



Auditor assurance on 2014/15 whole of government accounts returns (local authorities)

Technical guidance note 2015/4(LA)

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Foreword

Technical guidance notes are prepared by Audit Scotland's Technical Services Unit (TSU) to provide external auditors appointed by the Accounts Commission and Auditor General for Scotland with guidance on particular subjects or themes relevant to their audit appointment. They cover auditors' responsibilities to audit the annual accounts, and review returns for whole of government accounts and local authority grant claims.

Technical guidance notes are available to external auditors from Audit Scotland's *Technical reference library*, and are also published on the Audit Scotland website so that audited bodies and other stakeholders can access them.

This particular type of technical guidance note is approved by the Assistant Auditor General and provides guidance on reviewing whole of government accounts returns.

While auditors act independently, and are responsible for their own conclusions and opinions, the TSU has a role in ensuring that those conclusions and opinions are reached on the basis of informed judgement. Consistency in similar circumstances is important and **the Code of audit practice therefore states that auditors should follow TSU guidance**. Auditors should advise the TSU promptly if they intend not to follow any guidance provided in this technical guidance note.

Audit Scotland makes no representation as to the completeness or accuracy of the contents of technical guidance notes or that legal or technical guidance is correct. Points of law, in particular, can ultimately be decided only by the Courts. Audit Scotland accepts no responsibility for any loss or damage caused as a result of any person relying upon anything contained in this note.

Overview

Key points on this return		
Description of return		
<p>Whole of government accounts (WGA) is the consolidated financial statements for all components of government in the UK. Most public bodies are required to provide information for the preparation of WGA. External auditors are required to review and provide assurance on WGA returns over a prescribed threshold.</p>		
Return reference	Deadline to auditors	Auditor submission deadline
WGA 2014/15	24 July 2015	30 September 2015
Risk areas		
1	Inconsistent classification between the financial statements and the data collection tool.	
2	Transactions and balances are inconsistently reported compared to the prior year.	
3	Incomplete or incorrect elimination of intra-government transactions.	
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Publication date and relevant year	TSU contact points	
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1 Introduction

Auditor assurance requirement

1. External auditors are required by the *Code of audit practice* to review and report on whole of government accounts (WGA) returns prepared by audited bodies. Auditors are required to report the results of their review in an assurance statement. The review and reporting process performed by auditors is therefore described as auditor assurance.
2. The National Audit Office (NAO), who has responsibility for the overall audit approach to WGA in the UK, have prescribed a threshold for auditor assurance. Assurance is required where either gross assets (excluding property, plant and equipment, heritage assets, intangibles, investment properties, and assets held for sale), or gross liabilities (excluding pension liabilities), or gross income or gross expenditure is above the threshold.
3. For 2014/15, the threshold for local authorities remains at £350 million. No testing is required for bodies below the threshold but, in a change from previous years, auditors are required to complete the first section of the assurance statement and submit it to the NAO.

Purpose of technical guidance note

4. This technical guidance note has been prepared by the TSU to provide guidance on auditor assurance on the 2014/15 WGA returns of local authorities. The approach set out in this technical guidance note has been agreed with the NAO and is based on their group audit instructions. A separate technical guidance note has been prepared for central government bodies.
5. Testing and other procedures that auditors are required to undertake in respect of providing assurance on 2014/15 WGA returns above the threshold is included throughout this note and summarised in Appendix 1. Although this note provides an overview of the process for preparing WGA returns, it may still be necessary for auditors to refer to the source material on which this note is based for points of detail (see Appendix 2).

Changes for 2014/15

6. As part of the refresh of technical support provided by the TSU, technical guidance notes have replaced notes for guidance. In addition to presentational changes, the most significant changes in the content of this technical guidance note compared with the equivalent note for guidance for 2013/14 are as follows
 - Gateway tests 3 (correct version of DCT) and 4 (inconsistencies with financial statements) have been dropped.
 - The fieldwork test in respect of consistency with the prior year is now a separate test (see Fieldwork test 2).

- The fieldwork test to review the matches report and the completion procedure for the post-upload reconciliation have been dropped.
- The deadline for the submission of the return and assurance statement to the NAO has been brought forward to 30 September 2015 (from 17 October last year).
- There is a new requirement for auditors to submit a signed, scanned version of the assurance statement to the NAO.
- Auditors of local authorities below the threshold are required to submit a partially completed assurance statement (explained further at paragraph 79).

Preparation and auditor assurance overview

7. The return used to collect WGA data is an Excel document known as the data collection tool (DCT). The preparation of the DCTs and provision of auditor assurance is an eight step process undertaken using the 'Instruction' worksheet in the DCT.
8. An overview of the preparation process is provided at section 2 of this technical guidance note and can be summarised as follows
 - Steps 1 to 3 involve data input and validation of the DCTs.
 - At step 4 the authority 'locks' the DCT which is submitted by 24 July to auditors and to the Scottish Government.
9. An overview of the auditor assurance process for authorities over the threshold is provided at section 3 and can be summarised as follows
 - Auditors unlock the DCT by clicking the step 5 button and entering a password. Auditors then carry out testing procedures, and pass the DCT back to the authority for any agreed adjustments to be made.
 - The authority re-validates the DCT at step 6 to ensure the adjustments have not caused a validation failure.
 - At step 7, the authority locks the DCT and passes it to auditors.
 - Auditors lock the DCT at step 8 and then by 30 September
 - pass the locked DCT back to the authority, who emails it to the Scottish Government
 - submit the locked DCT and assurance statement to the NAO.

TSU contact point

10. The contacts in the TSU for this technical guidance note are
 - Paul O'Brien, Senior Manager (Technical) - 0131 625 1795 or pobrien@audit-scotland.gov.uk.
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2 Preparation overview

Introduction

11. WGA is the consolidated financial statements of all government components in the UK. HM Treasury is responsible for preparing WGA statements at a UK level. The Treasury requires government departments in England to consolidate their arms-length bodies with their own information. It has provided [guidance](#) on the preparation of the DCTs. The Treasury refers to itself in its guidance as the primary consolidator, and the departments as sub-consolidators.
12. Although there is no sub-consolidation of Scottish bodies, the Scottish Government has agreed to provide Treasury with equivalent information. Scottish local authorities have been advised by the Scottish Government to follow the Treasury guidance for authorities in England. The Scottish Government has, however, agreed different submission deadlines to those set out in the Treasury guidance. The agreed deadlines are reflected in this technical guidance note.

WGA bodies

13. Most public bodies are required to complete and submit a DCT. The Treasury has produced a [list](#) of all bodies within the WGA boundary for 2014/15. Each WGA body is allocated by the Treasury a counter-party identification (CPID) code.
14. Bodies that the Treasury define as minor do not have to provide information. To qualify for minor body status in 2014/15, bodies are required to be below £10 million for gross annual expenditure and income during 2013/14, and for gross assets and liabilities at 31 March 2014.

Data collection tool

15. Sub-consolidating departments are required to upload the information from the DCTs to consolidation software called the *Online system for central accounting and reporting* (OSCAR). Scottish local authorities are required to complete a DCT and submit it to the Scottish Government for them to upload to OSCAR.
16. The master [DCT template](#) is used by central government bodies and local authorities, and the version for the relevant sector is created by the body entering their unique CPID code in the 'Instruction' worksheet. The local authority DCT comprises
 - template worksheets that broadly replicate the format of local authority annual accounts
 - additional information worksheets to capture other required details.

DCT data input

17. After the authority has entered its CPID, the 'Body BF balance' worksheet is automatically populated with data from the final locked DCT for 2013/14.

18. Data entry in the DCT by the local authority is a two-step process. The first step is to populate the template worksheets so that a trial balance can be compiled. Authorities are required to use information in their 2014/15 group financial statements (or single-entity if group accounts are not prepared) to complete the DCTs. The transferal of transactions and balances from the financial statements to the DCT is referred to as 'mapping'. There is also a significant amount of additional information that is required.
19. The trial balance figures are analysed using the Treasury's standard chart of accounts (SCOA) codes. These are 8-digit ledger codes which map to a line in the WGA financial statements. At a high level, the first digit of each SCOA corresponds to a class of balance (i.e. 1 for assets, 2 for liabilities and 3 for reserves), transaction (i.e. 4 to 6 for income and expenditure) or additional information (i.e. 8 for opening balances and 9 for disclosures).
20. The second step is to enter the balances and transaction data with another WGA body on the 'i.CPID_Transactions' worksheet. This counterparty data is then used to calculate the consolidation adjustments needed by HM Treasury in the WGA accounts overall.

Balances and transactions with other WGA bodies

21. The area of identifying and reporting intra-group transaction streams and balances with other WGA bodies is probably the most important and highest risk area associated with WGA. In prior years, auditors have found large numbers of material mismatches in the figures reported by WGA bodies. Authorities are therefore required to have satisfactory processes for identifying relevant transaction streams and balances.
22. A key part of the process is the elimination of transactions and balances between WGA bodies. It is essential that bodies record complete and accurate counter-party information, as it is the only way in which transactions and balances between WGA bodies can be identified and eliminated. Counter-party eliminations are increasingly sensitive in terms of error evaluation, and elimination error is a key item of focus.
23. The basic principle is that authorities should identify and report transactions and balances with other WGA bodies using their unique CPIDs. Authorities are required to report all their CPID balances and are expected to fully reconcile CPIDs with government grant figures.
24. The elimination process works on a number of match relationships and is automated in OSCAR. Match relationships are groups of account lines that are expected to eliminate each other. For example, grant payments in Body X are in the same match relationship as grant receipts in Authority Y. Once two reported transactions or balances match each other, the OSCAR system automatically reverses the entries to eliminate them. However, if Authority Y reported the receipt as trading income, that would be reported as an elimination error.
25. Valuation joint boards and regional transport partnerships included in a council's group accounts as associates are not required to provide CPID data in respect of income and expenditure information that requires to be reported in the group accounts. However, councils

are required to list the boards/partnerships to which they pay requisitions, and the boards/partnerships are required to identify the relevant councils.

DCT submission

26. Once the required data has been entered and validated, the local authority 'locks' the DCT by clicking the step 4 button. The locked DCT is then submitted to auditors (for their review) and the Scottish Government (for uploading to OSCAR) by 24 July.

3 Auditor assurance overview

Introduction

27. The audit responsibilities in respect of Scottish local authorities can be summarised as follows
- The Comptroller and Auditor General is the auditor of WGA overall.
 - The NAO is the group auditor acting on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General and is responsible for the overall WGA audit approach, including the production of *Group audit instructions*.
 - The TSU is responsible for interpreting the NAO's instructions for a Scottish context, and providing guidance to auditors.
 - Auditors of local authorities over the threshold are responsible for
 - planning the review of the DCTs and arranging timetables for completion of the work within the required timeframes
 - completing the appropriate test procedures (see sections 4 and 5)
 - making judgements on the accuracy of the information within the DCT, and obtaining the authority's agreement regarding any adjustments that are required (see section 6)
 - reporting the results on completion of the review in an assurance statement submitted to the NAO (see section 6).
28. The overall WGA audit opinion is therefore underpinned by work carried out by a WGA consolidation audit team within the NAO and the assurances provided by the auditors of individual local authorities (referred to by the NAO as component bodies).

Significant risks

29. The testing procedures set out in this technical guidance note have been designed to address the following significant risks that have been highlighted in the NAO's group audit instructions
- Inconsistent classification between the financial statements and the DCT. Information in the DCT needs to be mapped from a local authority's financial statements to the disclosures in the DCT. Any mismapping could be a classification error in WGA.
 - Transactions and balances are inconsistently reported compared to the prior year. The NAO's reviews have identified that in some cases auditors had not completed sufficient work to ensure that mapping was also consistent with the prior year.
 - Incomplete or incorrect elimination of intra-government transactions. The audit opinion on WGA financial statements has always been qualified in relation to the elimination of

transactions between WGA group entities, e.g. counterparties recognised different amounts, or only one side recognised a transaction.

30. Auditors should also consider significant risks identified for the audit of the financial statements and consider whether they should lead to additional testing procedures.

Auditor assurance focus

31. The focus of the review by auditors is to provide assurance that the DCTs are materially fairly stated. The main parts of the review are to confirm that
- the impact of significant risks at the authorities that impact WGA have been appropriately addressed
 - transactions and balances have been recorded on a basis consistent with the prior year
 - the DCT is complete and accurate, and consistent with the financial statements
 - the CPID data is complete and accurate
 - the closing balances in the prior year DCT have been brought forward accurately into the current year DCT and, if appropriate, correctly restated
 - any recognised restatements are appropriately classified
 - all required additional information is provided (for the notes to the WGA)
 - transaction streams and balances with other WGA bodies have been correctly identified to enable elimination during the consolidation.
32. Auditors should complete the auditor action checklist at Appendix 1 of this note. Actions include initial gateway tests, fieldwork tests, and required completion procedures. The actions that auditors are required to carry out are discussed in sections 4 to 6.

Submission deadline

33. Auditors should expect to receive the draft DCT by 24 July 2015. Auditors should plan to lock the DCT and pass it to the authority and submit it to the NAO by 30 September 2015.

4 Gateway tests

Introduction

34. DCTs are required to pass two gateway tests before they should be accepted by auditors for review. Gateway tests are simple initial checks to assess whether the fieldwork tests should commence.
35. Auditors should report in the 'timetable' section of the assurance statement if a local authority does not submit an acceptable DCT within the agreed timetable. The gateway tests for 2014/15 are discussed in the following paragraphs.

Gateway test 1 - Information

Auditors should confirm that they have sufficiently good quality and complete information to enable their review to begin

36. The information that auditors should expect to receive is the locked DCT and an accompanying [Management review checklist](#) which has been completed by the local authority management.
37. Management review of completed DCTs is an essential part of ensuring their quality. The management of each authority is required to review its DCT and complete a checklist which records the management processes for its preparation, review and validation.
38. The checklist also provides assurance that the information submitted by authorities is in line with their financial statements and that the quality of the DCT (particularly the counter-party data) is of an acceptable standard. A pack of evidence supporting the completion of this checklist should have been prepared and retained by the authority.

Gateway test 2 - Validations

Auditors should review the 'K.Validation_errors' worksheet and confirm that

- **there are no 'hard' validation errors shown**
- **the explanations for 'soft' validation failures are consistent with their knowledge of the authority**

39. The DCT contains the following types of validation checks to ensure it has been properly prepared
 - 'Hard' validations control critical data such as ensuring that the accounts balance. Hard validation failures are shown as a red cell in column G of the 'K.Validation_errors' worksheet. A failure of a hard validation will prevent the DCT from being uploaded to OSCAR.

- 'Soft' validations review expected relationships within the DCT. Soft validation failures are shown with an amber cell. Failure of a soft validation will not prevent the DCT from being uploaded, but it will be highlighted for action by the authority.
40. The DCT presented for review by auditors must have passed all hard validations, as failure prevents the DCT from being uploaded. Auditors should ask the authority to resolve any that are shown.
41. Although the DCT may be submitted with soft validation failures, the authority will have to input explanations into column K of the 'K.Validation_errors' worksheet. If the explanations are inconsistent with the auditor's knowledge of the authority, the DCT should be returned. Due to the way it is constructed, the explanations for soft validations are deleted when the DCT is re-validated. The Treasury advises bodies to save explanations into a separate worksheet so they can be easily copied if deleted.

5 Fieldwork tests

Introduction

42. Once the gateway tests have been passed, auditors should proceed to the fieldwork tests. The fieldwork tests for 2014/15 are set out and discussed in the following paragraphs.

Fieldwork test 1 - Line by line agreement to financial statements

Auditors should

- **reconcile the primary statements and notes in the DCT line by line against the financial statements**
- **investigate variances through discussion with the authority and review of evidence**
- **review the financial statements to confirm that all significant disclosures are reflected in the DCT**

43. The process of agreeing the financial statements to the DCT is an important aspect of making sure it is accurate. The most significant transaction streams and balances require to be checked.
44. The mapping process should have been subject to management review. If figures do not reconcile easily, auditors should examine the authority's working papers that support their mappings.
45. The main allowable difference between the financial statements and the DCT is for agency transactions. Agency transactions should be grossed up and included within DCTs with relevant CPIDs reported to allow for full elimination across all WGA bodies (unless there is an agreement between all bodies to only report their share of costs/income).
46. Auditors should use the 'Auditors comments' columns in the DCT to evidence their checks and reconcile and explain any differences. The NAO and Treasury find the proper use of this column very useful in resolving queries.

Fieldwork test 2 - Consistency with previous year

Auditors should confirm that

- **the mapping in 2014/15 is consistent with, or an improvement on, the mapping used for 2013/14**
- **a retrospective restatement has been made, where required**

47. Auditors are required to confirm the consistency of mapping between 2013/14 and 2014/15. Any change should result in better quality information in 2014/15. A consequent retrospective restatement may be required.
48. In order to highlight its importance, this is a separate test for 2014/15.

Fieldwork test 3 - Opening balances

Auditors should confirm that

- **the final (restated) opening balances in the 2014/15 DCT are consistent with the comparative figures in the 2014/15 audited financial statements**
- **the pre-populated balances in the 2014/15 DCT agree to the closing balances in the 2013/14 DCT**
- **restatements of the opening balances have been correctly classified**

49. Auditors are required to confirm that the 2013/14 data has been correctly carried forward. Opening balances are populated into the DCT automatically based on the closing 2013/14 DCT. The brought forward figures require to be reviewed to confirm they reconcile to the closing submission for that year.
50. Auditors should check that any restatement of the opening balances has been correctly classified.

Fieldwork test 4 - Additional information

Auditors should confirm that the additional information within the DCT is

- **based on relevant financial statement disclosures**
- **otherwise fairly stated**
- **complete**

51. Authorities are required to fill in the 'LP Additional data' worksheet within the DCT based on the relevant financial statements disclosures. Auditors should review the financial statements to confirm that the disclosures in the DCT are complete. Contingent liabilities is a particular area where the NAO has previously found high levels of errors.
52. There may be some additional information required that is not available from the financial statements, e.g. staff numbers, and this requires to be verified by auditors.
53. The additional information includes highways infrastructure data (LP-Add Info - Hways Inr) to capture the progress being made on revaluing those assets on a depreciated replacement cost basis. This worksheet is not subject to review by auditors in 2014/15.
54. The Treasury does not require intra-group items to be deducted from the additional information disclosures, e.g. where one component has a contingent liability or operating

lease with another WGA body. There is therefore the risk of overstatements arising from non-elimination, and auditors should note on the assurance statement (in the 'Reconciliation of DCT to published accounts' section) if the impact of intra-group items within any of the additional information is more than £20 million.

Fieldwork test 5 - CPID high level review

Auditors should review the 'i.CPID_Transactions' sheet to confirm that

- all obvious CPIDs have been identified and reported
- the authority has not made any common CPID errors
- the authority has identified and reported CPIDs on an accruals basis
- where CPIDs are reported for the balance sheet, there is a corresponding CPID for the comprehensive income and expenditure statement, and vice versa, if appropriate
- the signage of CPIDs is the correct way round
- amounts have been entered in £000s
- grant amounts have been fully allocated to CPIDs

55. Auditors should use their knowledge of the authority to check that all obvious CPIDs have been identified and reported (e.g. teachers pensions, social security contributions, grant receipts, VAT debtor/creditor, Public Works Loans Board loans and interest) and that common CPID mistakes have not been made (e.g. 'tax and duties' paid to HM Revenues and Customs should be coded to IRT813 rather than HMR041).
56. Auditors should also check that the signage of CPIDs is the correct way round (i.e. positive for debit balances, negative for credit balances).

Fieldwork test 6 - CPID financial statements review

Auditors should

- review the financial statements and confirm that all references to transactions and balances with other WGA bodies have been disclosed in the 'i_CPID_transactions' sheet
- review the consistency of the reporting of intra-government balances and transactions in the DCT with the intra-government balances and transactions reported in the financial statements
- investigate variances over £1 million through discussion with the authority and review of evidence

57. In order to ensure that intra-group transaction streams and balances are completely and accurately reported, CPIDs reported for the balance sheet and for the comprehensive income

and expenditure statement should be consistent with available financial statements evidence, e.g. related party disclosures, debtor and creditor ledgers etc. Transaction streams and balances should be fully allocated to CPIDs within the DCT.

58. Auditors should note any unresolved variances in the assurance statement (in the 'Reporting of intra group transaction streams and balances' section) unless the total of all errors is less than £1m.

Fieldwork test 7 - CPID completeness

Auditors should

- review the authority's process for ensuring completeness of CPID transactions and the work undertaken to clear mis-matches
- compare CPIDs reported for 2014/15 with CPIDs reported in 2013/14 to identify any incomplete CPIDs
- confirm that specific grant balances identified in the DCT agree with any grant certification work that has been performed

59. Auditors are required to use their judgement to conclude as to whether the CPID transactions are materially complete.
60. Auditors should confirm that CPIDs reported for 2013/14 are also reported for 2014/15 or establish the reason where this is not the case. Auditors should use grant certification work they have carried out to check specific grant balances.

Fieldwork test 8 - CPID accuracy

Auditors should select a sample of CPIDs on the DCT 'i.CPID_transactions' worksheet and confirm that the amounts are

- accurate
- supported by relevant evidence

61. Auditors are required to check that a sample of intra-group transaction streams and balances are accurately reported. Relevant supporting evidence includes invoices or contracts.
62. Samples should focus on the highest value items and areas where there have been errors in the past. Balances with HMRC require testing.

Fieldwork test 9 - Additional test procedures

Auditors should consider whether significant risks identified for the audit of the financial statements should lead to additional test procedures

63. Auditors are required to consider significant risks identified for the audit of the financial statements, determine whether there is a specific impact on the DCT review, document the impact of these specific risks, and consider whether they should lead to additional test procedures.
64. Any additional test procedures should be noted in the comments box in the 'Other matters/key judgements made in the audit of the annual accounts' section on the assurance statement, along with an indication of any remaining risk that could not be mitigated by additional test procedures.

6 Completion procedures

Introduction

65. There are a number of steps in the completion process that cannot be 'rolled back' if undertaken incorrectly. The NAO considers it may be prudent to ask the authority's management to retain a copy of the DCT in a safe place before undertaking the completion procedures, in case there are any problems.

Completion procedure 1 - WGA errors and adjustments

Auditors should

- **consider errors identified in the fieldwork tests**
- **agree any adjustments**
- **prepare the unadjusted errors schedule**

66. Auditors are required to accumulate the errors in the DCT identified in the fieldwork tests and agree these with the authority. Auditors should encourage authorities to correct all errors, particularly CPID omissions. Changes may also arise from work carried out by authorities, but any adjustments require to be agreed with auditors.
67. Auditors should
- unlock the DCT by clicking step 5 and entering the password (which will be emailed to auditors separately)
 - pass the unlocked DCT back to the authority management (by email or in person), who can then make adjustments as agreed
 - remind the authority's management that they should not click step 7 until after they have received confirmation from auditors (NB the body cannot unlock the DCT once step 7 has been completed).
68. If the authority chooses not to adjust the errors identified in the fieldwork tests, auditors should complete the WGA unadjusted error schedule (a separate worksheet accompanying the assurance statement), unless the total of all errors is less than £1 million. Auditors should record the journal entries required to correct the errors.
69. Unadjusted errors from the audit of the financial statements reported to those charged with governance should also be included in the schedule. Individual financial statement errors over £5 million should be disclosed separately, but those below that level can be aggregated into one line (even if the aggregate entry exceeds £5 million). The proper officer at the authority is required to agree that the errors are unadjusted by signing the completed schedule.

70. If there are no errors, or if all errors arising from the fieldwork tests are less than £1 million, the unadjusted error schedule should be completed as a 'nil return' and signed off by auditors, rather than being deleted; the proper officer is not required to sign it.
71. Once the adjustments have been recognised in the DCT, but before step 7 is clicked, auditors should review the DCT to confirm that all adjustments agreed have been put through correctly. Auditors will also have to pass on certain contact information to the authority so that it can be included in the DCT (the DCT cannot be locked without this information).
72. Once step 7 has been clicked, authorities should have passed the DCT back to auditors.

Completion procedure 2 - Locking DCT

Auditors should lock the DCT and pass it back to the local authority

73. Once testing has been completed and reviewed, auditors should click the step 8 'lock for submission cycle 2' button on the 'Instructions' worksheet to lock the DCT for a final time. This confirms that auditors are satisfied with the DCT being submitted into OSCAR.
74. After auditors have locked the DCT, it should be passed back to the authority for submission to the Scottish Government by 30 September 2015.
75. It will not be possible to upload any DCTs to OSCAR after 5 October and therefore it is important that auditors encourage their local authorities to submit their information to the Scottish Government on time.

Completion procedure 3 - Assurance statement

Auditors should complete and sign the assurance statement

76. The NAO produces the assurance statement proforma, but the TSU has agreed amendments with the NAO to make the wording more applicable to Scottish local authorities. The 2014/15 assurance statement to be used accompanies this technical guidance note.
77. Assurance statements are intended to summarise the results of the work undertaken by auditors and key information that may be required by the NAO in auditing and reporting on the WGA overall. Details of issues should be provided, along with their impacts on the audit and the conclusions reached.
78. The assurance statement is prepared in a specific format in Excel which allows it to be automatically uploaded to a database when they are submitted to the NAO. Changes to the format (e.g. adding lines or columns) should not be made by auditors as this prevents it from being uploaded, which would therefore require it to be returned to the component auditor for correction.

79. All auditors (i.e. including from 2014/15 those where the DCT is below the assurance threshold) are required to complete lines 25 to 51 of the assurance statement. This includes
- the name and CPID of the authority
 - the opinion on the financial statements, details of any modifications, and the materiality level used for the audit
 - certain key values from the financial statements, and confirmation as to whether the DCT is above the threshold
 - a reasonable estimate of the cost of delivering the assurance review.
80. The NAO, as group auditor, is required to comply with *ISA 600 (UK & Ireland) Special considerations - audits of group financial statements (including the work of component auditors)*. To reflect this, the NAO's group audit instructions are designed to ensure that they receive sufficient information and assurances from component auditors. Where the DCT is above the threshold, auditors are required to confirm in the 'Approach' section of the assurance statement that they
- undertook the review of the DCT in accordance with this technical guidance note
 - have an understanding of the guidance issued by the Treasury for WGA
 - possess the skills and experience necessary to perform the review of the DCT
 - will co-operate with the NAO and provide them with access to relevant documentation
 - understand that the NAO may evaluate their work.
81. In the 'Reconciliation of DCT to published accounts' and 'Reporting of intra-group transaction streams and balances' sections, auditors should record a summary of the key findings and judgements from the review, e.g. information on the reconciliation of the DCT to the financial statements, and reporting intra-group transactions and balances.
82. Auditors should report judgements or other matters arising from the audit of the financial statements that they consider should be brought to the attention of the NAO in the 'Other matters/key judgements' section. This may include a material fraud, significant disagreements with management, or other issues that may be significant to WGA overall.
83. Auditors should report their conclusions from their review in the 'Auditor's report to the C&AG' section in the assurance statement. The conclusions are in two parts, i.e. whether
- the transactions, balances and additional disclosure information reported in the DCT are consistent with the audited financial statements or accounting records from which those statements are produced
 - the counterparty information reported in the DCT is complete and accurate in all material respects.
84. The following options are provided in the assurance statement, and auditors should select which conclusion best fits each part
- Agree.

- Agree - but immaterial errors.
 - Disagree - due to material errors.
 - Disagree.
85. The first two options are akin to unmodified audit opinions on the financial statements. The other options are akin to modifications to the audit opinions
- The third option should be used where the DCT is materially misstated, but this is limited to a number of specific areas that can be quantified or ring-fenced.
 - The fourth option should only be used in exceptional circumstances where there is material disagreement or limitation of scope which is pervasive, and the effect cannot be limited to specific areas of the DCT or quantified. Auditors should raise their concerns with the TSU if this option is being considered seriously.
86. Materiality for the review of the DCT should be the same as that adopted for the audit of the authority's financial statements. Where a different level is used, an explanation is required to be included in the assurance statement. When assessing the level of error against materiality, unadjusted errors from the financial statements audit (ISA 260 errors) should be added to errors identified in the fieldwork tests to arrive at a total WGA error.

Completion procedure 4 - Submission

Auditors should submit the locked DCT and assurance statement to the NAO using the required naming convention by 30 September 2015

87. Auditors should submit the following Excel documents by 30 September 2015 to wgareturns@nao.gsi.gov.uk
- Locked DCT, where a review has been carried out.
 - Assurance statement (including the unadjusted errors schedule).
88. In addition, as a new requirement for 2014/15, auditors should also scan a signed version of the assurance statement and unadjusted errors schedule and submit them along with the Excel version. The assurance statement should be signed by the Assistant Director or Partner, but signature by the Manager is acceptable.
89. Auditors should ensure they use the naming convention for
- the required submissions using the format CPID_Name of audited body_Document name, e.g. SO13xx_Edinburgh City Council_Assurance statement
 - the subject line of the emails attaching the required submissions using the format CPID_Name of audited body, e.g. SO13xx_Edinburgh City Council.

Appendix 1

Auditor action checklist

Gateway tests		Yes/No/N/A	Initials/date	W/P ref
1	Have you confirmed that you have sufficiently good quality and complete information to enable the review to begin?			
2	Have you reviewed the 'K.Validation_errors' worksheet in the DCT and confirmed that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • there are no 'hard' validation errors shown? • the explanations for 'soft' validation failures are consistent with your knowledge of the authority? 			

Fieldwork tests		Yes/No/N/A	Initials/date	W/P ref
1	Have you <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reconciled the primary statements and notes in the DCT line by line to the financial statements? • investigated variances through discussion with the authority and review of evidence? • reviewed the financial statements to confirm that all significant disclosures are reflected in the DCT? 			
2	Have you confirmed that <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the mapping in 2014/15 is consistent with, or an improvement on, the mapping used for 2013/14? • a retrospective restatement has been made, where required? 			

Fieldwork tests		Yes/No/N/A	Initials/date	W/P ref
3	<p>Have you confirmed that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the final (restated) opening balances in the 2014/15 DCT are consistent with the comparative figures in the 2014/15 audited financial statements? the pre-populated balances in the 2014/15 DCT agree to the closing balances in the 2013/14 DCT? restatements of the opening balances have been correctly classified? 			
4	<p>Have you confirmed that the additional information within the DCT is</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> based on the relevant financial statements disclosures? otherwise fairly stated? complete? 			
5	<p>Have you reviewed the 'i.CPID_Transactions' sheet to confirm that</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all obvious CPIDs have been identified and reported? the authority avoided the common CPID errors? the authority identified and reported CPIDs on an accruals basis? the CPIDs reported for the balance sheet correspond to those reported for comprehensive income and expenditure, if appropriate? the signage of CPIDs is the correct way round? amounts have been entered in £000s? grant amounts have been fully allocated to CPIDs? 			

Fieldwork tests		Yes/No/N/A	Initials/date	W/P ref
6	<p>Have you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewed the financial statements and confirmed that all references to transactions and balances with other WGA bodies have been disclosed in the 'i_CPID_transactions' sheet? reviewed the consistency of the reporting of intra-government balances and transactions in the DCT with the intra-government balances and transactions reported in the financial statements? investigated variances over £1 million through discussion with the authority and review of evidence? 			
7	<p>Have you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reviewed the authority's process for ensuring completeness of CPID transactions and the work undertaken to clear mis-matches? compared CPIDs reported for 2014/15 with CPIDs reported in 2013/14 to identify any incomplete CPIDs? confirmed that specific grant balances identified in the DCT agree with any grant certification work that has been performed? 			
8	Does sample testing of intra-group transactions and balances indicate that they are accurate and supported by relevant evidence?			
9	Have you considered whether significant risks identified for the audit of the financial statements should lead to additional test procedures?			

Completion procedures		Yes/No/N/A	Initials/date	W/P ref
1	<p>Have you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> considered errors identified in the fieldwork tests? agreed any adjustments? prepared the unadjusted errors schedule? 			
2	<p>Have you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> locked the final version of the DCT? passed the final locked DCT to the authority for submission to the Scottish Government? 			
3	<p>Have you completed and signed the assurance statement?</p>			
4	<p>Have you submitted the final locked DCT to the NAO</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> along with a properly completed and signed assurance statement (Excel and scanned)? using the required naming convention? by 30 September 2015? 			

Appendix 2

Key sources of guidance on WGA

The following represent key sources of guidance and other useful information in respect of WGA which can be accessed by following the hyperlinks or downloaded from Audit Scotland's *Technical reference library*.

- [WGA guidance for local authorities \(England\) on completing the 2014/15 data collection tool pack](#)
- [2014/15 management review checklist](#)
- [2014/15 WGA CPID list](#)

Auditors may also have to refer to the NAO's *2014/15 Group audit instructions*