

Code of Practice on Taxation for Banks

OVERVIEW

1. The Government expects that banking groups, their subsidiaries, and their branches operating in the UK, will comply with the spirit, as well as the letter, of tax law, discerning and following the intentions of Parliament.

1.1 This means that banks should:

- adopt adequate governance to control the types of transactions they enter into
- not undertake tax planning that aims to achieve a tax result that is contrary to the intentions of Parliament
- comply fully with all their tax obligations
- maintain a transparent relationship with HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC).

GOVERNANCE

2. The bank should have a documented strategy and governance process for taxation matters encompassed within a formal policy. Accountability for this policy should rest with the UK board of directors or, for foreign banks, a senior accountable person in the UK.

2.1. This policy should include a commitment to comply with tax obligations and to maintain an open, professional, and transparent relationship with HMRC.

2.2. Appropriate processes should be maintained, by use of product approval committees or other means, to ensure the tax policy is taken into account in business decision-making. The bank's tax department should play a critical role and its opinion should not be ignored by business units. There may be a documented appeals process to senior management for occasions when the tax department and business unit disagree.

TAX PLANNING

3. The bank should not engage in tax planning other than that which supports genuine commercial activity.

3.1. Transactions should not be structured in a way that will have tax results for the bank that are inconsistent with the underlying economic consequences unless there exists specific legislation designed to give that result. In that case, the bank should reasonably believe that the transaction is structured in a way that gives a tax result for the bank which is not contrary to the intentions of Parliament

3.2 There should be no promotion of arrangements to other parties unless the bank reasonably believes that the tax result of those arrangements for the other parties is not contrary to the intentions of Parliament.

3.3 Remuneration packages for bank employees, including senior executives, should be structured so that the bank reasonably believes that the proper amounts of tax and national insurance contributions are paid on the rewards of employment.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE BANK AND HMRC

4. Relationships with HMRC should be transparent and constructive, based on mutual trust wherever possible.

4.1. The features of this relationship should include:

- disclosing fully the significant uncertainties in relation to tax matters
- focusing on significant issues
- seeking to resolve issues before returns are filed whenever practicable
- engaging in a co-operative, supportive and professional manner in all interactions
- working collaboratively to achieve early resolution and hence certainty.

4.2. Where the bank is in doubt whether the tax result of a proposed transaction is contrary to the intentions of Parliament, to help the bank form its reasonable belief under section 3, it may discuss its plans in advance with HMRC.