



Guidance for Government representatives on BSI British Standards committees

raising standards worldwide™

About this publication

The Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS) is working to build a standards and conformity assessment infrastructure which meets the needs of UK industry, through a range of policy activities and through their relations on behalf of Government with BSI and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS).

This booklet has been developed to further DIUS's objective of ensuring effective and increased Government involvement in BSI technical committees. It aims to educate members of Government departments and agencies on their rewards, role and responsibilities when operating within BSI British Standards technical committees.

This publication should be conceived within the remit and scope of BS 0, the overarching governance requirements for all committee members.



Department for
**Innovation,
Universities &
Skills**

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Summary

The Government is a strong advocate of standards and standardization.

In delivering best practice, standards make procurement more efficient by eliminating waste and ensuring maximum value for money. By complementing legislation, they enable a 'lighter touch' approach to regulation. They can promote sustainability among suppliers, ensuring the sustainable sourcing of raw materials, waste recycling and the maintenance of good environmental management. Working with standards is also a quicker and more cost-effective way of supporting innovation.

Managers are under constant pressure to deliver on departmental and organizational objectives, and standardization forms part of the solution. Departmental representatives should sit on BSI British Standards technical committees so they can **influence the content of standards** and ensure that the public sector dimension is fully taken on board when standards are designed and agreed.

Simply supporting the principles and applications of standards is not enough. Through involvement in the setting and updating of

standards, Government departments or agencies have the opportunity to spread their influence, **ensuring departmental priorities are addressed** not just in the public sector, but also in much of the private sector and internationally.

Given the nature of many contemporary challenges, it has become crucial that Government fully engages the private sector to support them. Involvement in standards-setting committees facilitates **sharing technical knowledge**, thus improving the management of budgets and policy implementation through a more informed, industry-wide awareness of policy challenges and potential solutions.

Read on to learn more about why – and how – to get involved in developing standards.

Why get involved?



A collaborative approach to standardization constitutes an unparalleled framework for shared knowledge.

Standards are fundamental to the approach increasingly being taken by the UK Government and the European Union, since it adopted the 'New Approach' in 1987. Under the New Approach, standards have been agreed for many different products, and these have been the basis for creating the single European market. Standards have been shown to support key Government policy priorities:

- ▶ **Improving procurement.** Standardization offers greater efficiency, predictability and confidence in public sector procurement. Standards ensure that public bodies buy products and services that are fit for purpose and interoperable (that is, they can be used in conjunction with others). They introduce greater competition into public sector procurement by ensuring that products are compared on a like-for-like basis. They also reduce the time and cost involved in drafting product and service specifications, and help ensure that procurement meets other policy objectives, such as fostering sustainability or buying from small businesses.
- ▶ **Complementing regulation.** Standards can be more effective than regulation. They are voluntary, less burdensome and less costly for both the regulated and the regulator. They allow a flexible, principles-based approach that focuses on outcomes not processes, providing reassurance to all stakeholders of conformity to best practice. They also play an important role in making markets work more transparently. Conversely, non-compliance with standards can be used by regulators as a warning signal.
- ▶ **Promoting sustainability.** Standards are an effective means of ensuring suppliers meet wider policy goals, such as environmental sustainability. They can be used to ensure that raw materials are sourced sustainably, waste is recycled and good environmental management practices are maintained.

- ▶ **Supporting innovation.** Standards can support and promote innovation, creating a common framework that encourages the sharing of knowledge. This minimizes the need for duplication during research and development, thus increasing the efficiency of the process and maximizing interoperability. They also enable the private sector to devise more efficient and effective approaches to achieve public sector objectives, through new technologies or new ways of working.

Not only are standards themselves strongly supported by Government; there are also significant benefits for a Government department or agency that becomes involved in standards-setting and reviewing.

Ensuring departmental priorities are addressed

Membership of a technical committee can ensure that a department's priorities are addressed effectively in any new, related standard. Representatives should inform the committee of the practical difficulties encountered by their department or agency. This will help ensure that a public sector perspective – which may differ from that of other user interests – is taken into account in the development of standards.

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The Taking Standardization Forward Committee

The Taking Standardization Forward Committee (TSF) is a committee of the Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS). Its role is to co-ordinate Government views and responses relating to standards and certification policy where these affect more than one Government department, or the executive agencies reporting to more than one Government department, with the objective of ensuring a consistent approach to standards across Government.

The TSF focuses, in particular, on issues of policy relating to Government interest in the preparation of standards; European Union 'New Approach' harmonization directives; accreditation and certification; and the co-ordination of Government views in respect of other cross-departmental standards issues.

The co-ordination point to TSF is at DIUS. Please contact DIUS for further information on representation.

Standards apply to all sectors. This solves the problem of the private and public sectors adopting different and incompatible technologies and solutions. In the past, the failure to gain from economies of scale has resulted in higher costs in public sector procurement. Similarly, different parts of the public sector have sometimes used different specifications for the procurement of products designed to meet the same objectives so they were not interoperable. Devolution of decision-making over recent years has meant there has been a diffusion of procurement practices, leading to the acquisition of incompatible products and systems.

Standards can therefore be used to ensure that all public bodies – including executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), local authorities, health trusts and other departments – are working to the same agenda, while still following the principles of devolved decision-making. This enables more efficient, more effective, more consistent and cheaper procurement, as well as ensuring that equipment is fully compatible and interoperable.

Participation in the standards-development process enables commercial providers and other stakeholders to help develop solutions for the Government's problems. British Standards are achieved by consensus, so Government cannot be accused of imposing solutions or approaches. Consensus should avoid – or at least reduce – implementation problems.

Influencing the content of standards

Involvement in the development of standards also allows Government departments to influence the content of those standards. This applies to British Standards and also – through BSI British Standards' representation on European and international standards committees – standards that are adopted globally. An example of this is the involvement of the Home Office in the

development of biometrics standards in the UK and internationally, for example, has meant that the UK is a leader in biometrics, and that these standards are helping to work towards the interoperability of systems used across the world.

Standards-setting provides a valuable opportunity to extend influence across industry, not just within the UK but also globally.

In other areas too – such as educational and vocational qualifications – departments have been able to strongly influence international standards. Standards-setting provides a valuable opportunity to extend influence across industry, not just within the UK but also globally.

In developing technical fields such as biometrics, but also in many other activity areas, involvement in technical committees helps provide departments with advance knowledge of what new standards are likely to emerge. Thus they can ensure that they use emerging, not outdated, technologies and working practices. Departments can shape their policies, risk-assessment strategies and budgets to take account of developing technologies and related standards.

Modern technologies should be embraced and deployed to help achieve public policy objectives, where it is practical and efficient to do so. Examples include the use of biometrics, IT systems that improve public procurement and real-time reporting systems. Standards can be the basis for providing commercial solutions to public policy problems. Involvement in standards committees helps improve departmental knowledge of these potential solutions.

Sharing technical knowledge

Departmental and agency representatives sitting on technical committees are likely to encounter influential technical players, including testing laboratories, industry leaders, regulators, academic institutions, users' groups, consumers' bodies and trade unions.

It is possible to work alongside some of the world's leading practitioners and thinkers in formulating a common approach to modern technical and policy challenges.

The improved knowledge and networking gained from involvement in international standards-setting committees has two important benefits for a Government department or agency. First, it demonstrates leadership in tackling policy and practical challenges, providing visible and credible sponsorship of good practice, helping to strengthen links between Government and other sectors. This reflects well on the department and is likely to be acknowledged by outside observers (including the media).

Second, as well as leading the debate externally, representatives often get a better insight into the latest technical innovations and the policy context. This should improve their understanding of industry's technical capacity to respond to departmental policy challenges and help shape policy development and procurement specifications. It is possible to work alongside some of the world's leading practitioners and thinkers in formulating a common approach to modern technical and policy challenges.

Guidelines for representatives



The work of BSI British Standards and its technical committees, and accordingly the representatives on its committees, is intended to support the national and international use of standards.

Nature and purpose of the guidelines

- 1) These guidelines set out the principles for involvement by Government department or agency representatives on technical committees. The aim is to ensure that participation is consistent with the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Standards, signed by the Government and BSI British Standards. The guiding document for the drafting of standards is BS 0: A *standard for standards*.
- 2) These guidelines are publicly available, so that other participants on technical committees, and other stakeholders, are made aware of the role of Government representatives.
- 3) It is recognized that these guidelines cannot cover all situations which Government representatives may face.
- 4) The work of BSI British Standards and its technical committees, and accordingly the representatives on its committees, is intended to support the national and international use of standards. Alongside UK-specific work, technical committees may be involved in the development of standards that support European Union Directives and in joint work with European and international standards bodies.

The role of the Taking Standardization Forward Committee

- 5) The Taking Standardization Forward Committee (TSF) co-ordinates Government views and responses on standards and certification policy.

- 6) The TSF Committee discusses issues of policy relating to standards and BSI British Standards, Government interest in the role of standards in the implementation of EU Directives, and Government interest in accreditation and certification. It also coordinates Government views in advance of meetings of the BSI Standards Policy and Strategy Committee (SPSC).
- 7) Objectives of the TSF include enabling Government representatives on the SPSC to represent the needs of Government effectively and efficiently.

The Government has agreed to use all appropriate means to promote and support BSI British Standards' pursuit and achievement of the primary objects for which it has been constituted by the Royal Charter.

Government relationship with BSI British Standards

- 8) The Government respects the independence of BSI British Standards and limits its standardization interest to public policy matters.
- 9) The Government has agreed to use all appropriate means to promote and support BSI British Standards' pursuit and achievement of the primary objects for which it has been constituted by the Royal Charter.

- 10) The Government has agreed to work to maintain an environment which enables BSI British Standards to respond positively to changing market needs and technology.
- 11) The Government provides annual financial support for various BSI British Standards activities relating to formal consensus standards.

The need for representation

- 12) BS 0 seeks to keep technical committees to a reasonable size. Usually only one nomination for membership is permitted for each organization. In the case of Government representation, individual departments or agencies can each nominate a representative, depending on the field of activity.
- 13) Individual departments should avoid multiple representation on a committee, except where this is necessary and appropriate for the full utilization of departmental expertise.
- 14) Where appropriate, Government departments can suggest when a committee would benefit from the representation of another department or agency.

Government interest in the work of BSI British Standards

- 15) The Government is particularly keen to promote its interests on committees in the pursuit of policy principles:
 - i) Public sector procurement should gain from and utilize standards.
 - ii) Standards can be used as an effective substitute for regulation in many circumstances, facilitating less intrusive, less burdensome, less expensive and more targeted regulation.

iii) Standards can be used to promote the use of innovative technologies and practices.

- 16) The Government supports the use of standards for public procurement and will take them into account when procuring. It is committed to working with BSI British Standards to develop standards to support its operations.
- 17) All Government representatives should consider the possible relevance of standards to future regulatory or procurement activities.
- 18) Government departments should use any standards their representatives have been involved in developing.

Scope of the representative role¹

- 19) Within their terms of reference, technical committees and sub-committees are composed of organizations with interests in the standardization of products and services or processes. As far as possible, BSI British Standards ensures that its committees represent the interests concerned.
- 20) The primary means of representing business interests is through trade associations or equivalent organizations.
- 21) Where appropriate, representation is sought from consumer organizations, professional institutions and organizations with interests in testing, inspection and certification.
- 22) Where BSI British Standards believes that a standard could be used to support legislation, or affect consumer protection, health and safety, human rights, or environmental matters, representation from the relevant Government department(s) is sought.
- 23) Committee chairmen represent the committee, not their representative bodies.

Standards development

- 24) Committee practice is governed by BS 0, *A standard for standards*.
- 25) The Government is represented at every level of BSI British Standards' technical, advisory and policy committees. Its representatives make contributions to the technical, commercial and legislative aspects of standards work as necessary and appropriate, drawing upon the resources and expertise within Government.
- 26) Government representatives may be asked to advise whether and to what extent a standard (or other standards publication) is likely to be acceptable to the Government for regulatory or procurement purposes.
- 27) Government representatives should keep committees fully informed of any relevant developments or proposals from their department that may affect the committee or the standards it is developing. Representatives should keep committees informed of any development or proposals of which they are aware emanating from other departments or agencies.

The Government is represented at every level of BSI British Standards' technical, advisory and policy committees.

¹ See BS 0-1:2005, 4.3.

Differences and disputes²

- 28) Differences between Government representatives should be resolved outside the committee. Most issues can be resolved in discussion between the representatives concerned, but others may require the involvement of representatives on related or senior committees.
- 29) Committee decisions are made by consensus.
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BSI British Standards is open to proposals for new work from any source.

Requests for new standards work

- 30) BSI British Standards is open to proposals for new standards work from any source.
- 31) Proposals for new work are evaluated against a variety of criteria agreed with the Government,³ including public need, health and safety, urgency, likelihood of achieving consensus and commercial value. Considerations of urgency, the likelihood of achieving consensus, how tight requirements should be and any commercial interests will affect which type of standard is developed and what level of agreement is needed before publication.

² See Clause 10 of BS 0-1:2005.

³ See Clause 5 of BS 0-1:2005.

Frequently asked questions



You should ensure that you understand the views of your department or agency. If you represent an agency, you are likely to be directly or indirectly representing your sponsoring department as well.

Who within my department/agency should know about my membership of a technical committee?

You should seek approval for your committee membership from your line manager and then keep that manager fully informed of your activities on the technical committee and any relevant or contentious matters that will be or have been discussed by the committee – especially where these relate to policy that has been or is being formulated within your organization.

You should also make sure that any parts of your organization – or key individuals – that have a close relationship with the work of the committee know of your membership. Just how ‘close’ that relationship should be for you to notify and keep them informed is a matter of judgement and may need to be discussed with your line manager. In practice, it is likely that all other members of your business team will need to be notified of your committee membership.

Government departments should also consider whether it is appropriate to inform some of their executive agencies and sponsored non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs) of the work of the committee. If those agencies or NDPBs have technical or specialist knowledge that is relevant to the work of the committee, they should also be notified of your committee membership.

It is not necessary to notify your entire department or agency of your committee membership.

Who do I represent on a technical committee?

You sit on the committee as a representative of your Government department or agency. The views you express should be those of that department or agency, not your own. You should ensure that you understand the views of your department or agency. If you represent an agency, you are likely to be directly or indirectly representing your department as well. It is therefore important that the views you

express either represent those of that sponsoring department, or at the very least do not conflict with those views.

In some instances, representatives of departments may also be representing agencies. This relationship should be made explicit to all stakeholders. It is possible, for instance, that in the past both the department and the agency sent their own representatives, but that now, to save resources, only the department is represented. If this is the case, it is particularly important that the departmental representative works closely with the agency and keeps it fully informed.

You do not represent the Government as a whole, nor do you represent other departments unless that has been agreed and specified.

Should representation be shared between departments?

This depends on the circumstances. The sharing of a representative between departments or agencies can save resources and improve efficiency. That potential efficiency gain can be eroded or eradicated if it leads to greater inefficiency where the difficulties involved in co-ordination are disproportionately large, or if technical expertise is lost to the committee.

How should I formulate my briefing for a technical committee? Who should I consult?

Normally, it will be necessary at the very least to consult your line manager and other members of your business team regarding recent and forthcoming committee business to determine whether they have knowledge and opinions that are relevant.

The formulation of briefings varies significantly between departments and agencies. It depends on the type of working relationship that

exists between the interested parties, how many of these there are and the sensitivity of the matters being discussed. Matters of extreme sensitivity and importance may need to be discussed by a specially convened departmental meeting that brings together officers from the department and its relevant sponsored agencies – but this is unusual. It is more common for briefings to be formulated at a meeting within a business team, or by discussion over the phone or by email.

Matters of extreme sensitivity and importance need to be discussed by a specially convened departmental meeting that brings together officers from the department and its relevant agencies.

Another option – which may be preferable – is to establish a ‘community of interest’ relating to standards development on the organization’s intranet and use this as a discussion forum. While this is good practice, it would not remove the need to proactively consult with line management and immediate colleagues.

What happens if we cannot agree a common position?

Sometimes the departments and agencies represented by a single individual cannot agree a common position. In practice, this is unlikely to cause a significant difficulty. The important thing is that the individual fully explains to the committee the various positions held by the bodies that are presented. In rare

circumstances it may be necessary to tell a committee that a briefing cannot be formulated until a later meeting – but this should be avoided if possible.

Can I contribute freely to meetings?

Yes. Your involvement in BSI committees allows you to contribute your expertise and departments or agency's viewpoint.

How does the Civil Service Code affect my participation?

As a civil servant, you are bound by the Civil Service Code which sets out the core values of the Civil Service and the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants. Primarily, you must remember that you are representing your department or agency and you are not free to put forward any personal views you may hold. Furthermore, should your employing department or agency terminate your membership of the committee for some reason – for example, because of budgetary constraints – you cannot continue to sit on the committee in a personal capacity.

The Civil Service Code stipulates that civil servants should behave with integrity, honesty, objectivity and impartiality. These attributes must equally be applied when representing your department or agency on a technical committee. Civil servants must ensure that in their representative role on a committee they do not provide a commercial advantage to any particular business, or be construed as doing so. You must also not disclose information without being authorised to do so. You should, though, set out facts and relevant issues truthfully.

Representatives' activities on a committee must not provide a commercial advantage to any particular business, or be construed as doing so.

What authority do I hold to take decisions? In what circumstances should I ask for a decision deferral while I consult my department/agency?

Your department or agency has delegated decision-making responsibility to you as part of its approval of your role as committee representative. Part of your responsibility is to anticipate committee decisions and to be briefed adequately so that you can reflect your department's or agency's views to enable you to participate properly in that decision-making. It is bad practice to seek to defer a decision because you have not obtained a thorough briefing.

As a civil servant, you are bound by the Civil Service Code which sets out the core values of the Civil Service and the standards of behaviour expected of civil servants.

Can I propose standards as a solution to Government policy, either as an alternative or as an enabler of legislation?

Yes, and you are strongly encouraged to do so. The Government is committed to proportionate regulation that does not impose a heavy burden on the private, public or voluntary sectors. Standards are a recognized way to support this policy objective. Initiatives that replace existing and complex regulations with more appropriate and flexible standards are in keeping with this policy.

Much legislation outlines desired principles, while relying on standards to provide the mechanism for achieving this. Many European Union directives do this.

How does Crown copyright affect my participation in a committee?

BSI copyright subsists in all BSI publications. If you need to contribute Crown copyright material to a technical committee please seek appropriate advice from your department.

Can I get help to pay for travel expenses if I am asked to attend a European or international meeting?

The Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills operates an Assisted International Travel Scheme (AITS) to help with the costs of attendance at overseas meetings, such as those of ISO and CEN. However, AITS is not available to central or local Government employees. In some circumstances, staff of executive agencies may be able to obtain AITS support. Otherwise your department or agency should pay for travel and other costs from its budgets. If you believe that you need to attend an overseas meeting to support the work of your department or agency and that of the technical committee, you should discuss this with your line manager. Discussions on likely travel expenses for future work should be held during your department's annual budget-making process. It is important that your line manager recognizes that your work on a committee needs to be supported by a travel budget appropriate to your attendance at UK meetings and possibly meetings in Europe and elsewhere.

How are committee decisions taken?

British Standards reflect a broad consensus of interests, reinforcing their authority and helping to ensure that they will be generally acceptable and widely applied. Establishing that consensus requires all viewpoints to be taken into account and all arguments to be explored thoroughly. Voting is not used and it is expected that all members of a committee will be reconciled to the decisions that

emerge from discussion. There is an established arbitration procedure for those rare occasions when a fundamental objection arises, which, together with other aspects of the standards development process, is discussed in BS 0 and its supporting documentation.

Committee decisions are generally made by consensus.

Am I free to disclose information learnt at a BSI committee?

Documents and committee proceedings are confidential and for private distribution only. They do not enter the public domain. Dissemination should, as far as practical, be limited to those who have a legitimate interest in the development of the standard to which the disclosure relates. But this does not preclude due consultation within your department or agency, within Government, or within other organizations represented on the committee.

You should not disclose confidential information, other than to your nominating body, without the committee's express authorization. Where you do so, you should ensure that recipients are aware of the confidential nature of these documents and will safeguard their confidentiality.

Where to find out more

Further reading

Members of technical committees are recommended to read the following:

- *Memorandum of Understanding*, download at www.dius.gov.uk/policy/standardisation/bsi.html
- *BS 0: A standard for standards*
- *The Civil Service Code*.
www.civilservice.gov.uk/iam/codes/cscode/index.asp

The following useful publications are available for download from www.bsigroup.com/Government:

- *The Standards Solution for Government*
- *Introducing Standards*
- *Enabling lighter touch regulation: the role of standards*
- *Improving the efficiency of public procurement: the role of standards*
- *The New Innovation Guide*

Many publications and further information can be downloaded from the BSI website, www.bsigroup.com.

Get involved

To find out more about getting involved with BSI committees email the BSI Technical Committee Service Centre at csc@bsigroup.com or by telephone 020 8996 7009

Glossary

AITS	Assisted International Travel Scheme
BEC	British Electrotechnical Committee
BS	British Standard – published by BSI British Standards, – the standards division of BSI Group
BS 0	<i>A standard for standards</i> (published by BSI)
BSI	British Standards Institution
CEN	European Committee for Standardization
CENELEC	European Committee for Electrotechnical Standards
DIUS	Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills
ETSI	European Telecommunications Standards Institute
IEC	International Electrotechnical Committee
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding (between the UK Government and BSI)
NDPB	Non-departmental public body
NSB	National Standards Body
SPSC	Standards Policy and Strategy Committee (a BSI committee)
TSF	Taking Standardization Forward Committee

About BSI British Standards

BSI British Standards is the UK's national standards body, as recognized in a Memorandum of Understanding between the UK Government and BSI British Standards. A Royal Charter was awarded to BSI in 1929 – and updated several times since – endorsing the role of BSI as the issuer and promoter of standards. The Charter recognizes that standards can improve products, simplify processes and material specifications, improve management practices, cut wastage, reduce environmental damage and improve safety.

The Memorandum of Understanding with the Government recognizes BSI British Standards as the UK member of ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and CEN (the European Committee for Standardization).

Through the British Electrotechnical Committee (BEC), BSI British Standards is the UK member of the International Electrotechnical Committee (IEC) and the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standards (CENELEC). BSI British Standards also undertakes functions on behalf of the UK within the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI).

BSI British Standards has a range of supporting tools and guidance including *A standard for standards* (BS 0) which supports the role of committee members and staff in producing standards and provides a detailed framework for how committees should undertake their functions.

About DIUS

The Department for Innovation, Universities & Skills (DIUS) brings together functions from two former departments. Science and innovation responsibilities from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Skills, further and higher education from the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

To build a dynamic, knowledge based economy the Department draws together the nation's strengths in colleges, research, science and universities.

To ensure the wider personal, community and cultural benefits of education and science are supported, the Department works closely with other departments (including the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR)).



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