

Terms of Reference – Revised 2020 National Occupational Standards Governance Group

Context

The National Occupational Standards Governance Group provides the strategic direction for the National Occupational Standards (NOS).

The NOS Strategy 2010-2020 describes NOS as “UK-wide, demand-led, evidence-based benchmarks of competent performance which underpin vocational learning and development, apprenticeships and qualifications across all sectors, occupations and parts of the UK”.¹

Following the UK Government withdrawal of support for NOS they have been managed by the Devolved Administrations with the support of Skills Development Scotland (SDS). The contents of the NOS database remain publicly available and employers throughout the UK continue to use NOS although they are not a mandatory requirement in England for either qualifications or apprenticeships².

Responsibilities

The NOS Governance Group aims to:

- co-ordinate policy on strategic issues relating to the NOS on behalf of the Devolved Administrations and those employers across the United Kingdom choosing to access the NOS;
- ensure that the NOS reflect the skills and learning policies across the Devolved Administrations and provide support to those employers across the United Kingdom choosing to access the NOS;
- ensure that NOS meet the needs of learners, business and other stakeholders across the UK;
- review the fitness for purpose of the strategy for NOS, including periodic reviews of the strategy;
- provide advice and guidance on the priorities for NOS;
- keep under review the format, style and the specification for NOS;
- keep under review the content, structure and general usability of the NOS Database;
- establish the quality assurance systems for the development NOS;
- provide advice and guidance to the UK Standards and Frameworks Panel and, more specifically, in the event of disputes arising regarding the approval of NOS in accordance with the NOS Governance Conflict Resolution Procedure; and
- maintain an effective communication strategy with key stakeholders who are involved in NOS.

¹ UKCES. 2011. *NOS Strategy 2010-2020: Revised Strategy June 2011*. London: UKCES.

² <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-statements/?page=1&max=20&questiontype=AllQuestions&house=commons&use-dates=True&answered-from=2016-07-21&answered-to=2016-07-21&member=3985>

Membership

Membership of the NOS Governance Group will be representatives from the Devolved Administrations, comprising of at least 1 representative per Administration and Skills Development Scotland.

Current Membership:

- Scottish Government Policy Leads for NOS and Apprenticeships Standards and Frameworks.
- Welsh Government Policy Leads for NOS.
- Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland Policy Leads for Vocational Education Policy and NOS.
- Senior Leader of the NOS Unit within Skills Development Scotland will attend as an ex officio member of the National Occupational Standards Governance Group and provide secretariat responsibilities at each meeting.

Governance Arrangements

The NOS Governance Group will be chaired on a yearly rolling basis.

Secretariat & Administrative Matters

The NOS Unit (Skills Development Scotland) will provide the secretariat function with all the Devolved Administrations providing agenda items and update papers as required.

The draft agenda and working papers will be issued electronically five working days ahead of the scheduled meetings.

Meetings

The group will meet on a quarterly basis face-to-face*, or more frequently if necessary. The dates of these meetings will be set at the end of the calendar year, members will be notified of any alteration as soon as possible.

A minimum of 1 member per Devolved Administration of the NOS Governance Group must be present for the meetings to be deemed quorate. In the absence of the Chair, one of the other Devolved Administration members will assume that role for the duration of the meeting. If for any reason a meeting is not deemed to be quorate, it will mean that final decisions cannot be taken during the meeting itself, and instead members will be contacted by the Chair separately on specific issues requiring an urgent decision.

The NOS Governance Group members may ask any other officials to attend to assist it with its discussions on any particular matter

The NOS Governance Group members may ask any or all of those who normally attend but who are not members to withdraw to facilitate open and frank discussion of particular matter.

The group will meet face-to-face* with the UK Standards & Frameworks Panel and representatives from the SDS NOS Unit and Procurement Teams at the end of each financial year to review annual activity, highlight any lessons learned and communicate priorities for the coming year.

The group's Devolved Administration representatives will conduct an annual review with senior leaders of the SDS NOS Unit at the end of each financial year to review the DA/SDS contract arrangements.

Reporting

The NOS Governance Group will formally report back to Skills policy officials, and where appropriate Skills Ministers/Senior officials in the Devolved Administrations as appropriate, in line with individual reporting requirements, providing a verbal/written update on relevant discussion topics and/or a copy of meeting minutes where appropriate.

The NOS Governance Group will publish quarterly stakeholder updates on the NOS website.

* In the event that face-to-face meetings are not possible, e.g. due to Covid-19 travel restrictions or adverse weather conditions, the NOS Governance Group will meet virtually.