

Impact assessments

Executive summary

At the January PAB meeting members present agreed that an impact assessment is an important part of the policy-making process. (This was raised during the discussion on the .uk brand, and then identified as a crucial part of the policy advisory process.)

The discussion on the reform of the policy advisory process highlighted that an impact assessment should be prepared at an early stage in the discussion of an issue. It was suggested that the Secretariat could assist in the creation of impact assessments and that the standing committee could have a role in these studies.

The preparation of an impact assessment would help issues groups to focus their thinking. In addition the Board may wish to take account the likely impact of a recommendation put forward by an issues group as part of the proposed policy advisory process and an impact assessment could help with this.

What is an impact assessment?

The Government's Better Regulation Executive defines an impact assessment as

- A continuous *process* to help the policy-maker fully think through and understand the consequences of possible and actual Government interventions in the public, private and third sectors; and
- A *tool* to enable the Government to weigh and present the relevant evidence on the positive and negative effects of such interventions, including by reviewing the impact of policies after they have been implemented.¹

How could an impact assessment be used in the policy process?

If an impact assessment formed part of the policy development process, it could mean that a policy recommendation (proposed by an issues group) would only go forward to the Board for consideration if the assessment indicated that a fair and reasonable review of the proposal had taken place. This would also ensure that the impact of a change in policy on all stakeholders who rely on .uk would be measured ensuring that Nominet delivers on its commitment to conduct our business for the public benefit.

The PAB is invited to consider:

- Do you agree that an impact assessment should form part of the policy development process?
- What are the benefits and/or disadvantages of carrying out an impact assessment?
- Is the Better Regulation Executive's guide sufficient guidance for issues groups and the secretariat?

¹ From the Government's Better Regulation Executive Impact Assessment guide