

Q3 NGG update paper

NOS Strategy

The current NOS Strategy is due to expire in 2020. Last year members of the NOS Governance Group asked Skills Development Scotland (SDS) to commission several pieces of research to provide an evidence base for a strategy refresh; this included some initial high-level research on international standards.

More recently the Edge Foundation has been commissioned to facilitate a series of NOS Governance workshops. The first, held in November, reviewed perceived successes and challenges of the existing strategy against the landscape of current devolved skills policies. Members pooled their collective views on the role, purposes and principles of NOS, and discussed current and potential links to other systems. The second workshop in January will consider what the future NOS strategy might contain and which other external partners may wish to be involved in shaping it.

A second piece of work has been commissioned with the Edge Foundation to carry out independent research to explore stakeholder perceptions and uses of NOS. Users across all four countries of the UK will be interviewed to share their experiences of NOS; what works well, the challenges of using NOS and how NOS could be improved.

During 2019 NESTA was commissioned to programmatically extract content from the current NOS database to identify overall levels of overlap/duplication in the system. The analysis highlighted a number of technical issues relating to, for example, inconsistent naming conventions and categorisation. NOS Governance members are now considering recommendations and SDS has opened up discussion between NESTA and the NOS Database maintenance contractor to take some of this work forward.

The NOS Governance members are also keeping a watching brief on the work being carried out at Warwick University to move towards a 6-digit system for Standard Occupational Classification Codes (SOC2020). Further analysis will be needed in due course to review which of the SOC2020 groupings that NOS relate to and which are covered instead by existing professional standards.

The visual five-year plan, driven by key recommendations from the 2016 York Report has recently been reviewed to illustrate achievements to date and what is still to be done; a revised version of the visual will be issued shortly.

Quality Assurance

Members of the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel have recently updated and published the NOS Quality Criteria and NOS Governance members have agreed that it should be reviewed annually at the end of each financial year with input from key stakeholders and suppliers. A workshop has been organised in January to draft the 2020 version, which will incorporate additional information arising from the NESTA analysis. It will also provide an opportunity to review the mandatory fields within the current NOS template document.

Recently a new system has been rolled out to manage the development of self-funded NOS products. The process involves standard setting organisations submitting a business case to the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel for consideration and aims to avoid duplication with NOS which has been commissioned via the Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement and to provide assurance that developers have the technical expertise to develop NOS and understand the quality assurance processes.

A set of desk instructions is in the process of being developed to support future new members of the NOS Governance Group and the NOS risk register is being updated at quarterly face to face NOS Governance meetings.

Procurement

The Multi-Supplier Framework Agreement was established in 2019. A lessons learned workshop is being held in early January 2020 to ensure that all future contracting is carried out as efficiently as possible. The workshop will involve representatives from both NOS Governance Group and the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel.

SDS is currently collating demand for 2020/21 products. Key sources being used to identify NOS priorities include local/national LMI, analysis provided by NESTA, supplier feedback, critical occupations, changes in legislation, etc. A 1-5 priority scale will be allocated to all proposed products and these will be prioritised during January. Once the priority list is finalised, all suppliers on the Framework Agreement will be notified and tenders will be issued during February, with contracts to be awarded in March.

Following the success of last year's Supplier Event, a further event will be organised in the spring and invitations will be extended to a wider audience, including any known sub-contractors, consultants and translators. The event will be used to introduce a new written code of conduct and broad principles on ethical behaviours for suppliers, which is in the process of being drafted.