechanisms:

Soundness of implementation is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Human resources recruitment, training policies and development programmes of the NSA put considerable emphasis on the technical competencies as well as on the understanding of the importance and characteristics of quality statistics.
- Risk management policies are in place to identify, analyse and respond to the uncertainties which may arise in different levels of the implementation of a statistical process.
- A strategy for measuring and analysing quality measures including, but not limited to, paradata, data capture and processing errors and non-sampling errors is in place in order to identify causes of errors and to be used by the NSA for improving accuracy and timeliness of statistical products and for reporting purposes.
- A strategy is in place for reporting quality measures related to the implementation process such as paradata, data capture and processing errors and non-sampling errors to different levels (managers, implementation personnel, users, stakeholders).
- A system is in place for documentation and for archiving all the documents produced during the implementation process and is accessible for current and later use in order to monitor and evaluate the process, identify lessons learned and utilize for the statistical practices in the future.

NQAF 13: Managing the respondent burden

Description:

Individuals, households or businesses who provide data, upon which statistical products are based, are fundamental contributors to the quality of data and information. The requirement to collect information (user needs) should be balanced against production costs and the burden placed on respondents (supplier costs). Mechanisms to maintain good relationships with individual providers of data and to proactively manage the response burden are essential for improving quality.

This difficult challenge is particularly topical with declining response rates in surveys. This decline lowers quality and increases the cost of surveys. Improving response rates requires a multi-dimensional strategy that addresses the issue of non-response at different stages of the survey process. This includes an assessment of the need to collect the information, the use of data from administrative sources or other surveys, and the use of sound statistical and survey methods to keep the burden to a minimum.

Supporting mechanisms:

Management of the respondent burden is likely to be more effective if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

For assessing the necessity to undertake a new statistical survey:

- Users' needs and the range of data items involved are assessed against the corresponding respondent burden;
- Statistics suitable for users' needs are sought from some other source;
- A determination is made as to whether the required data can be produced with less response burden by modifying an existing survey rather than instituting a new survey (including the possibility of using a subsample of an existing survey);

- A determination is made as to whether an existing survey can be eliminated or reduced in size or content as new data requirements of users indicate a shift in their needs or priorities;
- Any data items that are the same or similar to those collected in another survey are eliminated.

For actively managing the response burden:

- A provider charter exists which spells out the rights and responsibilities of respondents;
- A continuous effort is made to research, develop and implement techniques that reduce the burden on respondents;
- The costs of compliance are systematically taken into account in the design of a new survey or redevelopment of existing surveys;
- The cost of complying with statistical surveys is planned, measured and reported each year;
- The value of administrative data in producing statistics is recognised, and statistical purposes are promoted in the design of administrative systems;
- The burden on respondents is measured and taken into account in regular comprehensive reviews of surveys and their methods.

For applying methods to reduce or distribute the response burden:

- Good quality frames are used;
- Sample surveys instead of censuses are used, as well as advanced sampling techniques to minimize sample sizes to achieve the target level of accuracy;
- Co-ordinated delineation of sampling population or co-ordinated sampling is used that could range from avoiding overlap, i.e. spreading the total burden on many respondents, to maximizing overlap, i.e. concentrating the burden on fewer respondents;
- Multiple modes of collection are offered to respondents;
- Electronic reporting initiatives are introduced, where cost-effective from a respondent perspective;
- Collection of data is done at the most appropriate time of the day or the year;
- Surveys are conducted from central registers or other common frames to better record, assess and control response burden.

For applying statistical standards to make it easier to respond to surveys:

- Standard frameworks, concepts, questions and classifications are used, while respondents are still allowed to easily complete questionnaires from readily available information or bookkeeping records;
- Questionnaires are pre-tested;
- Questionnaires are tested to ensure minimal intrusion on privacy and to respect public sensitivities and overall social acceptability;
- The legal obligation, policies and practices to assure the confidentiality and security of all respondent provided data are made known.

For promoting the value and uses of statistics:

- Information packages that demonstrate the value of official statistics are provided to respondents;
- Initiatives with community groups and business advocates are undertaken to raise awareness of the value of official statistics;
- Internet-based products are developed that give valuable statistical information to businesses and individuals, and these products are promoted through initiatives with communities and respondents;
- A presence on social media is set up which provides, for example, key population and economic indicators;
- Schools, communities, business associations, etc. are reached out to.

NQAF 14: Assuring relevance

Description:

The relevance of statistical information reflects the degree to which the information meets the current and/or potential or emerging needs or requirements of clients, users, stakeholders, or the audience.

Relevance therefore refers to whether the statistics that are needed are produced and whether those that are produced are in fact needed and useful, and shed light on the issues of most importance to users. Relevance also covers methodological soundness, particularly the extent to which the concepts, definitions and classifications correspond to user needs.

Assessing relevance is subjective and depends upon the varying needs of users. The NSA's challenge is to weight and balance the conflicting needs of current and potential users in order to produce statistics that satisfy the most important and priority needs within given resource constraints. Relevance can be seen as having the following three Components: completeness; user needs; and user satisfaction.

Supporting mechanisms:

Relevance is likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- The inclusion in the legislation or some other formal provision of an obligation to consult with the users of the statistics.
- Quality guidelines that list considerations and provide guidance in design decisions.
- Structured and periodic consultation processes (e.g., advisory committees or working groups) with stakeholders and users to review the usefulness of existing statistics and to identify emerging data requirements.
- Participation in statistical meetings and seminars organized by international and regional organisations and by professional organisations.
- Regular programme reviews.

NQAF 15: Assuring accuracy and reliability**Description:**

NSA should develop, produce and disseminate statistics that accurately and reliably portray reality. The accuracy of statistical information reflects the degree to which the information correctly describes the phenomena it was designed to measure, i.e. the degree of closeness of estimates to true values. It is usually characterized in terms of estimation of sampling and non-sampling errors. These errors are traditionally decomposed into bias (systematic error) and variance (random error) Components, and reflect the major sources of error (e.g. errors linked to sampling, coverage, measurement, nonresponse and processing). Reliability concerns whether the statistics consistently over time measure the reality that they are designed to represent.

Supporting mechanisms:

Accuracy and reliability are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Standards, guidelines and handbooks for quality assessments and reports are available.
- A documented revision policy exists.

NQAF 16: Assuring timeliness and punctuality**Description:**

NSA should minimize the delays in making data available. Timeliness refers to how fast - after the reference date or the end of the reference period - the data are released or made available, whether for dissemination or for further processing. Punctuality refers to whether data are delivered on the dates promised, advertised or announced (for example, in an official release calendar).

Supporting mechanisms:

Timeliness and punctuality are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- A law or other formal provisions exist that requires the setting of a release calendar.
- The public is informed about the statistics being released via release calendars, which also inform them about how the data can be accessed (e.g. through the Internet or in publications).
- A written release or dissemination policy is publicly available.

- Guidelines are available on how to deal with delays when using administrative data for statistical purposes.
- Respondents are made aware and reminded of the deadlines set for reporting.
- Procedures for consulting with users about periodicity are in place.
- Quality indicators on timeliness and punctuality are regularly calculated, monitored and disseminated.

NQAF 17: Assuring accessibility and clarity

Description:

NSA should ensure that the statistics and metadata they develop, produce and disseminate can be found or obtained without difficulty, are presented clearly and in such a way that they can be understood, are available and accessible to all users on an impartial and equal basis in various convenient formats, and are affordable, if not offered free of charge.

Provision should be made for allowing access to microdata for research purposes, in accordance with an established policy which ensures statistical confidentiality.

Supplementary explanatory information and metadata, which are necessary for the proper understanding of the statistics and the appropriate uses to which they can be put, should be made available by the NSA. This information should normally cover the underlying concepts and definitions, origins of the data, the variables and classifications used, the methodology of data collection and processing, and indications of the quality of the statistical information.

Supporting mechanisms:

Accessibility and clarity are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- An easily navigated website for searching for and accessing data and metadata and for facilitating self-tabulations in a variety of formats.
- A written dissemination policy which is publicly available.
- User support or information services for assisting users in placing orders or obtaining answers to questions about data.
- User satisfaction surveys, user focus groups or other user consultation mechanisms to solicit feedback on statistical outputs, dissemination formats, etc.
- A publication catalogue for users.
- Methodological documents (on concepts, scope, classifications, basis of recording, data sources, compilation methods and statistical techniques) available to the public.
- Staff training and development programmes for writing about statistics.

NQAF 18: Assuring coherence and comparability

Description:

NSA should develop, produce and disseminate statistics that are consistent internally and comparable over time and are produced using common standards with respect to scope, definitions, classifications and units. It should be possible to combine and make joint use of related data from different sources.

Supporting mechanisms:

Coherence and comparability are likely to be more effectively assured if the following supporting mechanisms are in place:

- Internal procedures or guidelines are developed in order to ensure and monitor internal coherence and consistency.
- Statistics are kept comparable (availability of time series) over a reasonable period of time. Significant changes in reality are reflected by appropriate changes to concepts, classifications, definitions and target populations.
- A common repository of concepts, definitions and classifications is set up and regularly updated.
- Coherence and comparability is promoted throughout the statistical agency by promoting the adoption of national or international standards.

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- The comparability with other related statistics of a new individual programme is assessed before launching it.
 - Specific procedures and guidelines are developed in order to ensure that outputs obtained from complementary sources are comparable and can be properly combined. Compliance is periodically assessed.
 - Internal cooperation and exchange of know how is promoted and organisational tools are in place (e.g. intranet fora and working groups).

Annex 2: Terms of Reference for the Independent Quality Assessment Panel**INDEPENDENT QUALITY ASSESSMENT PANEL
TERMS OF REFERENCE****1. Introduction**

The Namibia Statistics Agency (NSA) was established in terms of the Statistics Act (Statistics Act No.9 of 2011) with the mandate among others, to constitute the central statistical authority of the State; and to collect, produce, analyze and disseminate official and other statistics in Namibia. In addition, the Act empowers the NSA to coordinate the National Statistical System (NSS) to ensure the production of quality statistics and the Statistician-General (SG) to designate statistics as “official” statistics.

Therefore, in order to fulfill its responsibilities of designating statistics as official statistics, the NSA has developed and gazetted a “Namibia Quality Assurance Framework for Statistics” (NQAFS) and the related quality assessment and official statistics designation (OSD) templates. However, as part of the official quality assessment and OSD, the SG is required to constitute an Independent Quality Assessment Panel (IQAP) to carry out the quality assessment and OSD process.

2. Purpose

The IQAP is a non-remunerative panel tasked with the responsibility of carrying out the assessment and “official” statistics designation process for the Statistical Undertaking using the assessment rating forms as provided by the NSA for recommendations to the SG.

3. Membership

The membership of IQAP is as follows:

- 3.1 The following are members to be appointed by the SG
 - 3.1.1 Three experts in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed.
 - 3.1.2 In this guideline, **an expert is defined as a professional who has acquired comprehensive or authoritative knowledge and skills through study and practice over time, in a particular field or subject, to the extent that his or her opinion may be helpful in fact finding, problem solving, or understanding of a situation.**
 - 3.1.3 In terms of education background, a Master degree or higher in the area of the Statistical Undertaking being assessed or related areas with a minimum working period of 15 years uninterrupted in the respective areas.
 - 3.1.4 To maintain independence, the experts to be appointed must not have worked or performed any duties for the NSA or the statistical producer whose statistics is under review for a period of 3 years.
- 3.2 The following are members by virtue of their positions
 - 3.2.1 Executive Data Quality Assurance and NSS Coordination (QA) of the NSA
 - 3.2.2 The Executive of the Statistical Undertaking to be assessed from the NSA or the Head of the Statistical Undertaking to be assessed from the NSS

4. Chairperson

The SG shall appoint as the chairperson of IQAP, a member from amongst the experts.

5. Secretariat

The Executive Secretary must provide secretarial services to the meetings of IQAP.

5.1 Duties of the Secretariat

- 5.1.1 Prepare submissions to the IQAP
- 5.1.2 Ensure that all relevant documentations and evidences are in place to support the submission
- 5.1.3 Ensure that the quality assessment and OSD rating form are in place
- 5.1.4 Take and prepare minutes of the IQAP meeting
- 5.1.5 Organise the meetings of the IQAP

6. Term of Reference of the IQAP

The terms of reference for IQAP include:

- 6.1 All IQAP members appointed by the SG must attend the assessment training meeting that introduces them to the assessment tools and expectation of the assessment process.
- 6.2 Read the materials provided thoroughly.
- 6.3 Undertake quality assessment and OSD of the Statistical Undertaking.
- 6.4 Ensure the timely drafting of the quality assessment and OSD report by Secretariat.
- 6.5 Provide recommendations to the SG on the status of the quality assessment and OSD outcome.

7. Meeting Procedures

- 7.1 The meetings of IQAP shall be scheduled five working days in advance.
- 7.2 The experts must declare their interest at the start of every meeting in accordance with the Statistics Act.
- 7.3 All Panel members shall uphold the confidentiality as outlined in the Statistics Act, where sensitive or confidential matters form part of the assessment.
- 7.4 The NSA shall provide a conducive environment for the Panel to convene meetings.

Annex 3: List¹⁷ of documents to be provided by the statistics producers to support the assessment of the Statistical Undertaking

1. Latest statistical outputs
2. User engagement strategy/plans
3. Published information on users/uses
4. Team organisational chart
5. Examples of engagement activities (e.g. reports about user surveys, social media, consultations, other activities)
6. Description of governance arrangements, including committees, advisory boards, user groups
7. Minutes of relevant meetings e.g. with advisory and steering groups, user groups and stakeholder's meetings
8. Business plan or other relevant planning documents
9. Relevant legislation governing the production of the statistics
10. Relevant target or performance measures
11. Release access lists; statement of compliance with release order or calendar
12. Revisions and corrections policies
13. Any corrections notices
14. Pricing policy and arrangements for ad hoc data requests/charging
15. Examples of where statistician has commented publicly on statistics e.g. media, responding to misuse etc. communication plan for the statistics
16. Method and data collection (referencing standards and classifications applied) documents
17. Supporting quality material accompanying the statistics
18. Documents giving quality guidelines, quality assurance arrangements, including your Assessment of risk to quality (including any supporting documentation with suppliers e.g. data specifications)
19. Any evidence of reviews/improvement projects
20. Survey documentation e.g. technical report, informed consent
21. Training evaluation report(s) e.g. Masters of Trainers/Trainers of Trainers, main training and other training reports
22. Confidentiality protection: e.g. control disclosure arrangements, data sharing agreements, examples of leaflet/letter sent to respondents
23. Cost estimates of responding to surveys, any information on compliance burden/documents demonstrating how explored and evaluated different data sources
24. Service level agreements or memoranda of understanding, for example, for the supply of data to compile the statistics or data processing
25. Staff recruitment, and training & development corporate documents: e.g. resource and staffing profile for the business area, including costs of producing the statistics, examples of job descriptions for relevant statisticians, examples of continuing professional development and relevant training undertaken.

¹⁷ From Assessment and Compliance Checks: A Guide for Statistics Producers; Annex A; United Kingdom Statistics Authority; <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Assessment-and-Compliance-Checks-producer-guidance-June-2017.pdf>