Government Classification Scheme

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These summary guidelines are based on “The Government Security Classification (GSC)” as issued by the Cabinet Office in 2018. The link below provides full handling guidance for information classifications including OFFICIAL, SECRET and TOP SECRET:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-security-classifications>

In summary, the majority of information that is created or processed by the public sector is now classified as OFFICIAL. The other two classifications are SECRET and TOP SECRET.

SECRET classification should be used on very sensitive information that justifies heightened protective measures to defend against determined and highly capable threat actors.

TOP SECRET is HMG's most sensitive information requiring the highest levels of protection from the most serious threats.

Classifications can have additional indicators, providing extra information about looking after the information with that classification. A frequently-seen example is OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE. This is still classified as OFFICIAL, but there is an additional indicator that tells you the information is of a more sensitive nature, and so should be handled and looked after accordingly.