Instructions and guidance for legacy output clearances

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1. Background
On 29 May 2024, the secure research service (SRS) changed to a single-level output clearance model ("SRS output clearance") from a three-level output clearance model ("pre-publication clearance", "publication clearance" and "code clearance"). This document provides instructions and guidance for how to handle outputs cleared under the legacy model, including how they interact with the current model.

For queries, or if you discover or suspect that material or the SRS may have been used in breach of its terms of use, please contact statistical.support@ons.gov.uk immediately so that they can investigate and attempt to reduce the impact of any potential breach. Incidents and breaches are investigated with high priority and should be resolved as quickly as possible.

2. Permissions and restrictions for legacy clearances
Any existing pre-publication, publication and code clearances will retain their clearance level. They will also retain any permissions or restrictions applied to them that were noted to researchers at the point of release. Different permissions or restrictions may be available through secure research service (SRS) output clearance, which can be requested for files already cleared under pre-publication by making a new request. Any new requests will be processed independently of other requests, according to current standards and procedures.

3. Requesting re-clearance of material
Existing cleared outputs can be submitted for clearance under secure research service (SRS) output clearance. To do so, you must follow the instructions outlined in the document: "Instructions and Guidance for Output, Ingest and Transfer Requests", which is available in the SRS (under "Libraries", "SRS" and "statistical disclosure control (SDC) Guidance"), and on our SRS web page.

If the material to be re-cleared exists outside of the SRS (for example, as a development of a pre-publication clearance), when instructed to name the folder in the project's "ready for checking" area, include a note that the files for clearance are attached to the requesting email. Any new requests will be processed independently of other requests and according to current standards and procedures.

4. Using legacy clearances

In some circumstances, your cleared legacy outputs may not need to be re-cleared. Some examples are outlined below. If you are in any doubt, please contact statistical.support@ons.gov.uk.

Publication clearances

Outputs cleared at publication level can be kept indefinitely and distributed freely. As a result, they typically do not need to be re-cleared after editing, unless they are combined with content that is derived from secure research service (SRS) data, which has not received publication clearance or SRS output clearance.

Examples that do not require further clearance include:

- changes to publication-cleared content which does not include or reference any non-publication-cleared material, such as changes to formatting, changes to structure, or the addition of content derived from information outside of the SRS
- combining publication clearance with code clearance or SRS output clearance
- combining publication clearance with non-SRS-derived content

Please note that if any of the non-SRS derived content has been ingested into the SRS project space, the combination may need to be re-cleared. Please contact SRS statistical support for advice.

Examples that require further clearance include:

- combining publication clearances with pre-publication clearances
- combining publication clearance with any SRS-derived content that has not been cleared, including impressions gained from SRS data or analysis that has not been cleared

Pre-publication clearances

The sharing of pre-publication clearances is restricted to those named on the project (for example, researchers, commissioners or sponsors). Any derivation or development of pre-publication content (including the addition of any pre-publication content to any other material) retains pre-publication status and all associated restrictions. Combining pre-publication clearances with any other clearance types from SRS will create material that inherits the pre-publication status and its associated permissions or restrictions. It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that any pre-publication-status material is destroyed at the end of the SRS project.

5. Frequently asked questions

1. Pre-publication clearances can only be shared with the "project team". Who is part of the project team?

   The project team are the named persons listed on the project's researcher access service (RAS) page. Project sponsors (listed on the approved project application) can also view pre-

publication outputs. It is the researcher's responsibility to control the distribution, retention, and deletion of pre-publication material.

2. Can people be added to the project team and is there limit to how many?

   People can be added to project teams. Although there is no limit to how many people can be added, the number should be minimised for data security reasons. Contact srs.customer.support@ons.gov.uk for more information.

3. How are non-cleared data cleared when writing publications after the project has ended?

   At the end of a project, researchers lose access to their secure research service (SRS) project folder and must destroy their pre-publication outputs. It is not possible to request clearances after a project has closed. Researchers should plan their time and prepare outputs accordingly.

4. How do I destroy pre-publication clearances?

   Delete files and emails, and shred paper copies (or equivalents). If in doubt, please contact statistical.support@ons.gov.uk.

5. Are there any restrictions on how and where results from publication clearances can be used or presented? For example, can the content from a publication-cleared document be used to inform a presentation?

   Publication-cleared content can be kept indefinitely and used freely. It may need to be cleared again if it meets any of the conditions set out earlier in this guidance document. Researchers are responsible for the appropriate use of data and publications and should carefully study their project documents for approvals and stipulations.