

Government Statistician Group (GSG) Recruitment and Promotion Guidance

1. Introduction

Recognition of a member of staff as a member of the GSG at a particular level is determined by NSO acting on behalf of the National Statistician. The NSO will so recognise members of staff who are recruited, moved or promoted according to this guidance

In order to bring the right people with the right skills into the GSG and to develop the cadre of skilled professionals, it is important that members are recruited in a consistent manner. The basic premise for this is covered by five key principles;

- Minimum entry and promotion requirements and equivalences, as agreed by Heads of Profession
- Use of the Statistician Competence Framework (SCF) as the basis for assessment of statistical competence
- Use of consistent selection methods which give evidence of potential and performance across the SCF
- Inclusion in the assessor panel of an independent (usually external) GSS member with a role of ensuring that GSG standards are met
- Use of the Civil Service core competences appropriate to the grade for assessment of generic competences

2. Applying the Principles

The application of the principles depends on the nature of the recruitment. Certain recruitments **must** follow a full GSS approved recruitment process. These are:

Entry to the GSG at any grade, whether by promotion/level transfer from a non-GSG post, or by external recruitment.

Promotion to Civil Service Grade 7 or equivalent.

Promotion to Senior Civil Servant or equivalent.

Other recruitments, as set out in this guidance, require only an interview at which candidates are scrutinised against the appropriate SCF and Civil Service core competences.

Entry and promotion standards are set out in Annex H.

The Statistician Competence Framework (SCF)

Principle – ‘The SCF is the reference standard which should be used to set the requirements of all posts and as a benchmark for recruitment, development, performance assessment and promotion’. It has four Levels. Details of the SCF can be found on StatNet:

<http://www.knowledgenetwork.gsi.gov.uk/statnet/statnet.nsf/refDocs/KANN-8C4FAK>

3. Selection methods for Entry to the GSG at any grade and for Promotion to G7 or SCS.

Principle – All GSG recruitment should follow an approach when selecting candidates in line with the SCF and (for external entrants) the CS Competency Framework. The following summarises the method expected for recruitment at each grade. Please also refer to the relevant level of the SCF.

StO – GSS-approved Test and interview including independent assessor at SStO (or AS of equivalent seniority or, exceptionally, with the agreement of NSO, experienced HStO) or above. StOs may also be candidates from the Fast Stream who have passed the Statistical Assessment Centre, but narrowly missed out on the Fast Stream Assessment centre. No further assessment would be required in this case.

AS – Through Civil Service Fast Stream process only (NB, this includes independent GSS assessors and statistical tests).

HStO – GSS approved Test and interview including independent assessor at SStO (or AS of equivalent seniority) or above

SStO – GSS approved Test and interview including independent assessor at G7 or above

G7 – Interview including independent assessor at G6 or above.

G6 – Interview including independent assessor at SCS1 or above

SCS – interview including independent assessor at a higher grade.

Candidates for G7 and above should have a lot of relevant experience. A longer, more detailed statistical interview may be used as an alternative to a written GSS approved test to ascertain suitability.

4. Independent Assessors

Principle - 'It is a basic requirement that an independent board member is required when selecting staff to join the GSG. The independent GSS assessor's role is to ensure that the requirements of membership of the GSG as set out in this guidance and in the SCF are being met, beyond the requirements of the particular post.'

An independent assessor is required for:

- Recruitment into the GSG for a non GSG candidate at any grade
- Promotion to G7 or SCS within the GSG.

Independent assessors will be GSG staff of at least the grade described in section 3 above. They will normally come from a different Department or organisation, and it is vital that they have a good knowledge of the GSS. For ONS, as a very large statistical organisation, the assessor may come from a different business area. In this case the approach used must be approved by the Head of NSO Delivery.

Responsibilities of the Independent Assessor:

- Ensuring that the relevant standards of the SCF are met.
- Ensuring that CPD requirements are covered where appropriate.
- Ensuring that candidates will be able to do a range of posts at the grade.
- Ensuring that a GSS approved test is used where required by this guidance.
- Ensuring that this guidance is being observed.

NSO holds a list of assessors and will offer training for new assessors and refresher training for existing assessors.

Requirements for an Independent GSS assessor

Independent assessors must:

- Be experienced within their own organisation on competency based promotion and selection boarding.
- Attend a GSS briefing or training session before being placed on the list. Note that a specific Fast Stream training session is required before an assessor can participate in recruitment Assistant Statisticians.
- Attend a refresher briefing if requested to do so by NSO following significant changes to the recruitment procedures.
- Agree to their names, email addresses and telephone numbers being made available through NSO for recruiting managers to contact.
- Agree that their performance may be evaluated, in order to ensure that standards are being maintained. Note that this is already a feature of fast stream assessment.
- Have a good knowledge of the GSS

Independent assessors should also:

- Ideally be available for at least 5 days of interviewing a year. However a lesser commitment will not disqualify assessors from the list
- Have experience in more than 1 government department, although this is not essential, particularly if they have already acted as an independent GSS assessor.

External assessor guidance for StO and AS recruitment will be available from NSO.

5. Minimum Qualifications

Candidates must **either** hold a first or second class honours degree (2:1 minimum for Fast Stream AS) in a subject containing formal Statistical Training (e.g. Statistics, Mathematics, Economics, Sciences, Business Studies, Psychology, Geography or similar), **or** have at least two years appropriate experience in a relevant statistical field and hold a minimum of the RSS Higher Certificate.

NB: candidates may apply in their final year of study whilst they are still awaiting their degree result; however, formal contracts must only be offered upon confirmation of degree result.

6. Core Non-Statistical Competences

Principle - 'The Civil Service Competence Framework should be used in conjunction with the SCF to ensure that the candidate meets the appropriate core competences for the grade.'

This means that, in developing the wider competences to be included in the person specification for a role, recruiting managers should have regard to the CSCF, and use those competences where possible.

7. Additional Department-specific requirements.

The GSS requires that the standards and processes herein be followed if staff are to be badged as members of the GSG. Some Departments make additional requirements for recruitment to particular grades, for example requiring candidates for Grade 7 posts to attend assessment centres. These are not required by the GSS, but may be required to provide assurance to Departments that non-statistical competences are met. Heads of Profession may wish to negotiate changes to such Departmental requirements where the necessary assurance is provided by standard GSG recruitment processes.

8. Mixed recruitments.

Annexes to this guidance cover:

- Annex A – NSO run external recruitment to the GSG
- Annex B – non-NSO run external recruitment to the GSG
- Annex C – level transfer within the GSG
- Annex D – promotion within the GSG
- Annex E – level transfer into the GSG within Government/GSS
- Annex F – promotion into the GSG within Government/GSS
- Annex G – returning to the GSS
- Annex H – recruitment into the GSG
- Annex I – interview processes

Some recruitment exercises may attract a range of candidates. In such cases Departments will need to run an exercise which is open and fair and which ensures that any successful candidate has been tested in accordance with this guidance and meets the minimum standards herein. Where recruitment has reached the external stage (known as stage 4 of the Civil Service Vacancy Filling Scheme) and applications are received from both existing civil servants and external to the civil service, only those individuals (i.e. non-badged) will be required to sit a written test before interview. This test should not however be more stringent than that sat by any badged internal candidates when they entered the GSG.

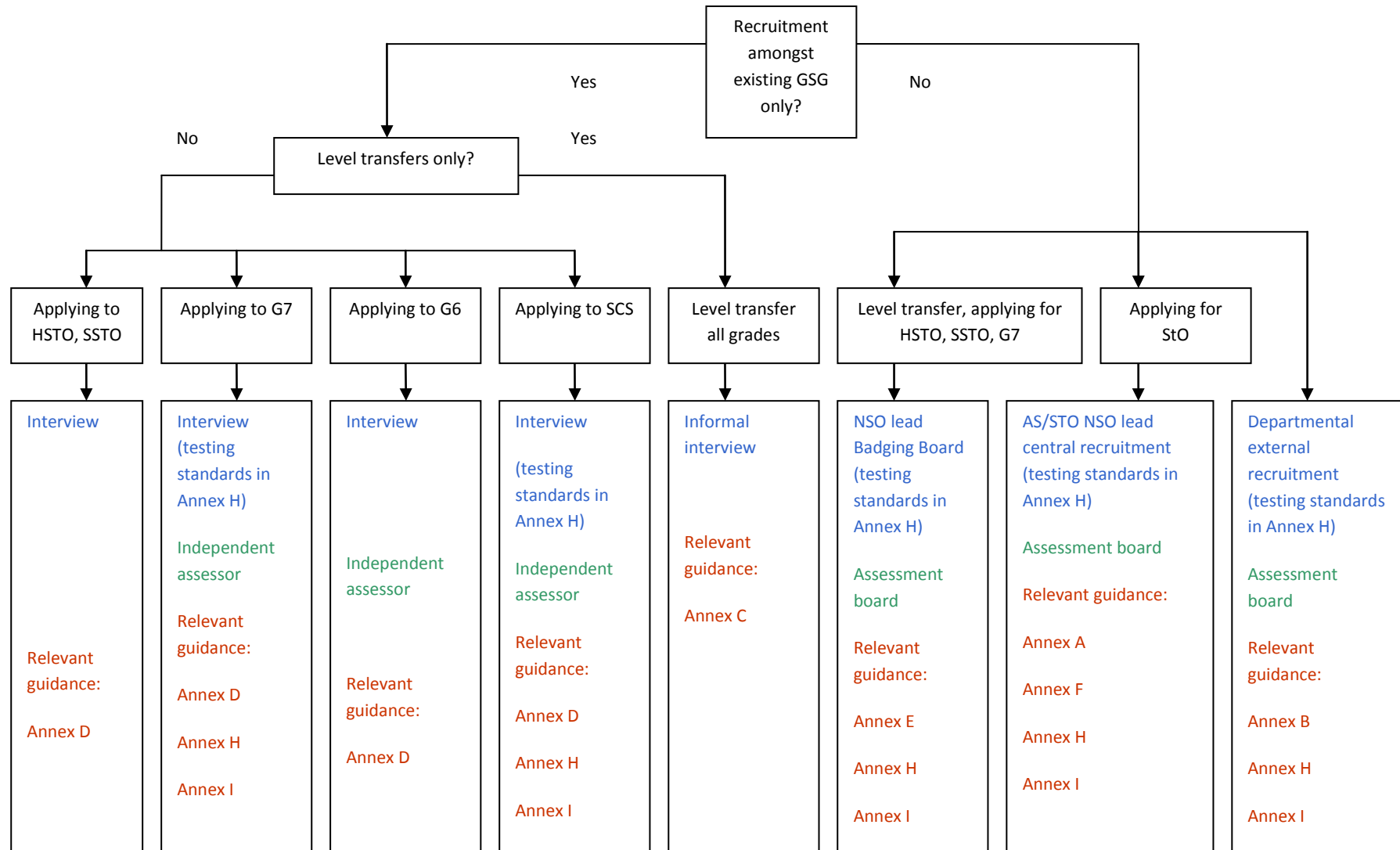
Where a recruitment exercise is for a broad 'analytical' post (which may attract candidates from more than one analytical profession), the assessment panel should include an independent GSS assessor who must be present at least for interviews of those in or intending to join the GSG. Note that the panel may also include assessors from other professions, and fairness may require the GSS assessor also to be present for other interviews.

It would be open to Departments if they wished to apply a higher level of test in e.g. HStO recruitment. If they did this in a recruitment involving GSG and non GSG candidates, they would then need to apply the test to all applicants, not just non-GSG. The mandated element for Departments would therefore be the one level of test for non-GSG (up to SStO) and an interview for all, with the difficulty of the interview reflecting the grade.

Candidates should not in general be able to achieve badging as part of an internal exercise where prior or subsequent attendance at a badging board would be more in keeping with this guidance.

Other information on procedural matters is set out in Annexes A – I.

A flow diagram for the whole process is below:



Annex A

Recruitment at CS Stage 4 (External) – NSO Managed Schemes

Permanent Appointments

For recruitment from outside the existing Civil Service, the GSG operates within the Civil Service Principles of fair and open competition and selection on merit for permanent appointments. The NSO managed schemes are audited by the Civil Service Commissioners on an annual basis.

Assistant Statisticians

Fast Stream Assistant Statisticians are recruited only via the Civil Service Fast Stream. There are two rounds of Fast Stream recruitment each year. NSO are responsible for managing the statistical part of the assessment process. This comprises an interview, a written exercise, a press-style written article and a presentation. The combination of these exercises scrutinises candidates in:

Data Collection – ‘Strengths and Limitations of Data’ and ‘Principles of Sample and Survey Design’.

Data Analysis – ‘Analysis to meet Customer Requirements’, ‘Grasp of a Range of Statistical Techniques’, ‘Understanding the Application of Techniques’ and ‘Numeracy’.

Dissemination – ‘Structure, Clarity and Awareness of Needs of Audience’, ‘Use of Charts Graphs and Tables’ and ‘Explanation of Statistical Concepts’.

All core non-statistical skills are assessed via the Civil Service Fast Stream process run by the Civil Service Resourcing team (now based within HMRC).

Assistant Statisticians are assessed as having the potential for early promotion to G7. Under current FS arrangements it is expected that they will remain in their initial department for two years, although they should be offered at least two postings in that time.

Statistical Officers

Statistical Officers are mainly recruited centrally via NSO, on an approximately quarterly basis. NSO is responsible for running the schemes which test candidates’ statistical skills and knowledge and also core non-statistical capability at Executive Officer level. The assessment consists of an interview and a written exercise which scrutinises candidates in:

Teamwork – ‘Teamwork Principles’ and ‘Working with Others’.

Delivering Results – ‘Delivering Results’ and ‘Customer Service’

Personal Effectiveness – ‘Decision Making’, ‘Responsibility and Pro-activity’ and ‘Self Improving’

Data Collection – ‘Understanding of Principles of Sample and Survey Design’

Data Analysis – ‘Approach to Analysis’ and ‘Grasp of a Range of Statistical Techniques’

Dissemination – ‘Tailoring to an Audience’, ‘Explanation of Statistical Concepts’, ‘Appropriate use of Charts Graphs and Tables’ and ‘General Communication Skills’.

Statistical Officer posts may also be offered to 'near miss' Fast Stream candidates. Such candidates must have passed the Statistical Officer Assessment Centre but narrowly failed the Fast Stream Assessment Centre.

Statistical Skills Tested on StO Applications

(Candidates are required to self-assess against each of the statistical techniques below and score themselves between 0 (no knowledge) and 3 (extensive knowledge and practice) along with supporting words up to 800 characters for each technique)

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Linear / Multiple Regression

Multivariate Techniques

Time Series Analysis

Generalised Linear Model

Hypothesis Testing

Index Numbers

Data Collection

Sampling

(Stochastic Processes will be included at a later date when assessors are fully prepared.)

Fixed -Term Appointments

Temporary Statistical Officers (TSOs)

TSOs are employed on a fixed-term basis. Recruitment methods may vary and are not controlled by the NSO Recruitment Team. If TSOs wish to become permanent members of the Civil Service then they must apply through one of the main channels. NSO will retain CVs and cover letters for candidates interested in temporary vacancies. If a department wishes to take on a TSO, NSO will forward any CVs and letters to departments. It is wholly the decision of the department who they decide to employ using civil service commissioner principles. NSO strongly recommends that departments interview candidates before offering these types of contract. Minimum qualification requirements for TSOs are the same as that for StOs.

Higher Statistical Officer, Senior Statistical Officer

NSO does not presently offer any external recruitment service for these grades. Anyone recruited in this manner should be treated fairly with someone seeking promotion to these grades. In particular, the general (non-statistical) competencies for the higher level will need to be tested. However, there will also need to be a GSS test to assess their suitability for membership of the GSG. Just as for promotion procedures, the interview will assess their higher-level competences.

Grade 7 and above

NSO does not presently offer any external recruitment service for these grades. Such a requirement is likely to be a rare one-off event which will require bespoke treatment.

Annex B

Recruitment at CS Stage 4 (External)– Non NSO-Managed Recruitment

Statistical Officers As a first resort, departments should use the central Statistical Officer schemes to recruit entrants. If a single department has a large number of vacancies, NSO can help run bespoke schemes for individual departments in addition to the main rounds (resource permitting).

Occasionally departments may need to run their own intake. If this happens, departments must ensure that they follow the guidance, structure and requirements for Statistical Officer recruitment (as outlined in Annex A), including an approved written test and an independent assessor. If departments wish to use their own tests or to otherwise vary the standard process, this must be agreed by NSO beforehand to confirm that they are in line with other entry tests and processes. In any event, departments must seek sign-off of their bespoke recruitment process with NSO before they commence.

Higher Statistical Officer, Senior Statistical Officer

Departments should follow the guidance laid out for recruiting Statistical Officers, but adjust their interviews in line with the expectations of the grade as outlined in the SCF.

Unauthorised Schemes

If departments recruit staff to statistical posts who have been recruited outside of the standards described in this document, they will be required to sit a “badging board” to gain recognised membership to the GSG.

Use of Job Titles

Assistant Statistician - Departments should ensure that the title of Assistant Statistician is reserved for GSG members below grade 7 who have successfully passed the Statistician competition of the Civil Service Fast Stream [note that this does not apply to Scottish Government posts].

Statistical Officer – Departments should ensure that the title of Statistical Officer (including Higher and Senior) is reserved for GSG members below grade 7 who have successfully passed a recognised Statistical Officer recruitment process, or who were accepted by the NSO as being a member of the GSG prior to the introduction of this guidance.

Transfer from other organisations

Staff from a number of agencies, including the Health and Social Care Information Centre, have agreed with the Civil Service Commissioners that their staff can apply for posts advertised in Civil Service trawls. These staff should consequently be treated in the same way as staff from other government departments.

Arms Length Bodies

For information regarding arms length bodies, please refer to “HR Consequences of Arms Length Bodies Coming under the Code of Practice”.

Annex C

Level Transfer within the GSG

StO through to G6

StO/AS to G6 - Informal interview to ensure candidate has the skills and competences for the post (departments are also asked to consider development opportunities in addition to post requirements).

Please note that ASs cannot transfer to other Fast Stream schemes.

Responsibility for compliance with employment law and wider government recruitment guidance rests with the employing (receiving) Department.

In principle, once a candidate has passed an approved GSG recruitment exercise at a particular grade they should be accepted throughout the GSG at that grade.

However posts vary greatly and advertising line managers will be seeking candidates whose skills match those for a particular post or more general grade requirements.

NSO recommends that departments recruiting staff on level transfer from other government departments should produce a person profile as well as a job description for the post. The advertising line manager should hold informal interviews with applicants to test whether they have the skills set required for the post or the demonstrated ability to develop them quickly. If necessary the advertising line manager may wish to involve a second manager better able to test some of the required skills (e.g. the advertising line manager is not a statistician but requires a statistical grade member of staff). Some GSS organisations may require additional selection methods for level transfer, including a full assessment centre.

For further information please see “GSS Policy on Moves, Loans and Secondments”.

Annex D

Promotion amongst existing GSG members (this overrides the details in Annex H for HStO, SStO and G6 exercises involving only GSG members)

Minimum Requirements

To HStO - Interview only – No requirement for independent assessor or test. Candidates must be scrutinised against the appropriate SCF and Civil Service core competences. CPD logs should be scrutinised.

To SStO – Interview only – No requirement for independent assessor or test. Candidates must be scrutinised against the appropriate SCF and Civil Service core competences. CPD logs should be scrutinised.

To G7 – Interview including independent assessor at G6 or above, and meeting the standards set out in Annex H below. No test required; a longer, more detailed statistical interview may be used as an alternative. Assistant Statisticians are promoted directly to *Grade 7* Statistician and must demonstrate the skills, competences and behaviours necessary to succeed at that higher level. As for all other candidates, for promotion to *Grade 7* Statistician, ASs should be able to consistently demonstrate performance at Level 3 of the SCF. CPD logs should be scrutinised.

To G6 – Interview including independent assessor at SCS1 or above. No test required. CPD logs should be scrutinised.

To SCS – Interview including independent assessor at SCS2 or above, and meeting the standards set out in Annex H below. No test required. Consistent demonstration of performance at level 4 across all areas of the SCF, including the ability to make critical judgement of others' abilities.

The promotion process must ensure that successful applicants possess the skills necessary to fill a wide range of GSG posts, not just the particular one advertised. The The Civil Service Competency Framework sets out the general core skills required at each civil service grade.

The Statistician Group Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy sets out a learning and development framework for members of the GSG. Compliance with CPD requirements should also be assessed at all promotion boards.

Note: although independent assessors are not required for some grades, their use is encouraged as good practice.

Annex E

Lateral Transfer into the GSG within Government/GSS

Membership of the Statistician Group for existing civil servants is encouraged for those qualified. Entry for EO level staff is possible via the Statistical Fast Stream Assistant Statistician or Statistical Officer route as described above where assessment against the SCF can be made. Applicants cannot be appointed to the GSG on the basis of other criteria, for example by virtue of having worked in a statistical area.

GSS organisations wishing to transfer staff who are above entry level (EO) into the GSG, for example from HEO to HStO, should apply to NSO for a badging board process. NSO will run badging boards on an ad-hoc basis (resource permitting). Lateral entry into the GSG for internal staff has the same criteria and selection methods as for External Recruitment, but does not assess Civil Service core skills as candidates should have already met these.

Badging Boards

Staff in some GSS organisations may be carrying out an analytical job (or may be members of another analytical profession) whilst not necessarily having substantive knowledge of statistics. These staff should accept the principle of carrying out CPD and acquire the RSS Higher Certificate or above if they wish to apply to become part of the GSG. Alternatively, they may possess the appropriate university qualification. On acquisition of the appropriate qualifications these staff may then apply for membership of the GSG through the external process or via a badging process which is run by NSO. Boards are offered periodically to HEO, SEO and Grade 7 staff. EO staff who wish to be badged should apply via the external Statistical Officer intakes.

Badging Boards follow a similar approach to full external recruitment but without the scrutiny of Civil Service core skills. A statistical test is taken and the interview panel assesses the individual against the appropriate level of the SCF. The assessment panel must consist of at least two statisticians, one of which should be external to the department and one grade higher than the grade being assessed. The other may be at the same grade if finding suitable assessors is problematic (in practice this rarely arises).

In order to apply for a badging board, a candidate must first discuss their position with the Statistical Head of Profession. The candidate can then submit an application form to NSO and must list the HoP as a referee. Applicants will then be sifted and invited to interview when a badging board is being run.

Annex F

Promotion into the GSG for non GSG members within Government/GSS

Recruitment into, and promotion within, the GSG are intended to be separate exercises. If departments intend running local campaigns then there should be sufficient safeguards to maintain standards. In general, non GSG staff who are interested in pursuing GSG vacancies must first acquire GSG status at their substantive grade. This applies to all grades. EO-level staff can only enter via the External Scheme, other grades via Badging (as in Annex E above). Thereafter, they are free to apply for GSG posts on promotion as per Annex D above.

Annex G

Returning to the GSS

Staff wishing to return to a GSG post that, having previously been badged, have been working outside the GSS for a significant length of time (five years or more), are required to be 're-badged' before re-entry. This is to ensure that standards are maintained and to encourage the continuance of CPD for those working away from the GSS.

Annex H

Recruitment into the GSG and promotion to G7 or SCS (for promotion to HStO, SStO and G6 amongst GSG members only, see Annex D)

The standard for recruitment into the GSG at each grade against the SCF is as follows:

StO – Potential to reach most of the Level 1 competences in the SCF within about a year. Must demonstrate at least **four** Statistical Techniques at application stage (see Annex A) and be able to discuss **two** in greater detail at interview. Any StO exercise must comply with this approach/guidance.

AS – ASs should progress through the framework, from having the potential to reach most of Level 1 competences in the SCF within a year of recruitment to consistently demonstrating performance at Level 3 as they approach promotion to Grade 7. Must demonstrate at least **four** Statistical Techniques at application stage (see Annex A) and be able to discuss **two** in greater detail at interview.

HStO – Consistent demonstration of performance at Level 2 across all areas of the SCF, including being able to discuss **two** statistical techniques in detail at interview.

SStO – Consistent demonstration of performance at Level 2 across all areas of the SCF, including working towards performance at Level 3 in some areas, and being able to discuss **two** statistical techniques in detail at interview.

Statistician (Grade 7 or equivalent) - Consistent demonstration of performance at Level 3 across all areas of the SCF, including being able to discuss **three** statistical techniques in detail at interview.

Grade 6 Statistician – Consistent demonstration of performance at level 3 across all areas of the SCF, including working towards performance at Level 4 (SCS1) in some areas and being able to discuss **three** statistical techniques in detail at interview.

SCS Statistician – Consistent demonstration of performance at level 4 across all areas of the SCF, including the ability to make critical judgement of others' abilities.

These are minimum standards for statistical competence for recruitment to the GSG. Departments are free to set higher standards for particular jobs, but are then responsible for justifying them if challenged.

In addition, the general core skills of the Civil Service Competency Framework will need to be tested for each candidate.

Please note: the grades used above are those use by the majority of organisations within the GSS but some constituent organisations will use different, but equivalent, terms. Equivalence is judged by the relevant HoP with input from the NSO.

Annex I

Interviews for entry to the GSG, promotion to G7 and SCS.

As noted elsewhere in this guidance (section 4) interview panels for entry to the GSG and for promotion to G7 or SCS must include an independent GSS assessor. The recruitment process must provide reasonable assurance to the panel, and in particular to the independent GSS assessor, that any successful candidates meet the requirements of the relevant level of the SCF, as set out in Annex H above, covering each of the four main areas of the SCF – collection, analysis, dissemination and professional issues, and including understanding how to apply statistical techniques. Examples of questions will be developed by NSO. In testing statistical techniques, panels should invite the candidates to nominate, according to the level of the post, two/three techniques from List A of the SCF on which they would be prepared to be questioned, and panels should then question on one or more of those offered, chosen without reference to the candidate. Note that whilst experience of techniques will be helpful, it is not essential to meet the requirements – what is required is an understanding of how to apply them and their assumptions and limitations.

The independent GSS assessor must be satisfied that the questioning covers the ground required to provide reasonable assurance against the standards of the SCF, and so that a successful candidate would be deployable in a range of GSG jobs at that level, but beyond that questioning may be tailored to reflect the particular requirements of the post being recruited to.