



Statistical Outputs Policy

FEBRUARY 2020



Version Control

This Statistical Outputs Policy was published in December 2019.

Feedback on this policy is welcomed at any time. Please send any comments to policy@qualificationswales.org

General principles of the Statistical Outputs Policy

This document describes how Qualifications Wales (“we”) will publish statistical outputs relating to data that we collect on regulated qualifications. We collect data from recognised awarding bodies both for monitoring and compliance purposes and for thematic and sector reviews, as outlined in our document ‘Policy Statement on Reviews of Qualifications and of the Qualifications System’ and as specified in our [Standard Conditions of Recognition](#). In November 2017 we were named as producers of official statistics¹. This requires us to comply with the relevant legislation^{2,3} and regulation⁴ for official statistics.

We support the qualifications system through delivery of a range of statistical outputs and services. We do this by:

- Building and maintaining confidence in our statistical staff and processes that produce statistics and data. We achieve this by:
 - Building capacity, capability and engagement;
 - Producing statistics that are trusted and authoritative;
- Ensuring that our statistics fit their intended uses, are based on appropriate data and methods, and are not materially misleading. We achieve this by:
 - Producing statistics that are relevant to the range of uses to which they are put;
 - Making available analysis that is timely and based on robust methodology;
 - Striking the right balance between users’ diverse and sometimes competing needs;
 - Anticipating and responding to changes in users’ needs.
- Ensuring that our statistics and data are useful, easy to access, remain relevant, and support understanding of important issues. We achieve this by:
 - Publishing data which are accessible, consistent and fully documented;
 - Producing statistics that are presented and disseminated in ways that suit the wider community.

¹National Assembly for Wales, (November 2017) *The Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2017* [Online]. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2017/1142/introduction/made> (Accessed 11 June 019).

²National Assembly for Wales, (October 2009) *The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2009* [Online]. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2009/2818/introduction/made> (Accessed 11 June 019).

³Parliament, (July 2007) *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* [Online]. Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/18/introduction> (Accessed 11 June 019).

⁴UK Statistics Authority, (February 2008) *Code of Practice for Statistics* [Online]. Available at <https://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/code-of-practice/> (Accessed 11 June 019).

“Statistical Outputs” refers to all forms of publications which contain data that we collect in relation to qualifications and the qualifications system in Wales. These outputs may also contain some data that we do not collect but that is collected by other bodies. Our outputs take several different forms, including:

- Regular statistical releases containing routinely collected data;
- Experimental or ad hoc statistical releases and responses to Freedom of Information requests;
- Thematic reports;
- Briefings, bulletins;
- Infographics and visualisations.

Contents

Statistical Outputs Policy	1
How we engage with users of our statistics	4
Pricing and form of outputs	4
Pre-announcement of outputs	5
Timing of publications	5
Security markings	5
Integrity	6
Welsh language	6
Statistical Disclosure Control	7

How we engage with users of our statistics

1. Our statistics are of interest to:
 - Qualifications Wales
 - Other regulators of qualifications
 - Recognised awarding bodies
 - Welsh Government
 - Local Authorities
 - Regional Consortia
 - Teaching Unions
 - Schools and colleges
 - Other learning providers
 - Researchers
 - Media outlets
 - Learners
 - Parents and Guardians
 - Other bodies with an interest in education in Wales
2. We welcome feedback from users, and as a result, hope to gain a better understanding of who our users are. We encourage feedback on all our statistical outputs from users. We sometimes undertake user engagement exercises to better understand how our statistics are used and how we can better meet user needs.
3. Our online presence is a method of informing users of our outputs and new developments. We make use of social media to seek views and stimulate debate on any proposals for change.
4. We communicate any expected changes to our data collection methods and outputs to users by notices on our website.
5. We keep our staff updated with our outputs at information sharing sessions and via our intranet.

Pricing and form of outputs

6. All our statistical outputs are freely available on our website.

Pre-release access to statistics

7. The Pre-release Access to Official Statistics (Wales) Order 2009 states that Welsh Ministers and officials may have up to five working days (up to 24 hours in the case of market sensitive statistics) early access to outputs, along with their officials. The sole purpose is for Ministers and officials to be able to respond completely when questions arise at the time of publication. We maintain a record, for public scrutiny, of Ministers and their officials who have such access to each output.
8. Early access to statistics can also be given, where justified, to officials in the course of quality assurance of the data. An accurate audit trail is maintained and those officials receiving unreleased material are advised of their responsibilities in respect of confidentiality.

Pre-announcement of outputs

9. For our regular statistical releases publication dates are announced in advance through our website and the Welsh Government website. The month of publication is announced twelve months before publication and the date of publication is announced four weeks before publication.

Timing of publications

10. We aim to publish our statistical outputs on our website at 9.30am on a normal working day in compliance with the Code of Practice for Statistics. Publication is also announced via our website and social media accounts.

Security markings

11. Prior to release, all outputs containing statistics not yet in the public domain are marked 'OFFICIAL SENSITIVE: RESTRICTED STATISTICS'. A standard statement accompanies all instances of pre-release access to statistics stressing that they must not be forwarded to anyone else or their contents reported.

Integrity

12. We comply with the United Kingdom Statistics Authority Code of Practice for Statistics. In line with the 'Trustworthiness' pillar of the code of practice, we ensure at all stages in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics that the public interest prevails over organisational, political or personal interests.
13. To meet this principle, we ensure the following practices are carried out in the production and publication of statistical outputs:
 - We issue statistical outputs independently of any statement or comment about figures contained within those outputs and ensure that no statement or comment is issued to the press or published ahead of the publication of the statistics;
 - We ensure that those producing statistical outputs are protected from any organisational or political interests that might influence the production or presentation of the statistics;
 - We ensure that our Head of Research and Statistics and Senior Statistician have the sole responsibility for deciding on statistical methods, standards and procedures;
 - We follow all statutory obligations and regulatory guidelines governing the collection of data, confidentiality, and release, and comply with the UKSA's Code of Practice for Statistics;
 - We respond to complaints that relate to professional integrity, quality or standards by informing our Head of Profession for Statistics in the Welsh Government and by conducting, in the first instance, an internal review;
 - We implement training to ensure that individuals do not abuse the trust placed in them for personal gain; and
 - We promote a culture within where our Head of Research and Statistics and Senior Statistician can comment publicly on statistical issues, including the misuse of our statistics.

Welsh language

14. Our regular statistical releases are published bilingually, and we make all statistical outputs available bilingually at the same time. We respond to requests in the language in which they were submitted to us.

Statistical Disclosure Control

15. We round counts to the nearest 5 in order to minimise the risk that individuals or organisations could be identified from the data in our statistical outputs and to make our statistics more accessible and easier to understand and use. If a figure is smaller than 5 but greater than 0, we use a '*' to suppress the figure, or where possible use appropriate aggregate breakdowns to avoid small numbers.