



STATISTICS QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

GENEVA
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INTRODUCTION

This document presents the UNCTAD *Statistics Quality Assurance Framework* (SQAF). UNCTAD aspires to produce and disseminate the best quality statistics possible. To that end, the SQAF will play an important role in helping to maintain and improve quality standards.

This SQAF addresses three areas of quality: institutional; output; and process. The framework is accompanied by definitions, guidelines and a quality assessment checklist. It is envisaged that a quality self-assessment, including production processes, supporting metadata and infrastructure, will be conducted by all units responsible for compilation and dissemination of UNCTAD statistics every three years. These self-assessments will be conducted under the authority of the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Deputy Secretary-General who chairs the UNCTAD Statistics Coordination Task Force. The results of these self-assessment will inform statistical quality improvement plans.

All statistics compiled by UNCTAD and published on UNCTADstat or on the UNCTAD website should be considered official international statistics, unless clearly stated otherwise. UNCTAD statistics are compiled and disseminated in accordance with the *Principles Governing International Statistical Activities* published by the Committee for the Coordination of Statistical Activities (2014).

BACKGROUND

Achieving and maintaining public trust in official statistics requires that statistics are produced in an objective, transparent and professionally independent manner. The United Nations Statistical Commission enshrined these and other important principles in 1994 when it adopted the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*. In 2014, these principles were adopted by the UN General Assembly. Many countries around the world have adopted national codes of practice and/or statistical quality assurance frameworks to capture the principles and best practices, and to safeguard public trust. These principles and frameworks target national statistical organisations. For international organisations producing statistics the CCSA in 2005 adopted the *Principles Governing International Statistical Activities*, which enshrines principles consistent with the *Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics*.

In March, 2018 the Committee of the Chief Statisticians of the United Nations System published a generic SQAF for the UN system. The UN SQAF is designed to go a step beyond the *Principles Governing International Statistical Activities* by introducing a common understanding of the quality dimensions and quality assurance for all UN agencies comprising the United Nations Statistical System. This framework is modelled on the national or *NQAF Template and Guidelines* but tailored to the circumstances of UN agencies. It recognises that a ‘one size fits all’ SQAF is not realistic and thus presents a generic SQAF that can be adapted to the specific circumstances of an individual agency. It is expected that every agency in the UNSS will customize their own SQAF.

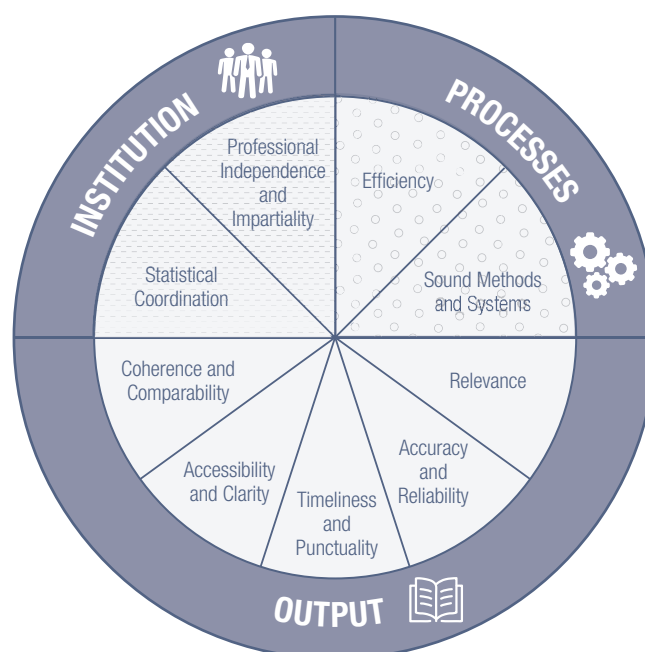
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The UNCTAD SQAF sets out the three broad quality dimensions that have been identified as being important for UNCTAD, namely:



FIGURE 1: QUALITY COMPONENTS & DIMENSIONS



For each quality dimension a number of quality components are identified. In turn each quality component has several associated indicators against which compliance can be benchmarked. In all, the UNCTAD SQAF has identified 3 Quality Dimensions, 9 Quality Components and 26 Quality Performance Indicators (QPIs). The QPIs will be used in the self-assessment reviews to benchmark UNCTAD's progress towards implementing the SQAF. They may also be used during external peer review. These quality components and performance indicators are detailed in sections 1 - 3.

The UNCTAD SQAF is also accompanied by Definitions, Guidelines and a Quality Governance and Assessment and Improvement Programme. These are presented in separate documents to simplify the presentation of the SQAF.

SECTION 1

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

Institutional and organisational factors can exert significant influence on the quality and credibility of statistics. UNCTAD has identified two key components:

- professional independence and impartiality;
- and statistical coordination.



1 - PROFESSIONAL INDEPENDENCE & IMPARTIALITY

UNCTAD statistics are professionally independent and impartial

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistical methods and outputs are determined only by statistical considerations and not by pressure from providers, users or other stakeholders
- Statistical reports and press releases are objective and impartial
- All methodologies and standards being adopted are well documented and published
- *UNCTAD Statistics Quality Assurance Framework* is publically available

2 - STATISTICAL COORDINATION

UNCTAD statistics maximise harmonisation and coordination and are considered a public good

Quality Performance Indicators:

- A Statistics Coordination Task Force is established within UNCTAD
- There is a single conduit for acquisition of data from external bodies (international organisations, NGOs, CSOs or enterprises) so that data are consistently accessed, imported and used within UNCTAD with minimum burden to data providers
- All UNCTAD statistics are published and made available freely to all users providing no confidentiality or copyright issues exist
- Unpublished data are shared internally

SECTION 2

STATISTICAL OUTPUT



The statistical outputs disseminated by UNCTAD are designed to meet several needs. They are designed to serve the needs of UNCTAD itself, of the member states, researchers and of the public generally. UNCTAD will strive to ensure that all statistics are:

- relevant; accurate & reliable;
 - coherent and comparable;
 - timely and punctual;
 - and accessible and clear.
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3 - RELEVANCE

UNCTAD statistics meet the needs of their users

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistical needs (as defined in mandate) are reflected in the work programme
 - Statistical needs are surveyed regularly
 - User satisfaction is monitored on a regular basis
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4 - ACCURACY & RELIABILITY

UNCTAD statistics are accurate and reliable

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Data sources and results are assessed and validated in as far as is possible
 - Unscheduled updates are kept to a minimum
 - Revisions should be highlighted and explained (cause and impact)
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5 - COHERENCE AND COMPARABILITY

UNCTAD statistics are coherent and internally and externally consistent and comparable

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistics are compiled in line with international standards and using international definitions and classifications (where they exist)
- Statistics are consistent over time and across countries
- Statistics can be reconciled with other sources

6 - TIMELINESS & PUNCTUALITY

UNCTAD statistics are released on schedule and in a timely manner

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistics are published in line with UNCTAD statistics online publication calendar
 - Statistics are published as quickly as possible
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7 - ACCESSIBILITY & CLARITY

UNCTAD statistics are clear and understandable and published in an accessible manner

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistical reports can be easily understood, and include all appropriate metadata
- Statistical reports and databases are easily located and accessed, and data are easily extracted and downloaded

SECTION 3

STATISTICAL PROCESSES



Adhering to international standards and guidelines enhances the quality, credibility and usability of statistics. UNCTAD ensures that all statistics use robust methodologies and systems in the most cost-efficient way possible.

8 - SOUND METHODS AND SYSTEMS

UNCTAD statistics are compiled using sound methodology

Quality Performance Indicators:

- Statistics are compiled and disseminated according to international standards
- Statistics are compiled using efficient and robust IT systems
- Metadata are available for all statistics

9 - EFFICIENCY

UNCTAD statistics are compiled efficiently

Quality Performance Indicators:

- High quality statistics are compiled at minimum cost
- Collection is designed to minimise the reporting burden on member states

REFERENCES

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