Irish Government Economic & Evaluation Service

IGEES Quality Assurance (QA) Principles & Guidelines

March 2018

IGEES

Why IGEES QA?

Irish Government and Evaluation Service (IGEES) was established in 2012 as a cross-government service aimed at supporting better targeting of Government policies by building analytical capacity across the Civil Service and producing relevant analytical output.

Given that the IGEES analytical work is intended to feed directly into the policy formulation and decision making, it is imperative that it is factually sound and technically robust, regardless of whether it is intended for internal use or external publication.

What is QA?

Quality assurance refers to the concepts of:

- accuracy of the data and other information supplied, and
- rigour applied in using analytical techniques and integrity in reporting.

It implies that those involved in the process of quality assurance provided relevant input necessary to improve the quality of the analytical work. Involvement in the quality assurance process does not necessarily mean agreement with the findings of the analysis or with the choice of methods used, as the ultimate responsibility remains with the author and their line management.

The quality assurance process can vary depending on the objective of the analytical work produced. For instance, for an internal Departmental short note a review through the line management may be sufficient. By contrast, an academic journal publication requires more formal review process that typically involves a field expert editorial team.

IGEES QA

All authors of published IGEES analytical output must ensure that necessary steps are taken to ensure high quality and robustness of the analytical work presented. As IGEES operates in a variety of policy areas and organisational contexts, there is no one prescribed IGEES quality assurance process. Instead, all authors of work published on the IGEES website are obliged to outline in their work the review process that was undertaken to ensure the content of the analysis is of the highest possible quality. This will give a reader/user of the analytical work clear understanding of the scrutiny that has been applied.

It is recommended that all IGEES quality assurance processes are open, so that reviewers are known to the author. This is to encourage constructive discussion between the author and reviewer(s) and facilitate learning and capacity building for the author and the IGEES network.

In the IGEES quality assurance process feedback should be sought on:

- the analysis format (structure),
- clarity (quality of writing),
- accuracy (reliability of data),
- robustness (methodological rigour), and
- consistency (between evidence and conclusions).

It is recommended that authors consider what the appropriate quality assurance process will be when beginning a piece of work**.** This will facilitate input from reviewers at the beginning, mid-point and end of the process as appropriate.

Author: The author should consider using the expertise in the wider IGEES network to identify and source potential reviewers. Information on areas of expertise of those in the IGEES network can be found in the IGEES contact list on the IGEES Hive Site (https://hive.cloud.gov.ie/sites/2/IGEES/Pages/Home.aspx). This site can also be used to pose general queries to those in the IGEES network. Alternatively, authors can contact igees@per.gov.ie for assistance in identifying those in the IGEES network with relevant expertise.

Where appropriate, the author should identify and approach potential reviewers at the outset of the analytical work. Early engagement can potentially provide useful early feedback and allow reviewer to include the work associated with the review into their work plan.

The author should respond to whatever form of review is undertaken, either taking on board suggested changes or outlining to the reviewer why changes have not been incorporated.

Reviewer: The reviewer has the responsibility of providing timely feedback and avoiding unduly delay in the completion/publication of the analytical work. All feedback should be constructive, so that it gives clear instruction on where the flaw is and how it can be rectified.

How to report on QA?

All IGEES output should include a brief outline of the process used to ensure quality of the work produced. A general guidance on how the quality assurance process can be reported on in IGEES analytical output is outlined below (Box 1).

Please note that the IGEES logo should appear on all IGEES published work. A copy of the logo can be requested from igees@per.gov.ie

Box 1. Suggested Template for QA reporting in IGEES analytical output (to be inserted at the end of the document)

Quality Assurance Process

To ensure accuracy and methodological rigour, the author engaged in the following quality assurance process (**list only relevant items and include appropriate details for each; delete items that do not apply**).

☐ Internal/Departmental
    ☐ Line management
    ☐ Working group
    ☐ Other divisions/sections
☐ External
    ☐ Other Government Department
    ☐ Steering group
    ☐ Quality Assurance Group (QAG)
    ☐ Peer review (IGEES network, seminars, conferences etc.)
    ☐ External expert(s)
☐ Other (relevant details)

Internal review – refers to the quality control that draws on expertise and experience held in the organisation; it can involve vertical review (through line management) or horizontal (across divisions and units):

> **Line management** – all Government Departments have a process for approval of internally produced documents; this involves review through line management. The management levels involved typically depend on the importance of the analytical work.

> **Working Group** – a group consisting of internal representatives who have expertise, experience and/or access to data relevant to the topic analysed. The group provides advice and support and direction to the project. The group typically meets frequently, but at the very least at all key stages during the lifetime of the project.

External review – seeks to leverage external expertise/ experience to ensure quality of the output:

> **Steering Group** – a group consisting of internal and external representatives who have expertise, experience and/or access to data relevant to the topic analysed. The group provides advice, support and direction with the aim of ensuring high quality of the output. The group can consist of representatives from Government departments and agencies, industry, academia, international bodies etc. The group typically meets at all key stages during the lifetime of the project.

> **Quality Assurance Group** – a group consisting of internal and external representatives who have expertise and experience relevant to the topic analysed. The group can consist of representatives from Government departments and agencies, industry, academia, international bodies etc. The analysis is typically reviewed once, at the completed draft stage.

> **Peer review** – review conducted by peers (persons with similar expertise and experience), which can take a variety of formats from bilateral liaison with relevant colleagues within or outside the IGEES network to presentations at relevant internal and external professional events (seminars, conferences etc.).

> **External experts** – review conducted by one or more experts in the field; this can involve national or international academics, expert editorial boards, industry experts, consultants etc.; typically, external expert review is the highest level of quality control most relevant for papers published in academic journals.