

# Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics

## Statistics on Labour Productivity

*(produced by the Office for National Statistics)*

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### **About the UK Statistics Authority**

The UK Statistics Authority is an independent body operating at arm's length from government as a non-ministerial department, directly accountable to Parliament. It was established on 1 April 2008 by the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*.

The Authority's overall objective is to promote and safeguard the production and publication of official statistics that serve the public good. It is also required to promote and safeguard the quality and comprehensiveness of official statistics, and good practice in relation to official statistics.

The Statistics Authority has two main functions:

1. oversight of the Office for National Statistics (ONS) – the executive office of the Authority;
2. independent scrutiny (monitoring and assessment) of all official statistics produced in the UK.

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# **Assessment of compliance with the Code of Practice for Official Statistics**

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## ASSESSMENT AND DESIGNATION

The *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007* gives the UK Statistics Authority a statutory power to assess sets of statistics against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*. Assessment will determine whether it is appropriate for the statistics to be designated as National Statistics.

Designation as National Statistics means that the statistics comply with the *Code of Practice*. The *Code* is wide-ranging. Designation can be interpreted to mean that the statistics: meet identified user needs; are produced, managed and disseminated to high standards; and are explained well.

Designation as National Statistics should not be interpreted to mean that the statistics are always correct. For example, whilst the *Code* requires statistics to be produced to a level of accuracy that meets users' needs, it also recognises that errors can occur – in which case it requires them to be corrected and publicised.

Assessment reports will not normally comment further on a set of statistics, for example on their validity as social or economic measures. However, reports may point to such questions if the Authority believes that further research would be desirable.

Assessment reports typically provide an overview of any noteworthy features of the methods used to produce the statistics, and will highlight substantial concerns about quality. Assessment reports also describe aspects of the ways in which the producer addresses the 'sound methods and assured quality' principle of the *Code*, but do not themselves constitute a review of the methods used to produce the statistics. However the *Code* requires producers to "seek to achieve continuous improvement in statistical processes by, for example, undertaking regular reviews".

The Authority may grant designation on condition that the producer body takes steps, within a stated timeframe, to fully meet the *Code's* requirements. This is to avoid public confusion and does not reduce the obligation to comply with the *Code*.

The Authority grants designation on the basis of three main sources of information:

- i. factual evidence and assurances by senior statisticians in the producer body;
- ii. the views of users who we contact, or who contact us, and;
- iii. our own review activity.

Should further information come to light subsequently which changes the Authority's analysis, it may withdraw the Assessment report and revise it as necessary.

It is a statutory requirement on the producer body to ensure that it continues to produce the set of statistics designated as National Statistics in compliance with the *Code of Practice*.

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# 1 Summary of findings

## 1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 This is one of a series of reports<sup>1</sup> prepared under the provisions of the *Statistics and Registration Service Act 2007*<sup>2</sup>. The Act requires all statistics currently designated as National Statistics to be assessed against the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*<sup>3</sup>. The report covers the following statistics produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS):

- *Labour Productivity Quarterly Release*<sup>4</sup> (LPQR);
- *International Comparisons of Productivity: First Estimates*<sup>5</sup> (ICP Provisional); and
- *International Comparisons of Productivity: Revised Estimates*<sup>6</sup> (ICP Revised).

1.1.2 Section 3 of this report adopts an ‘exception reporting’ approach – it includes text only to support the Requirements made to strengthen compliance with the *Code* and Suggestions made to improve confidence in the production, management and dissemination of these statistics. This abbreviated style of report reflects the Head of Assessment’s consideration of aspects of risk and materiality<sup>7</sup>. The Assessment team nonetheless assessed compliance with all parts of the *Code of Practice* and has commented on all those in respect of which some remedial action is recommended.

1.1.3 This report was prepared by the Authority’s Assessment team, and approved by the Board of the Statistics Authority on the advice of the Head of Assessment.

## 1.2 Decision concerning designation as National Statistics

1.2.1 The Statistics Authority judges that the statistics covered by this report are readily accessible, produced according to sound methods and managed impartially and objectively in the public interest, subject to any points for action in this report. The Statistics Authority confirms that the statistics listed in 1.1.1 are designated as National Statistics, subject to ONS implementing the enhancements listed in section 1.5 and reporting them to the Authority by July 2012.

1.2.2 The ONS has informed the Assessment team that it has started to implement the Requirements listed in section 1.5. The Statistics Authority welcomes this.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment-reports/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga\\_20070018\\_en.pdf](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/Acts/acts2007/pdf/ukpga_20070018_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/code-of-practice/index.html>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/productivity/labour-productivity/q3-2011/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/international-comparisons-of-productivity/2010---first-estimates/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/international-comparisons-of-productivity/revised-estimates-for-2009/index.html>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/guidance-about-assessment/criteria-for-deciding-upon-the-format-of-an-assessment-report.pdf>

### 1.3 Summary of strengths and weaknesses

- 1.3.1 The statistics are compiled from previously published information and so the cost of producing these statistics is low. ONS provides a range of helpful supporting material about methods and concepts in *The ONS Productivity Handbook*<sup>8</sup> (*The Handbook*); however, *The Handbook* does not include recent methodological changes to the *LPQR* statistics, and has not been updated since 2007.
- 1.3.2 ONS engages with users through a range of corporate initiatives focused on government departments and the Bank of England; ONS held a general user event in February 2012 – the last was held in 2008. ONS includes a range of experimental statistics within *LPQR* but does not provide any supporting explanation of their quality or information about how these experimental statistics will be developed to meet users' needs.

### 1.4 Detailed recommendations

- 1.4.1 The Assessment team identified some areas where it felt that ONS could strengthen its compliance with the *Code*. Those which the Assessment team considers essential to enable designation as National Statistics are listed in section 1.5. Other suggestions, which would improve the statistics and the service provided to users but which are not formally required for their designation, are listed at annex 1.

### 1.5 Requirements for designation as National Statistics

<b>Requirement 1</b>	Develop a greater understanding of the use made of labour productivity statistics, publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the use of the statistics (para 3.1).
<b>Requirement 2</b>	Provide more detailed analysis of the impact of revisions, and make it clear when scheduled revisions to labour productivity statistics will be made (para 3.2).
<b>Requirement 3</b>	Ensure that users and other stakeholders are alerted promptly to the correction of errors (para 3.3).
<b>Requirement 4</b>	Publish more information about the quality of labour productivity statistics, including their strengths and limitations in relation to use and potential use (para 3.5).

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/user-guidance/productivity-handbook/the-ons-productivity-handbook--a-statistical-overview-and-guide.pdf>

<b>Requirement 5</b>	Publish information about the differences between the range of productivity statistics ONS publish to aid the use of the statistics (para 3.6).
<b>Requirement 6</b>	a) ensure that commentary in <i>LPQR</i> clearly distinguishes between National Statistics and experimental statistics, and includes information about the quality and reliability of the experimental statistics; and b) publish a plan to review the data sources and methods used to produce the experimental statistics, to ensure that they are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs (para 3.7).
<b>Requirement 7</b>	Publish up-to-date information about ONS's plans to develop its labour productivity statistics (para 3.8).
<b>Requirement 8</b>	Provide information about the comparability of productivity statistics with those produced by other countries (para 3.9).
<b>Requirement 9</b>	Improve the commentary in the releases so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics (para 3.10).
<b>Requirement 10</b>	Ensure that pre-release access lists are kept under close review so that access is granted only where absolutely necessary (para 3.12).



## 2 Subject of the assessment

- 2.1 Labour productivity provides a measure of economic output relative to the amount of labour involved in creating it. The three most well-known measures of labour productivity are: output per worker, output per job, and output per hour worked. Each provides an insight into changes in labour productivity. For example, comparing output per worker and output per hour worked can show whether changes to output are due to changes in productivity or changes in the number of hours worked.
- 2.2 ONS publishes official UK estimates of labour productivity in *Labour Productivity Quarterly Release (LPQR)*. The release presents estimates of quarterly UK productivity – including output per worker and output per job – for the whole economy and for broad industry sectors. The release also presents experimental estimates of market sector<sup>9</sup> productivity. Quarterly statistics are published around three months after the end of the reference period. Annual productivity estimates for UK Countries and English Regions are published a year after the reference period.
- 2.3 ONS publishes comparisons of labour productivity between the G7 countries<sup>10</sup> in *International Comparisons of Productivity (ICP)*. Estimates are calculated using data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) website<sup>11</sup> with estimates imputed where data for particular countries are unavailable. ONS publishes provisional statistics in *ICP Provisional* around 9 months after the reference period, and its final estimates in *ICP Revised* around 14 months after the reference period.
- 2.4 ONS produces a range of other productivity measures, including Public Service Productivity<sup>12</sup> – the subject of Assessment report 146<sup>13</sup> – and a range of experimental productivity estimates including: quality adjusted labour input<sup>14</sup>; sub-regional productivity statistics<sup>15</sup>; multi-factor productivity<sup>16</sup>; and volume index of capital services<sup>17</sup> – that provide insight into the determinants of changes in productivity. These experimental statistics have been produced by ONS for the past six years; ONS told the Assessment team that it plans to consult users in 2012 about the development of these statistics. These experimental statistics are outside the scope of this assessment.

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<sup>9</sup> The market sector is that part of the economy engaged in buying and selling goods and services at prices that can generate a profit, and excludes the central and local government sectors and not-for-profit institutions such as charities and universities

<sup>10</sup> The G7 countries are: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, UK and the USA

<sup>11</sup> <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DatasetCode=LEVEL>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/ukcemga/ukcemga-publications/publications/index.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/assessment/assessment-reports/assessment-report-146---statistics-on-public-service-productivity.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/quality-adjusted-labour-input--experimental-/new-quarterly-estimates-for-1993-to-2009-and-annual-estimates-from-1970/index.html>

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-trends/regional-economic-analysis/sub-regional-productivity/art-sub-regional-productivity.html>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/multi-factor-productivity--experimental-/estimates-for-1970-to-2009/index.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/volume-index-of-capital-services--experimental-/1950-to-2009/index.html>

2.5 Productivity statistics are used by:

- the Bank of England to understand current and future inflationary pressures on the UK economy;
- HM Treasury to assess trends in productivity growth and to estimate future economic output;
- the Department for Work and Pensions to assess policies designed to improve productivity, as they affect welfare and the income distribution;
- the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to monitor the competitiveness of UK businesses; and
- academics to understand the UK's economy and international competitiveness.

2.6 ONS told us that the production of these statistics costs approximately £50,000 per year.

### 3 Assessment findings

- 3.1 ONS engages with users of productivity statistics through a range of broad corporate initiatives, including a consultation about its work programme<sup>18</sup> in 2010, and through meetings with key stakeholders; none of which are specific to *ICPs* or *LPQR*. Previously ONS held productivity user group meetings to gather the views of users and to discuss changes to methods and publications. Membership largely comprised government and academic users. These user group meetings ceased in 2008; ONS reconvened the productivity user group in February 2012. ONS gathers the views of users via a dedicated email address – to which users email questions and requests for data and analysis. ONS published plans to set up a dedicated user group for productivity statistics in *LPQR Quarter 3 2011*<sup>19</sup>. ONS published some information about the uses made of the statistics within the Summary Quality Reviews<sup>20 21</sup> (SQRs) for the statistics. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should take steps to develop a greater understanding of the use made of these statistics, publish the relevant information and assumptions, and use them to better support the use of the statistics<sup>22</sup> (Requirement 1). In meeting this Requirement, we suggest that ONS refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority’s Monitoring Brief, *The Use Made of Official Statistics*<sup>23</sup>.
- 3.2 ONS has not published a revisions policy specifically for these statistics, instead following the revisions policies which relate to the source data – National Accounts<sup>24</sup> and Labour Market Statistics<sup>25</sup>. *LPQR* and *ICPs* do not make it clear that ONS has adopted this policy for these statistics. The releases each include a revisions section that provides brief background to the revisions and quantifies the difference between the latest statistics and those published previously. However, an explanation of the reasons for the revisions is absent, and it is not clear when and under what circumstances revisions will take place. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide more detailed analysis of the impact of revisions, and make it clear when scheduled revisions to *ICP* and *LPQR* statistics will be made<sup>26</sup> (Requirement 2).
- 3.3 Errors in the calculation of unit wage costs were identified in *LPQR Quarter 1 2010*<sup>27</sup>. ONS corrected and re-published the release with an errata notice within six weeks of the original release. ONS told us that users were not notified separately of the error or that the release had been corrected. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should ensure that users and

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/about-ons/consultations/closed-consultations/2010/work-programme-consultation/index.html>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/productivity/labour-productivity/q3-2011/index.html>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-information/economic-statistics/summary-quality-report-for-labour-productivity.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/quality/quality-information/economic-statistics/summary-quality-report-for-international-comparisons-of-productivity.pdf>

<sup>22</sup> In relation to Principle 1, Practices 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/assessment/monitoring/monitoring-briefs/monitoring-brief-6-2010---the-use-made-of-official-statistics.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/method-quality/specific/economy/revisions/economic-statistics/national-accounts---revisions-statement.pdf>

<sup>25</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/revisions/labour-market-statistics-revisions-policy.pdf>

<sup>26</sup> In relation to Principle 2, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>27</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/productivity/productivity-measures/q1-2010/index.html>

other stakeholders are alerted promptly to the correction of errors<sup>28</sup> (Requirement 3). We suggest that ONS make the original edition of *LPQR Quarter 1 2010* available to users on its website, or that it publishes a statement noting that it is available on request.

- 3.4 ONS published *The Handbook* in 2007. *The Handbook* explains the theories, methods and data involved in producing ONS's productivity statistics, including *ICP* and *LPQR* statistics. ONS has changed aspects of the methods used to produce these statistics several times since the publication of *The Handbook*<sup>29</sup> – including the change to using the 2007 revision of the Standard Industrial Classification and to the methods used to estimate wage costs and labour costs<sup>30</sup>. ONS has published the details of these changes elsewhere but has not updated the Handbook. We suggest that ONS update *The Handbook* to incorporate the latest information about the methods used to produce these statistics.
- 3.5 The statistical releases do not provide information about the quality and reliability of these statistics. Some information about quality is published in the SQRs. The SQRs identify some factors that can adversely affect the quality of the statistics, but do not comment on the extent to which quality is affected. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should publish more information about the quality of these statistics, including their strengths and limitations in relation to use and potential use<sup>31</sup> (Requirement 4).
- 3.6 ONS publishes other National Statistics about productivity, including Public Service Productivity<sup>32</sup>, along with a range of experimental productivity statistics, such as sub-regional productivity statistics<sup>33</sup>. It is not clear how these statistics relate to each other and the reasons why they differ, especially for the estimates of Government Services Productivity in *LPQR* and estimates contained within *The Public Service Productivity Release*. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should publish information about the differences between the range of productivity statistics they publish to aid the use of the statistics<sup>34</sup> (Requirement 5).
- 3.7 *LPQR* contains experimental statistics about the productivity of service sector industries and of the market sector. Their inclusion helps to provide a more rounded and complete picture for users. The background notes include links to information about the methods used to produce the experimental statistics, but there is no clear distinction made between the quality and reliability of these statistics and the other statistics they are published alongside. ONS told us that these experimental statistics are created from component series of existing National Statistics and will continue to classify them as experimental while it evaluates the methods used to produce them; ONS invited users to comment about these statistics at a Productivity Statistics User Group workshop in

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<sup>28</sup> In relation to Principle 2, Practice 7 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/productivity/productivity-measures/q1-2011/labour-productivity---q1-2011.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/productivity-measures/revised-methodology-for-unit-wage-costs-and-unit-labour-costs--explanation-and-impact/explanation-and-impact.html>

<sup>31</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practices 2 and 5 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/ukcemga/ukcemga-publications/publications/index.html>

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/regional-trends/regional-economic-analysis/sub-regional-productivity/art-sub-regional-productivity.html>

<sup>34</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

- February 2012. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should:
- a) ensure that commentary in *LPQR* clearly distinguishes between National Statistics and experimental statistics, and includes information about the quality and reliability of the experimental statistics; and b) publish a plan to review the data sources and methods used to produce the experimental statistics, to ensure that they are produced to a level of quality that meets users' needs<sup>35</sup> (Requirement 6).
- 3.8 ONS published its first productivity strategy and work programme<sup>36</sup> in *Economic Trends* in April 2002; the article detailed the work that ONS proposed to carry out between 2002 and 2005. ONS published a second strategy<sup>37</sup> and work programme in July 2006 which outlined ONS's work programme between 2006 and 2008 and summarised progress against the first work programme. ONS has not published further updates and the extent to which ONS achieved its second work programme and its plans for current and future work is unclear. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should publish up-to-date information about its plans to develop its labour productivity statistics<sup>38</sup> (Requirement 7). We suggest that ONS publishes an update outlining the work done as a result of the previous productivity strategy and work programmes.
  - 3.9 *ICPs* contain statistics for the G7 countries, allowing comparisons of the UK's labour productivity relative to the six other G7 countries. *ICPs* each include a section explaining how to interpret the statistics, and highlight the difficulties of obtaining directly comparable data across countries. However, *ICPs* do not indicate where further information can be found about labour productivity statistics for the other countries. *LPQR* does not indicate whether similar statistics are available for other countries. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should provide information about the comparability of productivity statistics with those produced by other countries<sup>39</sup> (Requirement 8). We suggest that ONS signpost similar statistics for other countries in *LPQR* and *ICP* releases.
  - 3.10 The releases provide factual descriptions of the latest changes to the statistics, including increases and decreases, but only *LPQR* provides a useful summary of the main messages. Both releases contain technical terms that would benefit from plain English explanations. Information about the known and potential uses of the statistics is absent from the releases. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should improve the commentary in the releases so that it aids user interpretation of the statistics<sup>40</sup> (Requirement 9). We suggest that in meeting this requirement ONS should consider the points detailed in annex 2.
  - 3.11 Each publication is available in PDF format with detailed information contained within accompanying Excel tables. Four letter identifier codes are included in the data tables and *LPQR*. These codes allow users to quickly identify the

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<sup>35</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 3 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/elmr/economic-trends--discontinued-/no--581--april-2002/productivity-measures--ons-strategy.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/elmr/economic-trends--discontinued-/no--632--july-2006/productivity-measures-and-analysis--ons-strategy-and-work-programme.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 5 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>39</sup> In relation to Principle 4, Practice 6 of the *Code of Practice*

<sup>40</sup> In relation to Principle 8, Practice 2 of the *Code of Practice*

statistics and download them from the Data<sup>41</sup> section of ONS's website. However, it is not explicit how to use these codes to extract data from ONS's website. We suggest that ONS improve the level of accessibility of data available via the Data section of its website by providing instructions to help users.

- 3.12 ONS publishes pre-release access lists for *ICPs*<sup>42</sup> and *LPQR*<sup>43</sup>. 19 people are granted pre-release access to *LPQR*, 13 of whom are from HM Treasury. 29 people are granted pre-release access to *ICPs*, 11 of whom are from HM Treasury. ONS told us that these lists are reviewed regularly and are kept as short as possible. As part of the designation as National Statistics, ONS should ensure that pre-release access lists are kept under close review so that access is granted only where absolutely necessary<sup>44</sup> (Requirement 10).

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/datasets-and-tables/index.html>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/icp/international-comparisons-of-productivity/2010---first-estimates/ard-icp-pra.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/productivity/labour-productivity/q2-2011/rep-labour-productivity-pre-release-access.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> In relation to Protocol 2, Practice 7 of the *Code of Practice*

## Annex 1: Suggestions for improvement

A1.1 This annex includes some suggestions for improvement to ONS's Labour Productivity statistics, in the interest of the public good. These are not formally required for designation, but the Assessment team considers that their implementation will improve public confidence in the production, management and dissemination of official statistics.

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|---------------------|--|
| <b>Suggestion 1</b> | Refer to the types of use put forward in the Statistics Authority's Monitoring Brief, <i>The Use Made of Official Statistics</i> when documenting use (para 3.1).      |
| <b>Suggestion 2</b> | Make the original edition of <i>LPQR Quarter 1 2010</i> available to users on ONS's website, or publish a statement noting that it is available on request (para 3.3). |
| <b>Suggestion 3</b> | Update <i>The Handbook</i> to incorporate the latest information about the methods used for <i>LPQR</i> and <i>ICP</i> releases (para 3.4).                            |
| <b>Suggestion 4</b> | Publish an update outlining the work done as a result of the previous productivity strategy and work programmes (para 3.8).  |
| <b>Suggestion 5</b> | Signpost similar statistics for other countries in <i>LPQR</i> and <i>ICP</i> releases (para 3.9).   |
| <b>Suggestion 6</b> | Consider the points detailed in annex 2, in seeking to improve the statistical releases (para 3.10).   |
| <b>Suggestion 7</b> | Improve the level of accessibility of data available via the Data section of its website by providing instructions to help users (para 3.11).                          |



## Annex 2: Compliance with Standards for Statistical Releases

- A2.1 In October 2010, the Statistics Authority issued a statement on *Standards for Statistical Releases*<sup>45</sup>. While this is not part of the *Code of Practice for Official Statistics*, the Authority regards it as advice that will promote both understanding and compliance with the *Code*. In relation to the statistical releases associated with ONS' Productivity Statistics, this annex comments on compliance with the statement on standards.
- A2.2 In implementing any Requirements of this report (at paragraph 1.5) which relate to the content of statistical releases, we encourage the producer body to apply the standards as fully as possible.

### Appropriate identification of the statistics being released

- A2.3 The releases use appropriate headings and logos for National Statistics products and the releases clearly identify the originating department and provide contact details for the responsible statistician. The titles of the releases describe the time period covered by the release, but not the geographical coverage. *ICPs* do not make it clear that they are concerned with labour productivity. Neither the description of the frequency of release of *ICP* statistics (twice a year) nor that of the differences between the first estimate and the revised estimate is clear. The releases do not set the content of the release in terms of the subject and tables. The latest statistics are clearly identified within the releases. However, the revisions that occur, especially within *ICPs*, are not indicated clearly within some of the graphics.

### Include commentary that is helpful to the non-expert and presents the main messages in plain English

- A2.4 The releases provide a factual description of the changes, including increases and decreases. *ICPs* each provide a useful summary of the main statistical messages but *LPQR* does not. Some explanation of technical terms and jargon is given within the main text, but not for all – for example, unit wage costs. *LPQR* provides some explanation of the changes in the statistics, but does not consistently provide commentary to help the user understand changes; for example, *LPQR* does not explain the reasons for the volatility in productivity growth in the Administrative and support services industries between 2008 and 2011. *ICPs* provide factual summaries about the changes of the statistics but do not offer explanations of these changes.

### Use language that is impartial, objective and professionally sound

- A2.5 The text used in the releases is impartial and evidence based, and descriptions within the narrative are consistent with the statistics. However, the releases do not explain the statistics presented in the charts. Information about the quality of underlying data is absent from the releases.

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<sup>45</sup> <http://www.statisticsauthority.gov.uk/news/standards-for-statistical-releases.html>



### **Include information about the context and likely uses**

A2.6 The releases include little information about the policy and operational context of the statistics, and do not include information about how these statistics are used. Some information about the use made of the statistics is included in the SQRs, but this is not highlighted in the releases. It would be appropriate to comment on the uses to which people are likely to put the statistics.

### **Include, or link to, appropriate metadata**

A2.7 The releases and SQRs provide a useful section about how to interpret the data. The *ICP* releases provide links to appropriate productivity information from the OECD. Changes to definitions and methodology have recently been made to the statistics in *LPQR*. It is not clear why these changes have been made and when the statistics will be deemed adequate for the label of experimental to be removed. The data used in the releases are subject to later revision and this is not made clear in the releases.

## **Annex 3: Summary of assessment process and users' views**

A3.1 This assessment was conducted from November 2011 to March 2012.

A3.2 The Assessment team – Gary Wainman and Neil Wilson – agreed the scope of and timetable for this assessment with representatives of the ONS in November 2011. The Written Evidence for Assessment was provided on 21 December 2011. The Assessment team subsequently met ONS during January 2012 to review compliance with the *Code of Practice*, taking account of the written evidence provided and other relevant sources of evidence.

### **Summary of users contacted, and issues raised**

A3.3 Part of the assessment process involves our consideration of the views of users. We approach some known and potential users of the set of statistics, and we invite comments via an open note on the Authority's website. This process is not a statistical survey, but it enables us to gain some insights about the extent to which the statistics meet users' needs and the extent to which users feel that the producers of those statistics engage with them. We are aware that responses from users may not be representative of wider views, and we take account of this in the way that we prepare assessment reports.

A3.4 The Assessment team received 8 responses from the user and supplier consultation. The respondents were grouped as follows:

Academic users	2
Central government users	3
Suppliers	3

A3.5 Users reported that they felt that the statistics team is helpful and prompt in responding to queries. Users reported that they would like more detailed disaggregation of the statistics, for example a more detailed industry breakdown, and would like the components of each series published. Users reported that accessibility was a problem – with underlying data only available on request – and that they would like more information about the quality of the statistics. One user welcomed the inclusion of experimental statistics within the *LPQR* release and requested the creation of a constant price measure of productivity.

### **Key documents/links provided**

Written Evidence for Assessment document



