Office for Statistics Regulation

TQV Voluntary Application

Showing Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

when working with data and statistics

A guide for analysts on applying the Code of Practice for Statistics

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Contents

A Commitment to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)

Society benefits from data and analysis produced by all kinds of organisations including the public sector, charities, academia, or commercial organisations.

The Code of Practice for Statistics (the Code), originally developed to set the standards for the production of official statistics by government, can support any organisation and analyst who works with or communicates data, statistics and analysis. The Code helps produce analytical outputs that are high quality, useful for supporting decisions, and that will be well respected. This is because the core principles of the Code – **Trustworthiness, Quality and Value** – provide a universal, ethical framework that supports analysis to be done in a way that supports public confidence and delivers for the public good.

Trustworthiness, Quality and Value benefit anyone producing data, statistics and analysis, whether they are inside or outside government. They are relevant to all kinds of data, such as those published in statistical research, economic analysis and management information.

The Office for Statistics Regulation (OSR), which maintains the Code, runs a scheme to recognise organisations working outside of official statistics production that voluntarily apply the Code. Producers of data, statistics or analysis that are **not official statistics** and who apply the Code principles are encouraged to be part of the TQV voluntary application (VA) scheme.

We encourage members of the scheme to be open and accountable in their application of the Code by publishing a statement explaining how they apply and meet the Code principles. Being part of the scheme reflects an ongoing commitment to apply TQV.

Building public confidence in statistics

The core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV) describe the essence of what is required to ensure that the public can have confidence in data and statistics. They form the fundamental framework of the Code of Practice, the statutory code for official statistics produced by government bodies in the UK. They are underpinned by the Code principles, which unpack TQV to show the ten essential areas of practice.

The Code Principles:

Trustworthiness	Quality	Value
1. Show integrity 2. Lead responsibly 3. Be transparent 4. Manage data responsibly	5. Prioritise quality 6. Be rigorous 7. Be open about quality	8. Be relevant 9. Be clear 10. Be accessible

Why apply Trustworthiness, Quality and Value?

A commitment to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value offers the opportunity for an organisation to:

- Compare its processes, methods and outputs against the recognised standards in the Code that we expect of official statistics
- Build its reputation by demonstrating to the public and stakeholders its commitment to trustworthiness, quality and value
- Strengthen its practices by 'thinking TQV'
- Encourage its staff to work towards a clearly defined standard that will ensure their data best serve the public good

For example, a commercial data organisation could show that it works to high professional standards in its data handling and analysis. A charity can use the principles to provide reassurance to its donors about its fundraising and public services. An academic body could use the Code to help ensure outputs from its innovative research resonate and can be understood by the public.
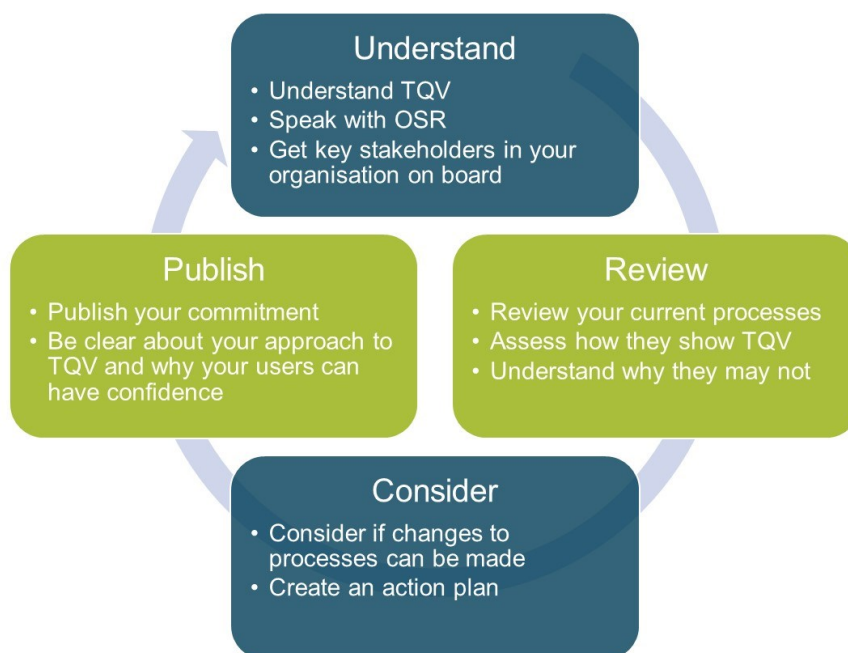
Making your commitment

Where an organisation chooses to adopt and apply TQV for all or some of its statistics or functions, we encourage it to **publish a TQV statement**. This statement should outline how the organisation or work area demonstrates practices in line with the Code. There are several stages that the organisation should work through.

1. Understand, review, consider

It is helpful to first **understand** TQV, the core principles of the Code, and to then **review** your approach to working with data and statistics in relation to TQV, and **consider** if there are ways of improving practice.

The VA cycle:

Understand
- Understand TQV
- Speak with OSR
- Get key stakeholders in your organisation on board

Publish
- Publish your commitment
- Be clear about your approach to TQV and why your users can have confidence

Review
- Review your current processes
- Assess how they show TQV
- Understand why they may not

Consider
- Consider if changes to processes can be made
- Create an action plan

2. Think TQV

The key is to think about how you show the standards of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value in what you do. Ask yourselves:

- How are we trustworthy in the way that we are organised, and manage and use data?
- What is the quality of the data and how robust are our methods?
- How do we provide value by ensuring our information is useful and usable?

Use the **Code principles** as a guide. They provide a practical list of dos and don'ts to help steer your practice.

The Code of Practice also has the **Standards for Official Statistics** with a detailed list of standards and practices. These practices may be helpful to those organisations similarly publishing statistics which are useful to the public. See which standards are relevant to you and consider the detailed practices in your own work.

3. Be transparent and accountable: publish your commitment

The **publish** phase means being transparent. Transparency requires an organisation to make information available about why it thinks users can be **reassured** that it achieves Trustworthiness, Quality and Value. It is helpful to your users to be clear if there are aspects of the Code that are not applied, and to describe your approach to Trustworthiness, Quality and Value, referencing each of the ten Code principles.

The very process of opening up about working practices enables external scrutiny and responding to feedback is at the heart of building confidence. You will find it helpful to review OSR's guide ['Ensuring public accountability'](#) to find out more about how to provide reassurance to your stakeholders.

You can also look at the **[Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis](#)** in the Code of Practice to support public confidence when your organisation uses your analysis or data publicly.

4. Register of TQV Voluntary Application

OSR will add you to the online [Register of TQV Voluntary Application](#) when your TQV statement is published. The register includes a link to your published statement.

Your organisation can be added to the list reflecting an **organisation-wide commitment** to apply TQV. It is important to consider how you will embed the Code across your organisation.

You can also join the register for **individual areas of work or outputs** – most scheme members are of this kind.

While encouraged, publishing a TQV statement and being added to the Register of TQV Voluntary Application is entirely optional and at the discretion of the organisation. You can join the wider [TQV community of practice](#) (see below) without committing in a public statement.

Continuing to apply TQV

This is an ongoing commitment – not a one-off exercise. Continue to cycle through the process, reflecting on any changes that may affect your approach to the production and publication of statistics.

1. Get senior buy-in to show that applying the Code matters to your organisation
2. Develop an action plan to focus your efforts to improve practice in a proportionate and strategic way
3. Embed the TQV principles within your teams and organisation
4. Look for ways to promote the Code that are relevant to your organisation
5. Share examples of good practice among your colleagues (see the further guidance section for more information)
6. Join the **TQV community of practice** and attend our regular events and learning sessions

We recommend all organisations review their TQV Statement regularly. It can help to link your review to your organisation's strategy or business plan. Tell your stakeholders about how you are developing within your TQV Statement, such as

how you are extending your Code adherence or how you are developing the statistics.

Annual review

OSR will conduct a short annual review to check in with organisations on the Register of TQV Voluntary Application, asking them to confirm that they are continuing to apply TQV. This will be a good time to see what progress you have made on your action plan or check if you need to update your TQV Statement.

TQV Community of Practice

OSR supports a community of practice for anyone applying TQV or is interested in finding out more about what is involved. Sessions are run quarterly, involving members sharing their experiences and describing some of their work. Additional training sessions are arranged in response to the interests and needs of members, to assist them as they develop and embed TQV in their work areas.

OSR can also assist in arranging buddies for new members to learn from more experienced TQV practitioners.

How does OSR oversee the TQV VA scheme?

OSR is the UK Statistics Authority's regulatory arm. Our remit focuses on official statistics produced by government, but we also encourage all producers of data and analysis to think about how to ensure that their potential benefit to society is realised.

We manage and apply the Code of Practice. Our role as regulator is to oversee the production and release of official statistics. We do not have a formal role in regulating the voluntary application of the TQV principles, but we are responsible for managing the scheme.

If someone raises a concern with us that relates to the presentation of quantitative information in the public domain by a member of the TQV VA scheme, we will contact the organisation involved and review its TQV statement and procedures. Any intervention will be made on an informal and advisory basis. This work is carried out in line with our [Interventions Policy](#). We are prepared to comment publicly on the voluntary application of the Code's principles.

Further guidance

The [Code of Practice website](#) has a wide range of useful material that will help you apply TQV. It also includes a variety of links to useful resources about preparing statistics and handling data:

[Code Guidance](#): information that supports use of the Code, including understanding and delivery of the principles and Standards, including a **[short guide for the Code Principles](#)**, and **[individual guides](#)** for the ten areas of practice covered by the Standards for Official Statistics. Each guide includes links to examples from analysts and producers of statistics highlighting good practice

[Understanding TQV](#): an introduction to the core principles of Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV)

[Code Principles](#): these ten principles explain how anyone working with data can put TQV into practice, in a wide range of settings

[Standards for Official Statistics](#): these standards set out specific statistical practices for those producing official statistics and are useful guide for other statistical producers

[Standards for the Public Use of Statistics, Data and Wider Analysis](#): these standards set out what public bodies need to do to ensure an open, clear and accessible approach to the publication and communication of statistics, data and wider analysis

[Guidance – Ensuring Public Accountability](#): Producers of statistics should see themselves as accountable to their users and can apply OSR's guidance on accountability to provide reassurance about how they demonstrate Trustworthiness, Quality and Value

The next section provides further information about the three core principles, Trustworthiness, Quality and Value, and the ten Code principles that unpack them.

Trustworthiness

Building confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics and data

Trustworthiness means that the public can have confidence in the people and organisations that produce statistics. It reflects the integrity, professionalism and impartiality of the producers and the statistical system. Trustworthiness signals that statistics are not subject to manipulation or undue influence.

To show you are trustworthy:

1 Show integrity

- Do present and use data and statistics objectively, being impartial and professional
- Don't withhold or misrepresent data or statistics due to political or commercial influence

2 Lead responsibly

- Do foster evidence-based decision making based on strong, professional analytical skills and promoting TQV
- Don't rely on biased evidence, be unwilling to listen to diverse views or refuse to adapt to changing circumstances

3 Be transparent

- Do be open about how, when and to whom you will release data and statistics
- Don't restrict the release of statistics because they make for uncomfortable reading or be reluctant to explain corrections or revisions

4 Manage data responsibly

- Do collect, use and share data in line with legal obligations and ethical principles and be open about choices made
- Don't ignore the rights of those providing their data or overlook risks to the disclosure of their personal or corporate information

Showing you are trustworthy

An organisation publishing data or analysis wants to demonstrate that its outputs are free from organisational vested interest.

It can show the **Trustworthiness principle** is achieved by describing how it protects its analysis through governance, oversight and appropriate resourcing.

Quality

Data and methods that produce assured statistics

Quality is about using suitable data and appropriate methods to produce reliable statistics that meet the needs of the people who use them. Statistics should inform rather than mislead, and producers must uphold high standards of transparency and quality assurance.

To ensure the statistics are of suitable quality:

5 Prioritise quality

- Do promote and take a proactive approach to quality and continuous improvement, learning constructively from both mistakes and good practice
- Don't discourage innovation or collaboration or dismiss quality issues raised by staff, data suppliers, partners, topic experts or users

6 Be rigorous

- Do use suitable data sources and sound methods to meet intended uses, applying recognised professional standards
- Don't assume data are suitable or ignore quality issues or the implications of system and method changes on their continued suitability

7 Be open about quality

- Do describe clearly the quality of data and statistics, including uncertainty and bias in estimates and impacts on appropriate interpretation and use
- Don't assume quality remains static or fail to communicate key quality or methods information that could result in a misleading interpretation or wrong decision

Showing the quality of your work

An organisation publishing data or analysis should ensure the public can have confidence in the quality of its data and methods.

An organisation can show the **Quality principle** is achieved by considering and describing how it sources and selects data, how it chooses and tests methodology, how it assures itself about the quality of the data and methods and by informing users about the quality and/or limitations of its statistics and analysis.

Value

Statistics that support society's needs for information

Value means that statistics benefit the public by informing and supporting decision making, action and debate. It also means that statistics can be accessed, understood and used by a wide range of people. Providing value is the ultimate goal of statistics, as it reflects their contribution to society and the public good.

To ensure the statistics are valuable:

8 Be relevant

- Do judge what is needed by listening and responding promptly to user feedback, explaining your choices about what can be reasonably progressed
- Don't make assumptions about what is useful or ignore requests for improvements

9 Be clear

- Do ensure that data and statistics are easy to use and understandable, tailored to your audiences' needs
- Don't present too much information, use confusing colours or jargon or present insufficient information to enable appropriate interpretation or use

10 Be accessible

- Do ensure easy access for all when publishing data, statistics and supporting material and meet legal accessibility standards
- Don't limit access to information or create barriers to data sharing or reuse where there is a public interest

Showing the Value of your work:

An organisation publishing data or analysis wants to communicate the value of its output – the questions it is aiming to address.

It can show the **Value principle** is achieved by clearly describing the questions, insights delivered and purpose of the publication.

How to get started: steps for new members

This **checklist** can help you get started with voluntarily applying the Code principles: Trustworthiness, Quality and Value (TQV). It's not a must-do list but some useful pointers.

It will help you think about how you already show TQV and begin to see how you can further develop your practice, both individually and within your organisation.

This is an ongoing process. It's not about perfection but provides a useful set of lenses to reflect on in your work and to provide reassurance to others – 'Think TQV'.

Action
1. **Build understanding of the three Code principles – Trustworthiness, Quality and Value**
1. Speak with OSR
2. Speak with senior leaders / key stakeholders in your organisation to get buy-in
3. Contact OSR if you would like to arrange training for your team
2. **Review your approach – how do you show TQV?**
1. Look at examples from other adopters
2. Join the community of practice to hear others' experiences
3. Speak to OSR about buddying up with an experienced adopter if helpful/possible
4. Begin to formulate a TQV statement that shows your approach to TQV
5. As a team see how your practice already shows TQV:
i. How are you trustworthy in the way you are organised and manage and use data?
ii. What is the quality of your data/outputs and how robust are your methods/processes?
iii. How do you ensure value in your activities and information?
3. **Consider ways of improving practice**
1. Think about how else you can further develop your Trustworthiness practices or activities in line with the Code principles:
i. Can you better demonstrate objectivity and impartiality?
ii. Are there ways you can enhance your organisational arrangements?
iii. Can you be more transparent about your plans to share your outputs?
iv. Can you be more open about where user needs can or cannot be met and why?

	v.	Do your data handling and security arrangements meet current standards and requirements?
2.		Consider how else you can enhance your Quality practices in line with the Code principles:
	i.	Are your sources and data still appropriate for your needs?
	ii.	Are there ways of further enhancing your methods or new ways of working that you can adopt?
	iii.	Are there ways of better measuring or understanding uncertainty or the limitations in the data?
	iv.	Do you clearly explain about the quality of your outputs to your users and stakeholders?
	v.	Are there opportunities for partnering with other analysts or organisations to extend your work?
3.		How can you enhance the Value of your outputs in line with the Code principles?
	i.	Do they still meet the need and purpose of your users?
	ii.	Do you have a good understanding of key stakeholders needs?
	iii.	How can you improve your engagement with stakeholders?
	iv.	Can you improve accessibility and clarity of your outputs?
	v.	How can you innovate in the way you present or promote your outputs?

4. Publish a TQV statement

1. Look at other adopters and learn from their approaches

2. Tell your story of how you show TQV in the way you work and produce your outputs

3. Write for your stakeholders and the public as your audience and reassure them about your approaches

4. Contact OSR with your TQV statement to receive comments on drafts and to get added onto the OSR list of voluntary adopters

5. Continue to review your practices and see how you can become more mature in applying TQV

1. Think TQV! When tackling any issue, reflect on each principle to see what answers emerge

2. Consider using the Statistical Practice Capability Framework – a maturity model for focusing on the strategic use of TQV in business practices (contact OSR for more information)

3. Review your current practice periodically and update your published TQV statement

4. Keep in touch with OSR – say how you are getting on, ask any questions, share examples of good practice

Download the checklist and begin to document how you are getting on in showing TQV. If you have any questions as you go, feel free to contact the voluntary application team at OSR by emailing regulation@statistics.gov.uk.