



Policies and Procedures

Procedures for Processing Documents

Date: March 2016

Due for review: March 2021



General foreword

This document supersedes any previous document covering the BSA policies and procedures for processing guidance documents and stands until superseded or withdrawn by the BSA.

Comments on this document are welcomed and should be sent to:

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Published by the British BSA of Audiology

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2. Background

One of the activities of the British Society of Audiology (BSA) through the Professional Guidance Group (PGG) is the publication of guidance and other advisory documents on good professional practice in audiology. This document describes BSA policy and procedures for the development of guidance documents. The principal aims of the policy and procedures in this document are to ensure the consistency and quality of all guidance documents produced and published by the BSA in order to meet the needs of guidance users and to promote the highest standards of professional practice in audiology.

This document represents a revision and extension of the previous BSA policy document (BSA, 2003), which it supersedes.





3. Scope

Any individual or group within the BSA is able to submit a document for consideration for publication by the BSA. Exceptionally, a document prepared by an individual or group, who are not members of the BSA, may be considered for publication. However, any documents published in the name of BSA shall be subject to the policy and procedures described here.

3.1 Definition of types of guidance

The type of guidance provided by a document shall be clearly indicated (according to the way in which the BSA formats documents). One document can cover more than one type of guidance.

- **Recommended procedure** - This provides a standard for the conduct of a specified audiological technique involving a specified group of patients/clients in a specified context.
- **Minimum training guidelines** - Guidance on training relating to BSA accreditation of training courses
- **Practice guidance** - This provides broader principles and themes on the topic
- **Position statement** - This represents a brief synthesis of the current evidence base and consensus on the topic

3.2 Use of this document and general principles

The aim of the policies and procedures described in this document is to provide a transparent mechanism for the careful consideration and review of documents without causing unacceptable delay in bringing them to publication. Documents must not be delayed or rejected without advice from acknowledged experts in the field.

The review procedure should ensure that documents are written in language that is clear to non-specialists and are presented in a manner that brings credit to the BSA.





The PGG may initiate the preparation of practice guidance, by setting up a working party to undertake the task. Usually, such a working group would include at least one member of the PGG, who would co-opt other members of the BSA to assist in the preparation of the document. Alternatively, the PGG may invite a member of the BSA, who is not a member of the PGG, to prepare a document, or to establish a working party for the same purpose. Any such working party or individual shall be subject to the same procedure for processing of the document for publication by the BSA, as any other group or individual.

Where another group develops a document for example a Special Interest Group, it shall be submitted to the PGG and they are responsible for processing the document. The PGG must keep the author(s) of a document informed about its progress through the review and consultation procedure. Council shall ratify guidance documents before they can be published or disseminated as official documents of the BSA or of any constitutional body or interest group within the BSA.

All documents that are published will be clearly dated and will be subject to review by the PGG at least every 5 years. If the Group decide on a major revision, its review shall follow the process described in this document.

3.3 Overview of the process

Figure 1 summarises the guidance development and review process as a flow diagram. The numbers in brackets at each stage give a suggested timetable in terms of cumulative weeks (not taking into account iterations of stages 3-5 and 7-8), attempting to balance the need for adequate processing time and avoiding undue delay.

It may be appropriate to extend the timetable on an individual basis in order to ensure reviews and revisions are thorough and to ensure stakeholders have an adequate opportunity to respond to consultation. Although this timetable considers each step in series some steps could be conducted in parallel; for example, planning the strategy for dissemination and the development of supportive resources could occur in parallel with the post-consultation review.



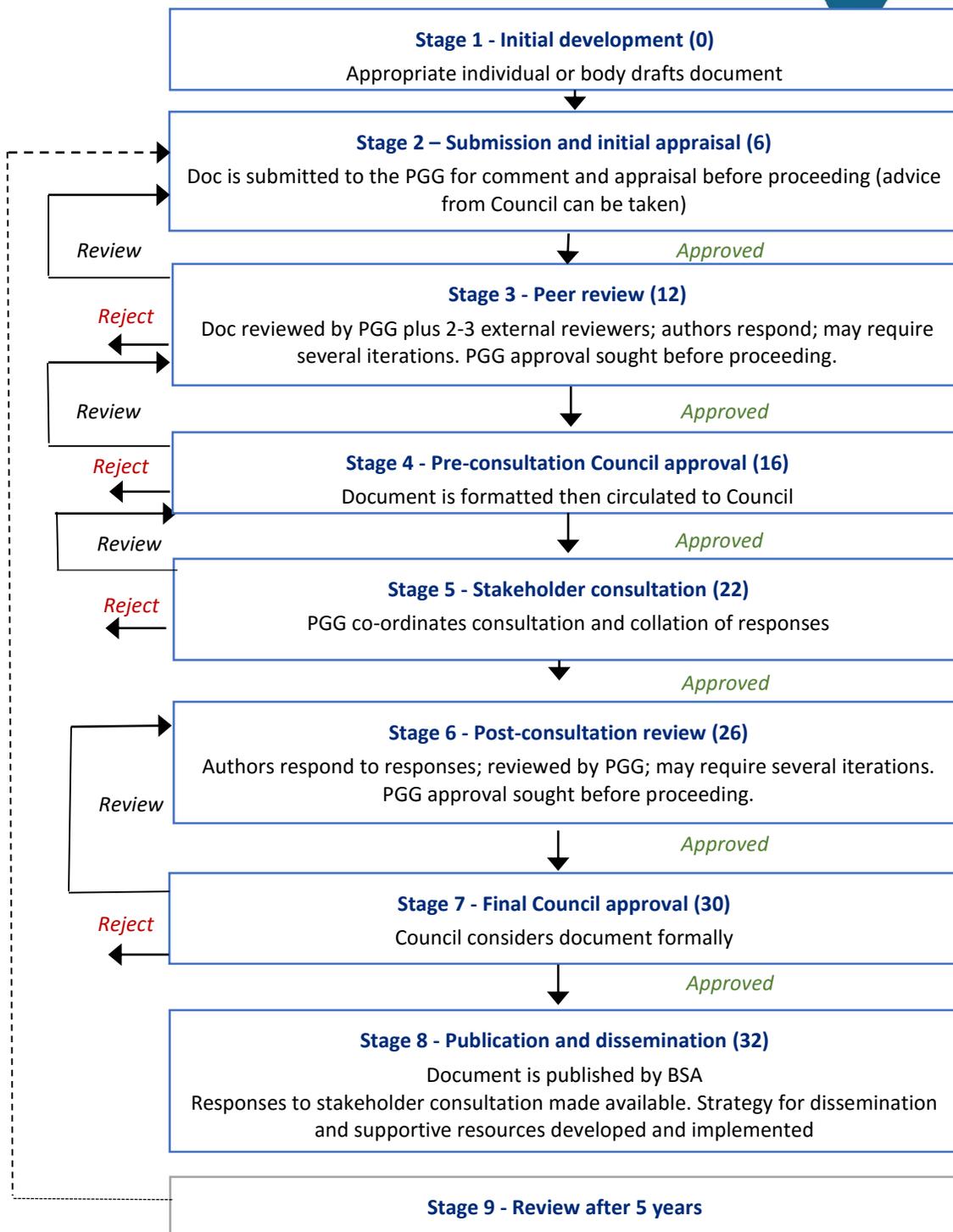


Figure 1





4. Development of documents

Stage 1

4.1. Selecting a topic or subject

The first stage in developing practice guidance is choosing the topic or subject. It is important to identify a clear need and rationale for any proposal for new practice guidance.

When selecting a topic, the following points should be considered:

- Why is this guidance needed?
- Is there sufficient evidence to support the development of guidance on this subject?
- Are there significant variations in practice which are likely to be improved by development and publication of new guidance?
- Are there significant resource implications for the development work required?
- Can the topic be clearly defined?
- Will the topic of the proposed new guidance be of benefit and/or interest to a definable group of professionals and/or service users?

4.2. Scope, preparation and topic of a new guidance document

The following preliminary steps should be taken in preparation of the development of a new guidance document:-

- a) A Lead for the working group is proposed by the Chair of the PGG in consultation with PGG members and, when relevant the Chair of a Special Interest Group. The proposed Lead should have specialist or appropriate expertise in the area of the guidance topic and is formally invited by the PGG Chair
- b) Once appointed, the working group Lead will be informed about the process of practice guidance development, timelines and the usual template for such BSA guidance documents
- c) A set of clinical or practice-based questions to be addressed by the guidance document is developed. A description of the areas to be included and excluded is prepared in collaboration with the working group Lead and the PGG. The type of guidance provided by a document shall be clearly indicated. One document can cover more than one type of guidance.
- d) Members of the working group who have access to libraries or higher education institutions are identified so that the document can demonstrate a systematic search of the appraised literature





- e) A timeline for the guidance document outline and a first draft should be agreed

4.3 Submission

Once the first draft has been agreed by the working group it should be sent to the Chair of the PGG to start the review process.

5. Procedures following document submission

Stage 2

5.1 The role of the Document and Guidance Group

The Chair of the PGG will then send this initial draft to all members of the PGG for appraisal, except where members have been involved in the development of the document or have any undue conflicts of interests. Any other potential conflicts of interest shall be documented.

It is the responsibility of the Chair of the PGG is to ensure the process is transparent, properly documented and conducted and that there is appropriate independence between the reviewers/stakeholders and the developer(s). The Chair is also responsible for circulating documents, collating responses and communicating with the reviewers and developer(s), with the support of the BSA Administration.

It is the responsibility of the PGG (and ultimately the Chair) to rigorously review the document, the reviewers' and stakeholders' responses and the authors' responses, and to make recommendations to the authors and Council the regarding the process and progress of the document.

5.2 Initial appraisal by PGG

The PGG considers whether document is consistent with the aims of the BSA and with the policy for development of documents described in Section 4 and appraises the document in general terms. Further information might be sought from the authors before an overall decision is made by the PGG.





Options for PGG:

- Approve document to move to peer review
- The requirement of general revisions to the document
- Rejection of the document

It may be appropriate to consult with BSA Council prior to a decision in some cases, particularly before a document is rejected.

If the document requires general revisions or is rejected, the reasons for this shall be communicated in detail with the authors, along with recommendations for revision if appropriate. A clear path to resubmission should be given where possible.

Stages 3-4

5.3 Peer review

The PGG shall approve the recruitment of two or three external peer reviewers from outside the PGG who are known experts in the area(s) covered to the document and who were not involved in the development of the document. Where another group has written the document they can advise the PGG of who the most appropriate reviewers would be. If appropriate, at least one reviewer should be from outside the UK. The names of the external reviewers shall not normally be communicated outside of the PGG and the BSA Council.

The document shall then be rigorously reviewed by the external reviewers.

This process will consider and document the following issues:

- The relevance of the document with regard to the aims of BSA, to previously published BSA guidance, to current practice and to current imperatives
- The scientific merit of the guidance, such as whether the development methods were appropriate for the context, the document reflects and explicitly links to the best available evidence, the interpretations of the evidence are reasonable and whether the recommendations are justifiable





- The merit of the guidance for the target audience, such as whether the recommendations are adequately clear, alternative options are considered
- The overall presentation and coherence of the document

The Chair of the PGG collates the responses from the review process. The external reviewers' (anonymised) responses shall be sent to the authors and made available to the PGG and the BSA Council. The external reviewers may also be asked to provide a frank assessment of the document and its methodology, which shall not be shared beyond the PGG except with the expressed permission of the reviewer.

If a unanimous decision on how to proceed cannot be reached by the PGG, the outcome is decided by majority vote after seeking advice from relevant individuals (e.g. the external reviewers, BSA Trustees).

Once approved by the PGG, the document is submitted to Council by the Chair of the PGG for general approval. The purpose of this stage is to ensure the general suitability of the document and its presentation to proceed with consultation, *not* to generate more comments ahead of consultation.

Stage 5

5.4 Stakeholder consultation

The PGG plays an active role in circulating document for consultation with all potential stakeholders. The general principle that one cannot consult too widely is followed. Time allowed dependent on document; agreed by Chair of the PGG and authors (unusually less than 4 weeks). All comments (and authors' responses to them) are made available to anyone on request after publication.





Stage 6

5.5 Post-consultation review

Responses are collated (in such a way that point-by-point responses can be made by the authors) and returned to authors with any recommendations. Authors then revises the document and responds to every comment in a spreadsheet for auditing purposes.

The PGG review the revisions and responses and make a recommendation on whether the document can be sent to Council for final approval.

Stage 7

5.6 Final Council approval

The final document will be sent to Council for ratification prior to publication.

Stage 8

5.7 Publication and dissemination

Once the document has been agreed, it can be published. It will be posted on the BSA website under “Resources” and the following should occur:

- A listing in Audacity about all of the recently published documentation
- A short piece in the BSA’s e-Update
- A push through Social media
- Sent directly to stakeholders where this may be of interest





Stage 9

5.8 Review of published document

All documents that are published will be clearly dated and will be subject to review by the PGG at least every 5 years.

Review of existing guidance documents should be considered by the PGG on a regular basis with the intention that existing guidance is updated every 5 years or sooner if the evidence base for the guidance document is known to have changed.

If the PGG decides on a major revision, its review shall follow the process described in this document.

If no significant additional evidence is available, the PGG will decide to confirm the validity of the existing guidance document for a further period and review the guidance document again within 5 years.

