

# Governance decisions to be made

A core feature of an open standard is that decisions about the future of the standard are made in a public forum by a group that represents the interests of the standard's users. As part of the Tariff Data Standard work, we need to define what will be governed by this group, who we will expect to attend, and what mechanisms of governance will be available for the secretariat.

## Reminder: benefits of adopting an open standard

Working in the open is more difficult than working in private and will require input from a wider group of stakeholders. Key benefits for committing to an open standard include:

1. **Plurality of voice:** engaging a wider range of stakeholders in the standards development process helps steer clear of decisions driven solely by the interests of a single stakeholder. This approach, in turn, leads to a more equitable and effective outcome that benefits all parties involved.
2. **Stability:** through the implementation of a formally governed process in the tariff environment, hasty, short-term decision-making can be circumvented. Instead, changes that have been thoroughly assessed for their full range of consequences can be prioritised for implementation.
3. **High quality outcome:** we benefit from complimentary access to the time and expertise of all stakeholders, which encompasses stakeholder feedback on data quality concerns. This will result in a better quality outcome for both us and the entire ecosystem.
4. **Better communication:** establishing a clear standard and governance framework guarantees transparent communication with all stakeholders regarding the timing and rationale behind significant decisions. This, in turn, enhances the ability to track, hold accountable, and effectively communicate these crucial decisions with ease, thereby preventing the isolated implementation of these decisions. ..

## What will be governed

We need to find a balance between making the standard as useful as possible for users (so standardise as much as possible) whilst being pragmatic about how much agreement can be found amongst the stakeholders (standardise as little as possible).

What	Recommend for standardisation	Rationale
<b>Structural format of the data (what fields, types etc)</b>	Yes	Basic requirement for any users of the data. Very slowly changing because system changes need to happen with even minor modification.
<b>Semantic meaning of data elements (eg meaning of validity dates, how legislation is encoded)</b>	Yes	User requirement mainly about extracting meaning from data so not much value in a standard if this is not included.
<b>How the data is used to represent tariff policy (eg how a suspension is recorded, how quotas are used to represent steel safeguards)</b>	No, document only	This is highly specific to each Tariff policy area and policy is subject to short and long term change. DBT and

		Gov policy makers need to retain flexibility and speed
<b>Contents of the data (i.e. what is in TAP)</b>	No	This is entirely Gov authority to set. Don't want to slow down tariff management process.
<b>Integration of upstream changes to the TARIC3 format</b>	Yes	TARIC3 is the standard we rely on so the governance process needs control of how we react to changes in it
<b>Integration of commodity codes from the EU</b>	No, document only	Requirements for comm code integration are largely operational or political. But we should document the agreed process.
<b>Changes to definitions of or sources of code lists: e.g. the countries and territories list, list of footnote types (i.e. how they are defined e.g taken from other UK gov code lists)</b>	Yes	Code lists are slowly changing and many implementers may hard code them. Rapidly changing reference data is not helpful for users. There is no need to move quickly to change these lists.

## How the standard should be governed

Our recommendation is that the standard should only be evolved by unanimous agreement. This represents the fact that each stakeholder in the standard is legally and functionally independent and there is no actual power to compel any party, so we need to achieve agreement on everything. This does not mean that the standard is a free-for-all or has no teeth – it just means that proposals brought forward need to keep usage of the standard mutually beneficial for all stakeholders.

Therefore, there needs to be an open and publicly accessible forum in which to bring proposals, discuss their merits, and take decisions. It will be the responsibility of a Secretariat to establish and operate this governance. They must ensure that all stakeholders and the general public can get access to the discussion and any supplementary material and contribute appropriately. If necessary, they have the responsibility for evolving the governance mechanism to keep it fit for purpose. Changes to governance need to be made unanimously.

As a first pass aiming for simplicity and low effort, we recommend the following arrangements:

- We will **document** the standard and its governance arrangements in the DBT tariff documentation repository at <https://github.com/uktrade/tariff-data-manual>.
- We will have **asynchronous discussions** using Github Discussions attached to the standard's repository. "Discussions" is a threaded conversation model that operates in the open. Users can respond using a free Github account, either via the website or via email if they elect to subscribe to discussions.
- Any stakeholder can suggest a **synchronous discussion** and the Secretariat will find the next available opportunity for this. Synchronous discussion can happen on any appropriate medium (e.g. Teams). As ever, the discussion should be conducted in the open and be available to members of the public. Dates, times agenda and joining instructions should be published to the discussion board prior to the meeting and minutes from the meeting should be published in the same discussion thread following the meeting. There is no obligation to have regular synchronous discussion – these meetings will be ad-hoc and organised on demand.

- If proposals are unanimously agreed, it is the responsibility of the Secretariat to update the documentation repository with the new information.

## Who should be on the group

Needed in a governance group at the working level, are:

- Colleagues involved in the tariff data *creation* process to bring forward requirements for change to be discussed.
- Technical colleagues to advise on the downstream impact of data standard changes.
- People that have authority to agree changes that may result in system changes and spend (but not necessarily budget holders).
- As small a group as possible so everyone has sufficient time to represent themselves and to maximise chance of scheduled meetings having full attendance.

With that in mind, the recommended group comprises of:

Who	Representing
<b>HMRC Data Architecture colleague</b>	Interests of HMRC enterprise architecture, data best practice
<b>HMRC CDS Architect colleague</b>	Impacts on CDS of proposed changes, arising requirements from CDS change
<b>DBT DDAT Architect colleague</b>	Impacts on TAP of proposed changes
<b>DBT Tariff Implementation colleague</b>	Impacts on Tariff Management of proposed changes, requirements for changes to correctly implement tariff policy
<b>DEFRA Data Architect colleague</b>	Impacts on IPAFFS of proposed changes
<b>HMRC Trade Tariff Service colleague (potentially external to HMRC)</b>	Impacts on Trade Tariff service of proposed changes, feedback from trader users
<b>Jersey and Guernsey representatives (potentially Telelogica)</b>	Impacts on J&G of proposed changes
<b>Industry representative</b>	Impacts on open data users of proposed changes
<b>Secretariat: DBT</b>	Meeting invites, minutes, ensure correct governance is followed

As the group is open invite, other parties may attend at any time, but these members minus the secretariat represent the “quorum” with which changes must be unanimously agreed. The posts (along with names of current postholders) of the people in the group should be publicly available but the contact information should not be.