Addendum to the Aqua Book (5<sup>th</sup> October 2023): This document provides supplementary information to the Aqua Book, in response to a recommendation by the Public Accounts Committee to provide clear principles for departments to follow on the publication of models, their outputs, and registers of business-critical models. This guidance will be integrated into a further update to the Aqua Book to be published subsequently.

Transparency is important to support effective scrutiny and can be a powerful quality assurance tool, particularly where analysis is highly complex.

This guide applies to publishing lists of Business Critical Models (BCM) and information on models more widely.

- 1. **Departments and Arm's Length Bodies<sup>1</sup> (ALBs) should<sup>2</sup> publish a list of BCMs** in use within their organisations at least annually.
- 2. Each department and ALB **should** decide which models are defined as business critical based on the extent to which they influence significant financial and funding decisions; are necessary to the achievement of a Departmental business plan, or where an error could lead to serious financial, legal or reputational damage.
- 3. Departments and ALBs **should** align their definitions and thresholds of business criticality with their own risk framework respectively. The thresholds should be agreed by the Director of Analysis or equivalent.
- 4. ALB's are **responsible** for publishing their own BCM list, unless agreed otherwise with the department. The ALB's Accounting Officer (AO) is **accountable** for ensuring publication and the sponsor department's AO oversees this.
- 5. The BCM lists **should** include all business-critical models unless there is an internally documented reason that they should be excluded, agreed with the Director of Analysis (or equivalent) and the agreement documented.
- 6. Justification for not publishing a model in the BCM list may include exemptions under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act 2000 where relevant, for example, including, but not limited to: National Security, policy under development or prejudicing commercial interests.
- 7. In addition to these exemptions, there may be further reasons where the risk of negative consequence is deemed to outweigh the potential benefits resulting from publication of the model. One example is where population behaviour may change in response to awareness of a model or modelling.
- 8. For clarity, the name of model and what the model is used for **should** be included, alongside links to published material.
- 9. To ensure the BCM list is accessible, content and structure **should** follow guidance for writing plainly<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> ALBs include executive agencies, non-departmental public bodies and non-ministerial departments, please see <u>Cabinet Office guidance on Classification of Public Bodies</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The use of should denotes a recommendation or an advisory element, <u>Government Functional</u> <u>Standard GovS 010: Analysis - GOV.UK</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> <u>Content design: planning, writing and managing content - Writing for GOV.UK - Guidance - GOV.UK</u> (www.gov.uk)

**Departments may**<sup>4</sup> **also choose to publish models** and details on these models which may include data, assumptions, methodology and outputs. Model publication should also draw on the guidance for BCM lists related to accessibility and justification for when publication may not be appropriate. For models or modelling that are extremely complex in nature, it may be more appropriate to publish summary information on the models instead, to aid the accessibility of the published model details.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The use of may denotes approval, <u>Government Functional Standard GovS 010: Analysis - GOV.UK</u>.