

Minutes of the SOC Revision Steering Group (SRSG) Meeting

8 February 2018

11.00 – 12.30

ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ

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| **Attendees:** |  |
| **Members** |  |
| Tomas Sanchez (TS) Chair | ONS (Data Architecture) |
| Bryan Halka (BH) | Dept for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) |
| Charlie Ball (CB)  audio | Higher Education Careers Service Unit (HECSU) |
| Daniel Sandford-Smith (DSS) | Gatsby Foundation |
| Doug Rendle (DR) | HM Treasury (HMT) |
| Frank Bowley (FB) | Dept for Education (DfE) |
| Lilly Herridge (LH) | National Records of Scotland (NRS) |
| Luke Main (LM) | National Records of Scotland (NRS) |
| Penny Allen (PA)  audio | Dept for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS) |
| Pete Brodie (PB)  audio | ONS (Survey Methodology) |
| Rachel Hewitt (RH) | Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) |
| Rose Elliott (RE)  audio | ONS (Census) |
| Stephanie Freeth (SF) | Dept for Communities & Local Government (DCLG) |
| Venetia Haynes (VH)  audio | National Records of Scotland (NRS) |
| **Classification Representatives (CU)** |  |
| Ruth James (RJ) | ONS |
| Michaela Morris (MM) | ONS |
| Oli Webb (OW) | ONS |
| Kerry Dagens (KD) Secretariat | ONS |
| **Apologies:** |  |
| Andy Darnton (AD) | Health & Safety Executive (HSE) |
| Cal Ghee (CG) | ONS (Census) |
| Chris White (CW) | ONS (Life Events and Population Sources) |
| Helena Rosieka (HR) | ONS (Census) |
| James Evans (JE) | ONS (Data Architecture) |
| Peter Hounsome (PH) | The Tech Partnership |

1. **Welcome and Introduction – Tomas Sanchez**

TS welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the meeting of the Standard Occupational Classification Revision Steering Group (SRSG). Members in the room and those attending via audio introduced themselves.

TS explained the change in chair was due to the Classifications Unit (CU) moving from the Methodology Division, of which Pete Brodie was the head, to the new Data Architecture Division of which Tomas is now the head.

1. **Minutes of last meeting, actions and updated Terms of Reference – Tomas Sanchez**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

Outstanding actions:

Action number 1 is now closed, NESTA will not be joining the steering group as ONS have attended a workshop with them as they have an interest in skills and apprenticeships. MM has put them in contact with Gatsby Foundation and it is hoped they will form part of the steering group for the 5 digit SOC work.

Action number 3 is on-going, DSS has put MM in touch with a colleague and it will now be taken forward.

Terms of Reference:

The updated Terms of Reference have been circulated and were agreed.

1. **Progress and achievements of the revision – Michaela Morris**

MM gave a presentation on the progress and achievements so far. (See Annex B for full details).

Questions and Comments:

* CB: What qualifies as an issue?

This is any change requested or area within SOC that a stakeholder or the CU has raised to be researched.

* DSS: Can an example be given of what an ‘Education manager’ is?

This would be a manager, most likely working in a college or university who are managing rather than teaching. Examples of job titles that would fall into this unit group are, ‘Academic Manager’, ‘Administrative Manager’ and ‘Business School Manager’.

* CB: Do you anticipate that changes will mean that fewer people will fall into the ‘not elsewhere classified’ (n.e.c) groups?

Yes, we have looked at all the n.e.c groups and where possible disaggregated them and created new unit groups.

* DSS: What about groups that will decline in future such as ‘Bricklayers’?

We have made the decision to keep some groups that are declining to meet the reporting needs of the Health & Safety Executive (HSE). CB added that they are also useful in terms of local and regional labour market and workforce planning.

* CB: Pleased that SOC2010 unit group 3543 ‘Marketing associate professionals’ is moving to MG2 as this is the 4th largest destination for graduates. The more disaggregation on these professions the more we can understand what is going on, especially with the increase in online businesses.

1. **New graduate groups – Oli Webb**

OW gave a presentation on the research completed to define the graduate unit groups (See Annex B for full details).

Questions and Comments:

* CB: The Elias and Purcell research was funded by HECSU, a further strength was that when the research was published based on SOC2000, it was widely accepted by the Higher Education sector. However, it did not transfer particularly well to SOC2010, probably due to occupation drift and changes in occupational characteristics. Another weakness, which is also shared by the Green and Henske research is that it is entirely supply side, it represents no employee demand side. Neither piece of work takes in to account any aspects other than those perceived by graduates themselves.
* SF: What dependent variable was being modelled?

The level of skill required for an individual unit group based on the Skills and Employment survey.

* CB: A weakness of using the Skills and Employment survey is that is based on what the employees themselves think their skills are.
* FB: Why are you defining graduates?

A lot of feedback was received through the consultation and from stakeholders, asking ONS to re-examine SOC2010 as there are a lot of occupational areas that now require a degree that should be moved into Major Group 2 (MG2).

CB added that one of the crucial metrics used by Universities to measure success is based on SOC and they do not feel that the current SOC is suitable.

* DSS: How are you defining graduates?

This generated a lot of discussion, some of the key points raised by SRSG members were:

There was confusion surrounding the ‘skill levels’ used to determine which groups were considered as ‘graduate roles’. SOC2010 does not use the NQF skill levels so there is a concern that roles requiring NQF level 6 (equivalent to a degree) along with NQF levels 4 and 5 (equivalent to higher education) could all be classed as ‘graduates’ and therefore suitable for MG2.

‘Veterinary nurses’, many colleges are teaching to National Qualification Framework (NQF) levels 3,4 and 5 with a view to becoming a Veterinary nurse. Contrary to this, evidence from the Royal College of Veterinary Nurses supported moving this unit group into MG2.

The difference between NQF levels 4 and 6 is important, as there is a shortfall in the ‘middle skills’ which are not considered as graduate roles.

ONS are not just looking at whether roles require a degree to be considered as suitable for MG2, the skills required to be competent in a role have also been considered.

Financial Accounting Technicians need the Association of Accounting Technicians (AAT) qualification which is currently NQF level 4 and therefore not a ‘graduate’ level job. The research for SOC2010 unit group 3537 ‘Financial and accounting technicians’ would be re-examined and the outcomes on the placing of the group would be fed back to the working group for a final decision.

SOC was not designed as a tool to determine whether a job should be carried out by a graduate and in an ideal world would not be used for this purpose by the higher education sector.

Using the term ‘graduate’ in MG2 should be reconsidered if it is no longer necessary to have a degree for roles within this group.

Whether the word ‘graduate’ is used or not, roles within MG2 are seen as ‘graduate level jobs’. It is unlikely this will change regardless of the changes being made to the group in the future.

It is important what goes into MG2 as this information feeds into careers websites.

It was clarified that the ONS research to determine whether a degree was required for a role or not was purely to validate the findings of the Elias & Purcell and Green & Henske paper.

**Action point 1 – ONS to circulate the consultation paper covering the areas discussed in relation to graduates and professionals to steering group members for comment.**

1. **Review of changes to the MG1 structure – Michaela Morris**

MM went through the revised structure for MG1 which had been circulated (See Annex B for full details)

Questions and Comments:

* CB: Is identifying ‘Charity manager’ more of a SIC (Standard Industrial Classification) issue rather than SOC?

This group was identifiable through job titles.

* CB: Feel this is a good set of changes to MG1.

1. **Forward look at next steps – Ruth James**

RJ gave an overview of the plans and the key milestones for 2018. Some of the dates may changes depending on the outcome of our ongoing consultation activity. (See Annex B for full details).

There were no questions or comments.

1. **A fifth digit for SOC – Daniel Sandford-Smith**

DSS explained the purpose behind the paper ‘A fifth digit for SOC’, which was circulated prior to the meeting. Many organisations are interested in greater granularity for SOC and believe there is value in having a more detailed classification which is more consistent for users. Gatsby asked Peter Elias to look at 5 digit SOC, following some occupational maps they produced for Dept for Education (DfE), in doing this he came across other organisations who were interested in this work and thought it would be useful to get everyone together to develop a consistent classification that would be helpful in understanding what the labour market looks like below the 4 digit unit group level. A meeting is being planned for the end of the February to set up a steering group from which Peter Elias will take the work forward. It is hoped to engage with organisations who have a commercial interest.

Questions and Comments:

CB: Was involved in the development of a 5th digit SOC for DLHE based on SOC2010, it is valuable for small but significant groups. This work was only based on large SOC unit groups in MG1, 2 and 3 and is therefore confined to some professions. It is good to see this work being taken forward, it will make the data more granular for guidance purposes.

RH: Echoed the comments made by CB.

VH: Raised concern that some 4 digit unit groups are already small so not published, it is therefore unlikely that NRS would publish at the 5 digit level. The implications for Census would be costly and need to be carefully considered. MM clarified that the 5 digit SOC would not be used for the purposes of statistical outputs and that this piece of work was an independent piece of work, outside the remit of the SOC revision.

1. **Any other business**

DSS: The changes being made to SOC2010 are very different to reports and peoples’ perception on how the labour market is changing with jobs disappearing and people being replaced by robots. Need to give some thought on how this will be communicated and perhaps some work should be done on how little has changed in 10 years.

**Action point 2 – CU to speak to ONS labour market colleagues about communication of the new SOC framework, in relation to labour market statistics.**

CB: The workforce has not changed as much as people think it has, and would be happy to assist on this, having a lot of material already available on this topic.

RJ: Need to consider this issue as part of publication side of the release and the messages we want to communicate.

DSS: Suggested having a discussion around the graduates/MG3 issue with those members who have an interest in this area.

**Action point 3 – CU to arrange a meeting before the next SRSG meeting in November 2018 to discuss graduates.**

1. **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held on 15 November 2018 at ONS, 1 Drummond Gate, London, SW1V 2QQ, 10.30 – 12.30pm. Audio conference facilities will be available and details will be sent nearer the time.

**Annexes:**

1. List of Actions
2. Presentations

**Annex A**

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| **ACTIONS FROM THE SRSG MEETING – 8 February 2018** | | | | |
| **Action No** | **Agenda Item No** | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Status** |
| 1 | 4 | ONS to circulate the consultation paper covering the areas discussed in relation to graduates and professionals to steering group members for comment. | MM | Delayed – this in due to further research being conducted on:  which groups should move to major group 2; and re the comment ‘using the term ‘graduate’ in MG2 should be reconsidered if it is no longer necessary to have a degree for roles within this group’. |
| 2 | 8 | CU to speak to ONS labour market colleagues about communication of the new SOC framework, in relation to labour market statistics. | Ruth James |  |
| 3 | 8 | Arrange a meeting to discuss graduates prior to the next steering group meeting. | CU |  |

**Annex B**

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| Slide 1 |  |  |
| Slide 2 |  |  |
| Slide 3 |  |  |
| Slide 4 |  |  |
| Slide 5 |  | Since March last year the Classifications Unit has researched over 300 individual issues across the ***whole*** of the classification. These issues have been provided as either:  part of the SOC consultation that we held in January 2016  through issues that have been identified within the Classifications Unit  or through stakeholder consultation that began in April last year  More to do once we receive feedback on the proposed changes to MG’s 3 to 9, and new graduate groups |
| Slide 6 |  | It’s definitely been challenging conducting so much research in such a short period of time within a small team, and some of the analysis has been quite complex, especially around the IT occupations  We’ve tried to meet stakeholders requirements as much as possible within the constraints of what can be identified within the survey data and whether any new groups would be statistically viable within the agreed threshold of 10K for populating a group.  There have been some exceptions to the 10K rule, where we’ve tried to future proof the classification. For example the new group for ‘Cyber security professionals’ did not quite meet the criteria, but research shows that this is an increasing occupational area |
| Slide 7 |  | Feedback stakeholders was that they wanted more granularity within the classification and we’ve tried to achieve this where possible.  Currently SOC2020 9 major group (no change) has 26 sub-major groups (increase of 1), 100 minor groups (increase of 10) and 421 unit groups (increase of 52) |
|  |  |  |
| Slide 9 |  | We’ve also revisited some groups that were combined in previous revisions and where possible have separated them. One example is the group for ‘Bricklayers and masons’ |
| Slide 10 |  | Have been engaging with our stakeholders throughout the whole process and where possible we’ve identified new stakeholders and sought feedback from them on the changes.  One change we were proposing was the merging of ‘Marketing and sales directors’ and ‘Advertising and public relations directors’ . We were going to merge the groups as roles within these occupations are becoming more difficult to distinguish from each other. For example, when we examined the survey data we found that people called themselves ‘Advertising and sales directors’ or ‘Advertising and marketing directors’. As you can see these occupations span across the 2 existing SOC2010 groups.   * So we contacted the organisations on the slide and received negative feedback on this change, so we re-examined the group. * In SOC2010 ‘Communications directors’ currently code to both ‘Marketing and sales directors’ and ‘Advertising and PR directors’ * We found that if ‘Public relations directors were combined with and *all* the communications directors’ regardless of industry they would create a viable unit group, which left the ‘Marketing, sales and advertising directors’ in the 2nd group. * We fed this back to the stakeholder who was happy with this outcome |
| Slide 11 |  |  |
| Slide 12 |  |  |
| Slide 13 |  | -One of the main issues in defining a graduate unit group is that, a person obtaining a degree through study at a higher educational institution is provided with knowledge and skills to perform a graduate role competently and in some cases extensive experience and on-the-job training may be a substitute for this formal education.    -Just simply having a degree or having graduate level skills, does not mean that you are required to use the skills that you have learnt. In defining whether a unit group is a graduate group, an attempt to look at the skills required to perform the job competently should be the main driver in this process.    -In undertaking a revision of SOC2010, it must be considered that jobs previously classified within Major Group 3 or other Major Groups, have become increasingly complex and demanding in terms of the skills required. |
| Slide 14 |  | **Elias and Purcell**   -Elias and Purcell’s research into graduate occupations, began with them looking at the descriptions of occupations listed in Volume 1 of SOC2010, this contains the structure and descriptions of each unit group.    -They considered each occupation at the four-digit level (unit groups), in terms of the educational and vocational requirements, they then compared this with the data from their 2002 study.    -In 2002, they interviewed 220 UK graduates who had obtained a first degree in 1995. In the interviews, they identified the knowledge and skills required to carry out their jobs effectively.    -They identified three ‘clusters of competence’ these being expertise deriving from higher education knowledge, the orchestration of knowledge and the communication of knowledge.    -They then assessed the extent to which each graduate was required to use these competencies, and scored each unit group on a scale of 1-9 on each of these three dimensions using a qualitative assessment.    -They established a minimum score of 6 to decide whether a unit group was a graduate or non-graduate group, if a score of 6 or more was given for one of the three competences, then the unit group would be defined as a graduate group. |
| Slide 15 |  | **Elias and Purcell SOC\_HE Strengths**  -Gives more information about the skills required for a unit group than just whether it is a graduate job.  -Uses ONS surveys (UK *Labour Force Survey* 2011-2012 and *Futuretrack* Wave 4 (a study of applicants to HE in 2006)), to validate the classification.  -Uses a fixed threshold of 6 to define whether the skills required in the unit group warrant it being a ‘graduate’ occupation. Which makes it easy to define whether a job is a ‘graduate’ occupation or not.  **Elias and Purcell SOC\_HE Weaknesses**  -Interviews were conducted in 2002, due to the ever changing job market, there is a chance that the ‘clusters of competence’ identified may no longer be applicable to ‘graduate’ jobs.  -The subjective approach to defining a graduate job might also be considered a weakness, due to the broad range of job titles in unit groups, whether a unit group is graduate or non-graduate may not be an accurate.  -Potential for bias as only using graduates to define the ‘clusters of competence’, graduates may over emphasis the skills required for their job, due to the level of effort put into getting a degree.  -The scores that are attributed to the unit group have not been defined. We know that 1 is weak and 9 is strong, however the difference between a 5 and a 6 is not clear, and this is the difference between a unit group being defined as a ‘graduate’ or a not a ‘graduate’ job. |
| Slide 16 |  | **Green and Henseke Research**   -Green and Henseke used the Skills and Employment Survey which aims to capture information about the skills and knowledge of those employed in Britain. They used this information to identify key graduate skills and identified four areas:    -Knowledge requirements (This being what qualification would be required for their current job).    -High level generic skills (these being, literacy skills, professional communication skills, supervisor reasonability, self-planning skills, specialist knowledge and the need to learn new things).    -Computer use (computerisation is often seen as the main driver in the increasing demand for graduates in the labour market. Green and Henseke looked at the level at which they are used, defining graduate skills as someone who uses a computer at an advanced level).    -Training (A broad indicator of graduate skill levels is whether the job requires job-holders to have had a long-lasting formal training of over 2 years of training).    -They used these areas to assign each unit group a score, this score was created using binary values. |
| Slide 17 |  | **Classification method**   -In step one, they ran a linear probability model on the likelihood that degree level skills are required to do a job based on the generic skills, computer skills, required training and the degree requirements in similar jobs.    -Next, they averaged the skill requirement scores across unit groups. To try and avoid the effects of outliers, unit groups with less than five observations used the average values from the minor group level (3-digit level)    -In the third step, the goal was to derive two distinct non-overlapping groups of occupations, namely graduate and non-graduate jobs, to achieve this they used k-median clustering.    -*K*-medians clustering is a type of unsupervised learning, which is used when you have unlabelled data. Data points are clustered based on features of similarity.    -The algorithm uses the median instead of the mean and is therefore better in dealing with outliers in the data. The threshold for the high skills requirements score is 0.274, anything higher is considered a graduate job and anything below this is considered a non-graduate job.    Notes   -DNi is the average extent of degree requirements in similar jobs  -GSi denotes the generic skills intensity for the job of the worker  -CSi denotes the use of high level computer skills  -LTi denotes that a training period of over 2 years was required |
| Slide 18 |  | **Green and Henseke SOC\_HE Strengths**  -Technique uses the skills and employment survey, the aim of which is to assess the degree to which employees had skills proportional with the requirements of their jobs.    -The skills and employment survey asks, ‘If they were applying today, what qualifications, if any, would someone need to get the type of job you have now?’, this focuses on what level of skill is required for the job rather than what level of education the employee has.    -Uses a fixed threshold of 0.274 to define whether the skills required in the unit group warrant it being a ‘graduate’ occupation. Which makes it easy to define whether a job is a ‘graduate’ occupation or not.    **Green and Henseke Weaknesses**  -The methodology does not fully explain some specific elements that are crucial to calculating the high skills requirements score. For example, when a unit group has low numbers it may use the neighborhood of jobs or the degree requirements of similar jobs, to calculate the score. What the neighborhood of a job is and how similar jobs are selected, are not defined in the paper.    -Uses the skills and employment survey, this is however not released at regular time intervals, with different time periods between each survey. This lack of consistency may make it difficult to accurately track the required skill changes to the UK job market and therefore what defines a ‘graduate’ unit group.    -The paper uses data from The Skills and employment survey 1997, 2001 and 2006, these may not accurately depict the skills required by graduates in the current labour market. |
| Slide 19 |  | **ONS Research**  - The two research papers had different methodologies, which yielded some differences in the classification of graduate and non-graduate unit groups    -Because there were differences in the classification of graduate and non-graduate unit groups between the two papers, ONS conducted their own research to reconcile the differences.    -The ONS research consisted of looking at live job vacancies from the internet, from this the length of previous experience required to be employed in a role and the level of qualification to be employed in the role, were considered and from here it was decided whether that job was a graduate or non-graduate role. Several job vacancies were researched (typically at least 10 for each unit group), and then the cumulative result was observed to decide whether a unit group should be a graduate or non-graduate group.    -This was supported up by looking at the DLHE data, which is a survey completed by HESA, the survey asks a question about whether their qualification was required for the graduate to get a job. The answers to this question is the degree was a requirement, the degree was an advantage to getting the role, the degree was not required, other answers include that they don’t know or this was unknown. The research looked at data from 2011 to 2015 and consists of over 900,000 records. A unit group was looked at in its entirety and the answer most people gave was used to decide whether a unit group was a graduate or non-graduate.    -The live vacancy data and the DLHE data were used together to classify a unit group as either graduate or non-graduate. |
| Slide 20 |  | **ONS Strengths**  -The DLHE data has a very large sample (over 900,00) and therefore can be seen to be representative of the UK graduate labour market    -The research used live vacancy data and therefore can be seen to accurately show what qualifications and experience an employer is looking for.    -The DLHE survey is completed on a yearly basis and therefore is an accurate view of the current requirements of UK graduates to gain employment.    **ONS Weaknesses**  -This research does not account for the skills required for a graduate role, simply whether a person has a degree or not, this is different from the aims to classify graduate unit groups based on the skill level    -The research only accounts for live vacancy data on the day is was researched, this could in theory be a one off and not truly representative of the requirements for a job role.    -The DLHE data focuses only on graduates and does not account for people who have learnt skills required to do a graduate job by other means (experience, in house training) and therefore does not fully cover the UK labour market. |
| Slide 21 |  | **Reconciliation Paper**  -As a result of the differences between the two research papers, Elias, Heseke and Purcell, worked together to reclassify the non-agreed unit groups, this was supported by the research conducted by ONS.    -Initially, 46-unit groups were classified differently by Green and Henseke compared with Elias and Purcell. Green and Henseke reviewed these 46-unit groups, taking account of the possible reasons for differences.    -Following this review, 19-unit groups were reclassified by Green and Henseke in line with Elias and Purcell and 11-unit groups were reclassified by Elias and Purcell in line with Green and Henseke.    -16-unit groups remained differently classified after the review of the non-agreed unit groups.    -The remaining 16 groups unit groups were then classified as graduate or non-graduate, this was done in a working group meeting. Evidence from the two research papers and the ONS research was used to decide upon a final classification of the 16 non-agreed unit groups. |
| Slide 22 |  | **New groups**   -Laboratory professionals is a new unit group that has been created. This is from unit group 3111 (Laboratory technicians), we conducted research and have looked to disaggregate the group, this was because some of the occupations in this group were considered graduate roles and others were not. 3111 will remain for Laboratory technicians, which is a non-graduate group.    -The Draughtspersons unit group is being renamed CAD and drawing technicians, despite draughtspersons still being used, the CAD and drawing technicians is more in line with modern job titles.    -A new unit group called Interior designers is being created, this is from disaggregating unit group 3422 (Product, Clothing and Related Designers) |
| Slide 23 |  | **New Groups 2**  -It wasn’t just major group 3-unit groups that was researched, some unit groups in major group 4 and major group 6 were raised as issues by stakeholders or internally, this research identified that veterinary nurses, should be reclassified as a graduate unit group. |
| Slide 24 |  | **Teaching Assistants**  -‘Higher level teaching assistants’ and ‘Early years education practitioners’  are moving out of MG6 because stakeholder feedback and further research conducted by the classifications unit indicated that they needed additional qualifications and responsibilities and were therefore suitable to be moved to MG3. |
| Slide 25 |  |  |
| Slide 26 |  | ‘Financial *institution* managers and directors’ will be merged with the 1131 ‘Financial managers and directors’ This was another occupational area where it was becoming difficult to distinguish between the groups  Then there are the 2 new groups for Marketing, sales, advertising and PR and comms  new group for ‘Charitable organisation managers and directors’ |
| Slide 27 |  | SOC2010 minor group for ‘Managers and Directors in Transport and Logistics’. Originally there were 2 unit groups within the minor group 1161 & 1162. Split the directors from the managers and created 4 new groups out of the original 2.  This was because research found that the directors have similar roles and responsibilities to each other, but the managers still have very *distinct* roles from each other. |
| Slide 28 |  | the unit group for ‘Hotel and accommodation managers and proprietors’ where we’ve moved B&B and guest house owners to major group 6 (which is Caring, Leisure and Other Service Occupations) this is more in-line with ISCO08 – which is the International Standards Classifications of Occupations |
| Slide 29 |  | We’re creating a new unit group for ‘Managers and proprietors in early years and childcare services’. |
| Slide 30 |  | We are moving shopkeepers into MG7 (Sales and Customer Service Occupations) because we found that the majority were self employed; and that they either work on their own; or with few staff. This doesn’t fit in with the strategic managerial occupations that code to MG1. And again this change means we are more aligned with ISCO08  4 new groups for:  Managers and directors in the creative industries  Betting shop and gambling establishment managers  Hire services managers and proprietors  Directors in consultancy services  The creative industries group will include occupations for Arts, Publishing, Music, Media, Design and Architecture.  These new groups all previously coded to Managers and proprietors in other services n.e.c., which means not elsewhere classified and is a bit of a catch all group, so it’s a big improvement to the classification to be able to pull these occupations out of the group |