

Standards of Service Query Management Operational Guidelines

Document Control

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Development of Guidelines

1. The requirement to publish the Standards of Service Query Management Operational Guidelines is specified in Section S4.7 of the Transportation Principal Document (TPD) of the Uniform Network Code (UNC). This section also provides for the document to be revised from time to time. The provision reads¹:

“the "**Guidelines**" is the document entitled 'Standards of Service Query Management Operational Guidelines' as prepared, published and revised (subject to prior approval by Panel Majority of the Uniform Network Code Committee) from time to time by the Transporters (in consultation with Users);”
2. The Guidelines set out below meet the Transporter’s obligation to prepare guidelines, while the Document Control Section records changes which have been made to the guidelines. The document is published on the Joint Office of Gas transporters website, www.gasgovernance.com.
3. The Transporters would welcome comments from Users on the published document at any time, which should be sent to enquiries@gasgovernance.com. In accordance with the UNC, the Transporters will put any revisions they propose should be made to the document to the Uniform Network Code Committee for approval.

¹ Correct as at 1 April 2006, Version 2.02 of the UNC.

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1. Introduction

The Standards of Service Query Management Operational Guidelines (the Guidelines) set out the detailed rules of operation for the management of queries. The successful application of its approach is dependent on a series of defined responsibilities, which support an inclusive approach to the management of User raised Invoicing and operational queries.

These Guidelines relate to the governing rules set out in the Uniform Network Code (UNC). The Guidelines set out the principles of operation of a Standards of Service (SoS) regime for queries, the scope of queries included in such a regime, together with details of the reporting and calculation of performance. However, the Guidelines do not replace or amend any UNC obligation nor impose any additional obligations. Reference should be made to the UNC for definitions of the rights and duties of each party in relation to SoS.

The Guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the UNC and the definitions used within this document are as in the UNC.

2. Scope and Definitions

The SoS, defined in the UNC require planned performance levels (PPLs) to be achieved for two sub categories. The PPLs and any liability payments arising from the non-achievement of these PPLs will be measured separately for these two categories. These categories are split into GT Large and GT Small based on the size of the Supply Point.

2.1. Query Definitions

2.1.1. Gas Transportation (GT) Queries

An **Operational Query** is a reasoned and substantiated challenge by a User as to the validity of the following:

- Those Portfolio related data items in the Supply Point Register that have been originated by a Transporter;

And/or

- Those data items provided or confirmed by the User where they can demonstrate that these have been misrepresented by a Transporter.

And which is intended to require action from a Transporter to correct invalid and/or missing data and if necessary correct any related information, which is derived from that data.

An **Invoice Query** is a reasoned and substantiated challenge by a User regarding the validity of the data that has resulted in the calculation of any such amount that is or was properly payable to include:

- Those relevant related data items that have been originated by a Transporter.

And/or

- Those data items provided or confirmed by the User where they can demonstrate that these have been misrepresented by a Transporter

And/or

- Any amounts where the User can demonstrate that such charges have not been properly calculated in accordance with the relevant Transportation Statement.

And which is intended to require action from a Transporter to correct invalid and or missing data and if necessary correct any related information, which is derived from that data.

2.2. Larger and Smaller Supply Point Queries

The SoS will be measured separately for Larger and Smaller Supply Points. A Larger Supply Point is defined in UNC as one in respect of which the Annual Quantity (AQ) is greater than

73,200 kWh. A Smaller Supply Point is defined in UNC as one in respect of which the AQ is not greater than 73,200 kWh.

The categorisation used in this and previous query management regimes is often referred to as a split between Domestic and Industrial & Commercial (I&C) queries, with the categories referring to Smaller and Larger supply points respectively.

Larger Supply Point Queries

For the purposes of the calculation of query performance a query will be counted within the population of Larger Supply Point queries if:-

- the Domestic/I&C indicator field is populated with an “I” when the query is submitted.
- for Invoicing Queries, the Domestic/I&C indicator field is **not** populated with a “D”

It is expected that queries indicated thus, will normally have an AQ greater than 73,200 kWh.

Smaller Supply Point Queries

For the purposes of the calculation of query performance a query will be counted within the population of Smaller Supply Point queries if :-

- for Operational Queries, the Domestic/I&C indicator field is populated with a “D” when the query is submitted

It is expected that queries indicated thus will have an AQ of not greater than 73,200 kWh.

The Transporter may choose, from time to time, to sample queries submitted to confirm whether the indications given to the queries, in respect of I&C/Domestic categorisation conforms to the UNC definitions of Larger and Smaller Supply Points. If any significant mis-categorisation is found then the Transporter will address this with the User concerned, with a view to ensuring that future query submissions are categorised correctly.

2.3. Query Categories Excluded

2.3.1. **GRE Invoice** Queries are excluded from this regime as these are subject to their own individual standard the GRE Invoice Query Incentive Scheme Methodology;

2.3.2. Duplicate (**DUP**) queries will be excluded from any incentive payments associated with the four day standard for GT SoS.

2.3.3. **Shadow Log Relevant Invalid** queries as detailed in Section 5.1 and Appendix C.

2.4. Query Categories for Inclusion

Only those queries which are submitted in accordance with section 3 of these guidelines and correctly having a designated contact code which is included within Appendix A or Appendix B shall be counted within the SoS regime for queries.

3. Principles of Operation

For the SoS to operate for Query Management, there is a requirement for both the Transporter and Users to adhere to a set of principles and supporting business rules. This section states the principles and rules which will apply to the SoS regime.

3.1 Query Submission and Receipt

The Transporters can best resolve queries when they are clearly specified and contain the necessary information for allocation to the service provider best suited to resolve them. Those queries which are not clearly specified will require additional work before they can be adequately progressed.

To help the Transporters provide an effective and efficient service, the following principles have been identified that will apply to the SoS regime.

- a) For the purposes of the SoS, queries will be “counted” at Supply Point or Meter Point level for Operational queries, and at charge item level for Invoice Queries.
- b) Users should aim not to submit "double" queries and the Transporters will seek to identify instances of such submissions (a “double” query is one which is duplicated or replicated and the term “double” is used to differentiate these from queries submitted under the DUP contact code).
- c) Users should submit queries under the appropriate query category as defined in Appendices A and B below.
- d) Users shall provide the appropriate mandatory information which the Transporters require to properly resolve the query. The Transporters may reject and return to the relevant User any queries which do not satisfy the mandatory information required. In order for the query to be accepted for measurement (within the SoS), Users will be required to provide a minimum set of mandatory data items in use at that time. Where possible, Users should also provide further optional and desirable information to assist the resolution of the query, specifically the User’s view of what constitutes resolution. Details of the file format and mandatory data items for each contact code are contained in the ConQuest Query Management File Formats Appendix M1. Information indicating preferred wording of queries and indications as to what additional (non-mandatory) information should be provided to assist in speedy query resolution can be found in the ConQuest Operational Contact Code Descriptions.
- e) Measurement within the SoS will only apply to those queries issued to the Transporter in the agreed format.
- f) Users shall submit their queries in a balanced and a regular manner on a reasonable endeavours basis, so as not to disrupt the Query Management process and in order to assist the Transporter to efficiently resolve queries.
- g) The Transporter will process unavoidable excessive influxes of queries from Users and will respond to them on a reasonable endeavours basis. Users shall endeavour to give prior notification to the Transporter of any unavoidable excessive influxes of queries, which may be considered for definition as a Project. (See Section 4).

- h) The Transporter will provide Users with an appropriate and up-to-date contact point for query submissions, including addresses, telephone/fax numbers and e-mail addresses, for each type of query included in the SoS regime.
- i) Users will submit queries using the following media:
 - i). EFT (Electronic File Transfer)
 - ii). Web

Only in exceptional circumstances and by mutual agreement would queries be accepted by :-

- iii). Email (No file attachments)
 - iv). Fax
 - v). Letter
- j) For queries requiring additional information in excess of that set out in 3.1(d), The Transporters will request the information, and will reflect the appropriate start / stop time accordingly (see 3.2g).
- k) The first Transporter Day will be the day on which the query was received unless this is a non Business Day, in which case, it will be the immediately following Business Day.
- l) The Transporters will provide adequate information to enable efficient query identification by the User. As a minimum (where originally provided by the User) this shall include:

- The Transporters' Contact Reference Number
 - User's Query / Reference Number (supplied by User)
 - Meter Point Reference
 - Stakeholder Personnel Name
 - Confirmation Reference Number (Invoice Queries)

- m) If the Transporters fail to satisfy the minimum criteria set out in (l) above, the User will be entitled to reject the request, and the start / stop time shall revert to the Transporters from the date of the Transporters' failure to satisfy such minimum criteria.

3.2. Query Investigation and Resolution

Successful achievement of the planned performance levels will depend on the Transporters' ability to investigate and resolve queries. There is a recognition that in many cases there is a need for a joint and collaborative approach to the operational resolution of queries. The following provides further details of the regime which will support the previously stated principles.

- a) The Transporters will endeavour to provide a reasonable resolution to all accepted queries and a query may be deemed resolved if investigation demonstrates that no corrective action is required.

- b) The resolution of queries will be communicated to the User by the Transporters. Should the Transporters consider that consultation is necessary prior to a proposed resolution, this will be communicated to the User ahead of such implementation.
- c) The parties will make reasonable endeavours to resolve a query.
- d) Following resolution, a query will be deemed to be “resolved” for the purposes of calculation of achieved performance levels and will have the ConQuest Case Event Description (CED) of AWAJ or CLRD. Those queries not requiring financial adjustment will also be deemed “closed”. These queries will have a ConQuest Case Event Description of CLRD. Any queries which require financial adjustment, ie. CED is AWAJ, will progress for calculation of Invoice adjustment and will be closed (CED = CLRD) once the adjustment has been processed.
- e) A query will clear this stage (AWAJ or CLRD as stated in 3.2(d)) on the day that the Transporters communicate, via the media defined in 3.1(i), to the User that the resolution has been completed. For the avoidance of doubt this will be deemed to be the date on the communication.
- f) It is recognised that Users may raise queries in good faith that, after investigation, do not necessitate an amendment to the Transporters’ data. This information will be recorded. Queries falling into this category will be classified as invalid queries. Certain types of these invalid queries will be counted within a “Shadow Log” regime. Further details of this are given in Section 5.
- g) Queries that pass from direct Transporter control will have the relevant time period attributed to the User or User agent (start/stop clock time). For the purposes of measuring start/stop clock time, such queries will be deemed to have their query outstanding time attributed specifically to the relevant User(s).
- h) Submission of Previously Submitted Queries (PSQ) will be identified separately, indicating the reason for re-submission of the original query.
- i) In some circumstances, there may be a need for the relevant User(s) to complete corrective actions or provide information in a reasonable time period, before the query can be resolved. In such cases the relevant User(s) will take this action. The following details instances when the Transporters will measure this corrective action.
 - i) Measurement will be activated when the Transporters are unable to action/investigate the query due to action or information being required from a User or User agent(s) outside of the Transporters’ control. For the purpose of measurement against the SoS, the day on which measurement ceases will be attributed to the Transporters.
 - ii) Users shall endeavour to respond to the Transporter within the following time period. Queries which satisfy i(i) for an uninterrupted period of up to 40 Business Days will be closed.
Note: Should a response be required from a User other than the User raising the query, the query will not be closed but the query will be deemed to remain outside of direct Transporter control (clock stopped) until a response is returned.

- iii) Measurement against the Transporter will recommence on the day after they receive information or action from the User.

Note: The ‘rules’ regarding Transporter and User receipt days are therefore equivalent in terms of time allocation per query.

4. Projects

4.1. Overview

Projects agreed between Users and the Transporter will be for a specific query exercise, generally covering a single query category, and will typically relate to high volume events. Queries which are dealt with within a project framework will not be included within the SoS regime.

5. Performance Calculation and Reporting

It is recognised that it is of most benefit to both the Transporters and to Users to establish the performance standards achieved on a regular basis and promptly. Previous SoS regimes have concluded that this is best achieved by reporting performance against a set timeframe and also to adopt an output based calculation and reporting mechanism.

To this end the performance levels will be calculated against queries **resolved** (see 3.2(d)) within a **calendar month**.

5.1. Operation of the Shadow Log

The principle of the Shadow Log as agreed during the development discussions will apply to the regime for query management. The Shadow Log will reflect the impact of Users’ performance on the achievement of the standard.

It is presumed that Users submit queries in good faith but there are occasions when the query is deemed to be invalid. For Query Management it has been accepted that queries, which are deemed to be invalid, are to be used as the measure within the Shadow Log.

It should be noted that the Transporters current system for managing Operational and Invoicing queries, ConQuest, already has a set of business rules and functionality associated with the flagging of a query as valid or invalid. However, for the purposes of the Shadow Log, the categorisation detailed in **Appendix C** below will be used to determine if a query will be classed as within the valid or invalid population.

For the calculation of the shadow log impact on query liabilities, a two step approach has been taken. Firstly the impact on query performance for the 4, 10 and 20 day performance calculations and secondly the impact on payments for those queries which are over 40 days old at closure.

General principles 4, 10 and 20 day performance calculations:

1. All relevant Invalid queries (as per Appendix C) are deducted from the total population on a 1 for 1 basis. The number of such queries will be classed as “**shadow log relevant invalid Queries**” for the calculation of any liability payments due.

2. Invalid queries are still retained within the “resolved” population in recognition that the Transporters will have expended time and effort in order to resolve these queries.
3. Should a User have a population of “**shadow log relevant invalid queries**” then this will be used in the calculation of that Users Final Achieved Performance as specified in section 5.3.

The second part of the calculation relates to those queries that are over 40 **Transporter** days old at resolution.

** a **Transporter Day**” is a Business Day where the query is within the direct control of the Transporters for its resolution.*

General principles :-

1. The number of queries resolved in over 40 **Transporter Days** is the **Initial Population**
2. Relevant Invalid queries (as per Appendix C) are deducted from the Initial Population on a 1 for 1 basis to determine the **out of standard revised population**
3. The deduction on a 1 for 1 basis will take place against the total population of out of standard queries within each banding of 20 **Transporter Days**. The table below is used to illustrate this principle.
4. The Transporter will pay to each User a payment for each query within the **out of standard revised population** for each complete block of 20 **Transporter Days** that the query was unresolved over 40 days.

Period	No. of Out of Standard queries	No. of Invalids	Out of standard revised population
41-60 days	23	2	21
61-80 days	7	1	6
81-100 days	1	1	0
101-120 days	5	1	4

5.2 Operation of Volume Scaling for User Queries

It is accepted that variable volumes of query submissions would have an impact on the ability of the Transporter to meet its performance standards for resolving queries. Although, at an aggregate level, individual peaks would be smoothed out by troughs from other Users it is felt that there could still be times when sudden increases in the daily volumes of queries submitted (whether this be collectively by small increases by a number of Users or by very large submissions by one or two Users) could occur and this would result in an increased probability of not meeting planned performance levels

Consequently, a volume limit is applied for the Query Management regime, which will protect the Transporter from large swings in query volumes, and avoid any perverse incentive to submit volumes en-masse in order to hinder the Transporters’ ability to meet the

obligations introduced by such a regime. This proposal also seeks to encourage moderated behaviour from all Users so that any inappropriate action of one or a few Users, by the submission of excessive query volumes, could impact on the performance afforded to all other Users.

Determination of User Limits

For each User an average daily limit is determined, based on the **daily average** of **valid*** queries received each month. The **total number of valid queries** will be determined from the total number of queries submitted minus the number of **invalid*** queries cleared in that month.

** The agreed list of valid/invalid query categories for use in the Shadow Log will be used as the basis for determining the number of valid queries submitted by each User in a Calendar month.*

The **daily average** of any month will be calculated by dividing the **total number of valid queries** submitted each month by a User, by the number of Business Days within the month.

The **current month daily limit** will be taken to be the **highest daily average** within the preceding three months +20%. The limit will change month on month against this three month rolling highest figure.

The table below illustrates this principle.

Month	Business Days in month	Actual Total Queries	Actual Total Valid Queries	Valid Daily Average	Current Month Daily Limit (rounded up)
1	21	451	406	19.3	-
2	21	500	450	21.4	-
3	20	601	541	27.1	-
4	22	482	434	19.7	33
5	21	467	421	20.1	33
6	20	593	534	26.7	33
7	21	397	358	17.1	32

Very Low Volume Waiver

It is recognised that there are some Users who only submit very small volumes of queries every month. For these Users, an absolute increase of say, five queries, could represent a 100% increase in their average submitted volumes. Given the limited impact of these small numbers of queries, it is proposed that the lowest value used for a **User's Current Month Daily Limit** is five queries.

Calculation of Adjusted Performance

On each day in the current month that the User exceeds its **current month daily limit** (the limit) the amount by which the limit has been exceeded (**the daily excess**) is counted. A sum of the daily excesses for the month is then calculated.

User performance for the month (which will be used in determining if any incentive payments are due) shall be calculated as follows:-

5.3 Calculating Final Achieved Performance

The Transporters' will calculate the performance level achieved for each User each calendar month and subsequently calculate any liability payment due to each User against the following categories

- GT Queries – Larger Supply Points
- GT Queries – Smaller Supply Points

For each of the categories above calculations will be made to determine the percentage of queries for each User which have been:-

- Resolved within 4 **Transporter Days** within the calendar month
- Resolved within 10 **Transporter Days** within the calendar month
- Resolved within 20 **Transporter Days** within the calendar month

The Transporter will also determine for each User the number of queries

- resolved in over 40 **Transporter Days** within the calendar month as specified in section 5.1

For the 4, 10 and 20 day standard the calculation of performance (expressed as a percentage) will be made as follows:-

$$\text{Final Achieved Performance (percentage)} = \frac{\text{No. of Queries resolved within } \mathbf{D} \text{ days}}{\mathbf{A} - \mathbf{B} - \mathbf{C}} \times 100$$

NB: In exceptional circumstances, it is possible for this formula to produce:

a Final Achieved Performance of greater than 100% (where the number of queries cleared in *D* days is greater than the number resolved in the month minus invalid and daily excess queries)

a negative Final Achieved performance (where the number of invalid queries submitted plus the sum of daily excess queries is greater than the total number of queries resolved).

In both cases the Transporters will be deemed to have met the required PPL.

Where:-

A is the Total number of queries resolved in the month

B is the number of Shadow Log Relevant Invalid Queries (see 5.1)

C is the sum of the daily excesses (see 5.2)

D is 4, 10 or 20 days respectively.

5.4 Calculation of any liability payments due to each User

Where the Final Achieved Performance is less than the required PPL then liability payments will be calculated. Any determination of liability payments due to each User shall be calculated in accordance with UNC Section S4.7.

6 Appendices

6.1. Appendix A

ConQuest Invoice Contact Codes

The following table provides a comprehensive list of Invoice contact codes for GT queries.

Contact Code	Description	Invoice Type(s)
EXT	Challenge to the Exit Zone details held on SPA for a site	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM
ISO	Challenge to meter point status of a Supply Point	AD*, AMI, CAP CAZ, COM, REC
PRS	Any query disputing the relationship between Prime & Sub deduct meters and/or the Prime or Sub deduct meter attributes.	AD*, AMI, CAZ, COM, REC
DLQ	NDM Datalogger queries of both reads and Assets	AD*, AMI, CAZ, COM, REC
DMQ	DM Datalogger queries of reads, consumption and daily read equipment.	AD*, AMI, CAZ, COM, REC
AQQ	Challenge to validation of a AQ	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM, REC
DUP	Multiple MPRNs created for one meter	AD*, AMI, CAP CAZ, COM, REC
EUC	Queries challenging End User Category	AD*, COM, REC, CAP, CAZ
SOQ	Challenge to the Supply Off-take Quantity	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM, REC
ADJ	Query challenging an adjustment	AD*, AMI, NTE, REC
AMC	Challenge to the Meter Rental Charges (rates only)	AMI
CSE	Incorrect charges applied to a CSEP	AD*
IRC	Challenge to the Meter Read Charges	AD*, CAZ
ITR	Challenge to the charges levied on the Ad-Hoc (interest charges) invoice	AD*
LIA	Challenge to the charges levied on the Ad-Hoc (liability charges) invoice	AD*
MFF	Meter Read Frequency used to bill against is incorrect	CAZ, AD*
MRQ	Any contact challenging the reconciliation charges based on the validity of an NDM meter read	REC, AD*
NTE	Challenge to the charges levied on the NTE invoice	NTE
OVR	Any contact challenging the validity of an overrun charge	AD*, NTE
RAC	Any contact challenging the validity of a ratchet charge	COM, AD*
RAT	Query challenging the rate used	AD*, AMI, CAP, CAZ, COM, NTE, REC
RBD	Reconciliation by Difference	REC, AD*
SQQ	Billed Supply Off-take Quantity is incorrect	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM, REC
UNQ	Query challenging Unique Site configuration	AD*, AMI
UQS	Incorrect charges applied to a Unique Site	AD*, AMI
PSI	Challenge to charges invoiced for Prime and Sub-deduct meters	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM, REC
ECB	Query challenging the charges invoiced on the entry capacity buyback invoice	AD*, CAP, CAZ, COM, REC

6.2 Appendix B

ConQuest Operational Contact Codes

The following table provides a comprehensive list of Operational contact codes for GT queries.

Contact Code	Description	
ADD	Any contact challenging the address/postcode details of a site held on UK Link	Address Amendments
AGG	Any contact challenging a response to a request to aggregate a group of meters under one supply point.	Aggregation Responses
CDQ	Any contact challenging the consumption of a site where the Bundled reads are confirmed to be incorrect or for Unbundled reads where the reads are confirmed to be correct	Consumption Dispute
DUP	Any contact challenging two MPRNs for one Service to a property and where asset information matches.	Duplicates
ISO	Any contact challenging the status of a Supply Meter Point where an asset has been removed	Meter Point Status
APP	Challenge to Bottom Stop SOQ	Appeal Queries
MNC	A request to create a Meter Point Reference Number for a meter that is live, but not on Sites & Meters.	M Number Creation
PRS	Any contact challenging the Link Code for a Primary, Sub or Free- standing meter	Primes & Subs
NOM	Any contact challenging the reason for a specific Nomination response.	Nomination Responses
CNQ	Any contact challenging the reason for a specific response to a Confirmation file.	Confirmation Responses
DMQ	Request to investigate the daily read equipment or read information	Datalogger/Daily read dispute

6.3 Appendix C

Invalid Query Category Summary – Shadow Log Inclusion & Exclusion

Category	Explanation	ConQuest category	Include in Shadow Log
1	Inter User Dispute	Invalid	No
2	Invalid Challenge, however, UK Link updated following investigation e.g. MNC query submitted – however, no need to create a new MPR – as it already exists for the site, however, Address Amendment undertaken as a result of query submission. (Plot to postal).	Valid	No
3	Auto Closure by ConQuest. Action by User not completed within agreed time.	Invalid	Yes
4	No amendment required to UK Link following challenge e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Query is really an RFI • Data already amended prior to submission of query • CSEP site • Contact previously resolved • “Double” already open 	Invalid	Yes
5	Valid when raised – invalid when cleared e.g.: Meter Exchange believed to have occurred, however, no asset update has been sent to the User. When the User submits the query the exchange has still not been updated on the system – but by the time the query is investigated – the amendment has gone through automatically.	Invalid	No
6	Closed original query and raised a new external contact to enable the deletion of a 3rd party MPRN	Invalid	No
7	Advised to resubmit under a different contact code or as a different Transporter Activity	Invalid	No
8	Poorly worded queries e.g. Query is incomprehensible and no determination of the challenge can be determined or is inappropriate, for example: “Please investigate gas leak”	Invalid	Yes