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This document is still under study and subject to change. It should not be used for reference purposes.

ISO/TC 225	REQUESTED ACTION
Title: "Market, opinion and social research" Secretariat: AENOR - Spain	Circulated to P- and O-members, and to technical committees and organizations in liaison for: ☒ information ☐ discussion at ☐ comments by ☐ voting (P-members only: ballot form attached) by [date] ☐ send your proposal by *P-members of the technical committee or subcommittee concerned have an obligation to vote.*

WD - Market, opinion and social research. Service requirements.

INTRODUCTION

The main aim of International standardization is to facilitate business relations. An International Standard embodies the essential principles of global openness and transparency, consensus and technical coherence.

The purpose of this International Standard for Market, opinion and social research is to unify the criteria of the work procedures, establish level of requirements of the service provision, and that the quality of work is the same accross countries.

Market, opinion and social research is now a global industry with a rapidly increasing proportion of the money spent on research being concerned with expenditure on multi-country studies. Clients need to be able to evaluate the results of their studies in developing their market strategies for the product and the services they offer, and this is the reason for making such studies (for the same client) in different countries. Consequently the quality standards in all the countries involved should be the same.

Market, opinion and social research service providers and their clients have expressed the wish to have a standard that clarifies the difference between market, opinion and social research and prospecting or direct marketing activities.

The objective of the standard is to establish an international standard to harmonise national standards already available.

1 Scope

This International Standard establishes the requirements for organizations and professionals conducting market, opinion and social research.

2 Terms and Definitions

2.1 Access Panel

Sample database of potential respondents who declare that they will co-operate for future interviews if selected.

NOTE Normally the minimum demographic data are available for each respondent so effective sample selection can be checked by population parameters, and if more data on potential respondents are in the database then targeted samples can be selected. Continuously reporting panels (See 2.40 “panel”) (eg TV-rating-panels, consumer-panels) are not covered by the definition of Access Panel.

2.2 Accuracy

Degree of closeness between the estimate and the true parameter value.

2.3 Ad Hoc Research
Research specifically designed to address a particular objective or issue.

NOTE Ad hoc research is conducted when there is insufficient information to answer the relevant questions.

2.4 Appraisal
The process of monitoring the competency of an individual in carrying out their work.

2.5 Audit
Systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining audit evidence and evaluating it objectively to determine the extent to which audit criteria are fulfilled. [ISO 9000:2000 definintion 3.9.1]

NOTE Audit criteria: set of policies, procedures or requirements used as a reference [ISO 9000:2000 definition 3.9.3]

2.6 Auditor
Person with the competence to conduct an audit. [ISO 9000:2000 definition 3.9.9]

2.7 Bias
The tendency for estimates to systematically deviate in projecting from the sample to the population.

2.8 Computer Aided Interviewing (CAI); CATI; CAPI
Interviews with responses keyed directly into a computer and where the administration of the interview is managed by a specifically designed programme.

NOTE Examples include computer aided personal (CAPI) or telephone (CATI), or via Internet (CAWI) interviewing.

2.9 Client
Individual, organisation, department or division, internal or external, which requests or commissions a research project.

2.10 Code
Numeric or alpha character or combination of characters associated with each response category.

2.11 Code Frame
List of categories with associated codes (see 2.10) for classifying responses.

2.12 Coding
Process of assigning codes.

2.13 Confidentiality

Requirement that data collected or information and materials are protected from unauthorized use.

2.14 Continuous Research
Research that involves regular and on-going data collection.

2.15 Data Editing; Data Cleaning
Set of methods verifying the collected data and if necessary, correcting them.

2.16 Data Entry
Process step where data collected are converted into computer-readable form.

2.17 Data Processing (DP)
Management and converting of data from its raw state through to a required output.

2.18 Data Record
Set of data derived from a reporting or observed unit.

2.19 Database
Centrally held collection of data that allows access by users.

2.20 Depth Interview
Unstructured interview conducted by a highly skilled interviewer.

NOTE The purpose of depth interviews is to understand the underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes and feelings on a particular subject.

2.21 Desk Research
Systematic examination of available secondary data in the context of a research objective.

2.22 Derived Data Item
Data item used in analysis and/or tables derived from one or more source data items and/or categories.

2.23 Discussion Guide
List of points or subjects which have to be covered in a depth interview or focus group.

2.24 Fieldworker
Person generally involved in the collection of data for market, opinion and social research excluding management.

2.25 Filter
Question in a questionnaire that restricts answers to a sub-group of respondents.

2.26 Focus Group; Group Discussion

Informal discussion with a small number of selected participants in the company of a skilled moderator.

2.27 Frequency Count; Hole Count; Marginals
Summary count of individual data items on the computer file.

2.28 Imputation
Procedure where missing data are replaced by estimated or modeled data.

2.29 Incentive
Gift, payment or other concessions made to increase response rates and general interest among sample members.

2.30 Indexing
Method of identifying and classifying data to make them easier to compare.

2.31 Logic Data Entry
Data entry processes which are programmed for specific projects to check question skips and response ranges.

2.32 Market, Opinion And Social Research Service Provider; Research Service Provider
Service providers, which conduct research projects or parts of research projects in market, opinion and social research according to scientific principles and methods.

NOTE These can be private research institutions, academic and university research institutions, in-company research departments, local authorities, official statistics agencies or individual researchers acting in the same capacity.

2.33 Moderator
Individual responsible for facilitating the interaction of the members of the focus group and for capturing the data generated.

2.34 Mystery Shopping
Study using contacts in the role of customers in order to evaluate a business performance.

2.35 Netting
Method of treating codes assigned to responses from open-ended questions, where the net refers to the total number of people responding with the same group of codes even where each person has given more than one response within the same group of codes.

2.36 Non response
Failure to obtain measurements on some sample members for all or some questions or variables.

2.37 Observational Research

Research study where data are collected by directly or indirectly observing behaviour or events taking place.

2.38 Open-Ended Question
Type of question where respondents are asked to answer in their own words.

2.39 Open-Ended Response
Verbatim response to a question that can require coding.

2.40 Panel
Group of selected research participants who have agreed to provide information at specified intervals over an extended period of time.

NOTE "panel" does not cover Access Panel (see 2.1)

2.41 Pre-Testing Questionnaire
Small scale interview series to check the performance of the questionnaire before embarking on full scale fieldwork.

2.42 Qualitative Research
Analysis of motivations, patterns of thought, opinion, attitude, assessment or behaviour via unstructured research techniques such as focus groups and depth interviews.

NOTE A statement about the frequency and distribution of such patterns within a given population is normally not possible on the basis of qualitative studies, or else only to a first approximation.

2.43 Quality Control
Part of quality management focused on fulfiling quality requirements. [ISO 9000:2000 definition 3.2.10]

NOTE

2.44 Quality Assurance
Part of quality management focused on providing confidence that quality requirements will be fulfilled. [ISO 9000:2000 definition 3.2.11]

NOTE

2.45 Quantitative Research
Numerical representation of observations for the purpose of describing and explaining the phenomena that those observations reflect.

NOTE Often this research aims at making inference to populations.

In most cases a structured questionnaire is used with pre-determined questions with most of the responses being pre-coded.

2.46 Questionnaire
Structured technique for collecting data consisting of a series of questions.

NOTE Questionnaires can be self-completion or administered by an interviewer.

2.47 Quota Sampling
Method of constructing a sample so that it conforms to a predefined structure with respect to certain variables.

2.48 Probability Sampling; Radom Sampling
Procedure such that each member of the sampling frame has a specific and non-zero chance of being selected to form part of a sample.

2.49 Recruiter
Person who identifies and invites respondents to participate in a research project.

2.50 Reliability
The extent to which a research process can be repeated and produce consistent results.

2.51 Representativeness
Extent to which a sample represents the defined target population.

NOTE For probability sampling statistical margins of error will apply.

2.52 Research project
Research work that has its own objective, design, data collection process and results, although not all of these elements have to be present.

2.53 Research Proposal
Written submission to a client which includes a research design.

2.54 Researcher
Anyone designated by the person responsible for the project to carry out a specific task or tasks.

NOTE Other titles include Analyst and Executive

2.55 Respondent
Person from which data are collected.

NOTE "person" includes natural or legal persons

2.56 Retail Audit
Collection of data from retail outlets using documentary and/or observational methods

2.57 Sample
Subset of the target population for which data collection is to be conducted.

2.58 Sampling Frame
List of population elements or other appropriate sources from which sample members are selected.

2.59 Sample Variation
The range of an estimate based on the sample size and design effects.

2.60 Screening
Initial questions in a questionnaire used to establish eligibility of respondent.

2.61 Secondary Data
Data that have already been collected and are available from another source.

2.62 Simple Data Entry
Data entry containing no built-in logic checks.

2.63 Survey
Primary data collection for a quantitative research see (2.52) project

2.64 Target Population
The population of interest to which inferences are to be made.

2.65 Validation of Data Collection
Procedures to check that data have been collected according to specification.

2.66 Validity
The extent to which a research process represents what it intends to measure.

2.67 Verification of Data Management
Procedures to check that data are entered, coded and processed according to specification.

2.68 Wave
Each succesive repetition in a continuous project in which neither the objective nor the general project design change.

2.69 Weighting
Calculation process in which different units or variables are recalculated by assigning numericalvalues, with the aim of

increasing or reducing their relative importance in a sample or sub-sample.

3 Management System Requirements

3.1 Organisation and responsibilities

The research service provider shall apply a quality management system, which covers all the requirements of the present International Standard.

Top management of the research service provider:

a) shall be committed to quality of client service. This may include a statement of quality policy and quality objectives,

b) shall be responsible for the development, implementation and continual improvement of the quality management system,

c) shall ensure that the quality management system is properly documented,

d) shall ensure the provision of adequate resources for the system,

e) shall appoint a quality manager, with enough authority to be responsible for the whole system and who has the responsibility of organising audits in order to make sure the present International Standard is applied.

The research service provider structure, including the responsibilities of the people involved in the realisation and the control of the service, shall be documented.

Procedures and methods requested for completing the different tasks in accordance with the requirements of the present International Standard shall be documented, implemented, maintained and auditable.

Procedures and methods shall be available, ensuring that everyone involved in the provision of the research service are familiar with the ethical and professional codes (eg WAPOR, ICC/ESOMAR International codes), relevant legislation, and documented procedures and methods which specifically affect their work.

3.2 Confidentiality of research

All information supplied to the research service provider by the client in order to conduct a research project shall be treated in the strictest confidence. It shall only be used in this context and shall not be made available to third parties without authorisation.

The research results pertaining to a specific client which accrue with a research service provider as a result of carrying out a particular research project shall not be used in research projects for other clients without authorisation.

3.3 Documentation requirements

Records shall be established and maintained to provide evidence of traceability.

Each project shall have a project file that contains or references the location of a documented project specification showing the basic requirements of the project.

In addition to unique project identification, every relevant record shall be uniquely identified to allow traceability and to ensure they can be located.

Records shall be kept safe, useable and retained for defined periods (eg computer files back-up).

All documents and records shall have a version control system so that the valid version can be clearly identified.

All electronic files shall be checked for viruses by an uptodate virus detection software.

3.4 Training

The research service provider shall have a training scheme that ensures that individuals working on any part of a project and for specific tasks of the quality management system, either have due knowledge and experience or receive appropriate training for the tasks they undertake.

The research service provider shall ensure that everyone involved in the provision of the research service entrusted with the individual parts of the overall research process command the knowledge and experience necessary in order to fulfil their specific tasks.

When special factual, methodological or technical knowledge is required in order to conduct a research project, and the people involved in the provision of the research service may not normally be assumed to possess this knowledge, suitable project-related training activities shall be provided.

The research service provider shall establish and maintain records of training activities including the identification of current or potential training needs, taking into account the function and evolution of the job.

3.5 Subcontracting/outsourcing

The research service provider shall remain entirely responsible for all services carried out in connection with the project, including any part of the work which may be sub-contracted and services relating to the present International standard.

The research service provider shall define procedures to select subcontractors, to establish contractual relations with them and to control the quality of the service provided.

Subcontractors shall be briefed by the research service provider in such a way as will enable them to conduct the subcontracted parts of the research project in adherence with the contract and the present International Standard.

The research service provider shall evaluate the performance of subcontractors and maintain relevant records, including records of any unsatisfactory service received.

3.6 Reviewing the effectiveness of the quality management system

The research service provider shall effectively monitor and manage the research process and the quality management system by:

- analysing the functioning of the research process and the quality management system,
- analysing the causes of problems if any and implementing corrective or preventive measures,
- recording of actions taken to prevent any repetition of such problems.

There shall be a way of confirming that due actions have been taken and that these are effective.

The research service provider shall establish and maintain a system to document, review and resolve clients' complaints.

The system shall include:

- the identification and recording of the causes of the complaint,
- the actions taken to resolve the problem and prevent recurrence.

There shall be a review mechanism to confirm that such actions taken have been effective in resolving the complaint.

The research service provider shall carry out, at pre-planned intervals, audits to establish the correct functioning of the quality management system.

The research service provider shall measure and analyse at regular intervals client satisfaction in order to improve the quality of the service.

4. Managing the executive elements of research

4.1 Responding to research requests

4.1.1 General

The research service provider shall have in place defined methods for checking all necessary resources and have available internal and external expertise before responding to a research request.

If this is not already apparent from the request itself, it shall first of all be established whether the client requires a research proposal or merely a cost quotation. It is necessary for the client and the research service provider to agree upon the objectives before a research proposal can be drawn up.

NOTE The research service provider should have the opportunity to modify or improve the research approach proposed by the client.

The research service provider is responsible for ensuring that the client`s requirements are understood at each stage of the research process. This may involve additional meetings. Any agreements should be documented.

When responding to requests, research service providers shall explicitly point out if parts of the intended research project have not been adequately specified and the existing uncertainties have not been entirely resolved upon closer inquiry. If the research service provider is unable to meet the deadline for the research proposal or cost quotation, the client shall be informed of this at the earliest possible time.

4.1.2 Research proposals and cost quotations

Research proposals should contain an adequate description of all relevant steps of the planned research project as well as a timetable. If special aspects of data protection or professional codes need to be taken into account with the chosen research design, the research service provider shall give a detailed account of the problem and the proposed solution. The costs shall always be part of the research proposal. The proposal shall include details of steps considered critical by both the research service provider and client.

Depending on the client's request, the research service provider proposes a research proposal or a cost quotation. The quotation gives the cost of conducting a research project according to a predetermined methodology. It makes reference to an explicit document, drawn up by the client or the research service provider, which sets out this method.

The cost quotation shall specify at least:

- the cost and execution times of the research project; and
- the technical specifications and all elements having an influence on the cost, (eg fieldwork, coding, data entry, analysis, final report, number of presentations, etc.)

4.1.3 Contents of research proposals

4.1.3.1 Objectives and methodology of the research project

The research proposal shall define clearly which questions posed by the client can be answered by means of the proposed research project and which can only be answered by a follow-up research project or different means of obtaining the required information. The research approach and methods of analysis shall be chosen and described on the basis of the concrete objectives. The description of the methodology shall not only outline the procedures themselves but also indicate the appropriateness of this approach and the envisaged reliability of the research results, as well as the research service provider's own experiences with this approach.

4.1.3.2 Scope of services

The topic areas of the questionnaire or discussion guide to be used, approaches to analysis and the scope of analysis should be included in the proposal where relevant.

4.1.3.3 Sampling and weighting

The target population and the sample shall be adequately described in the research proposal. The proposal shall also describe the sampling frame and state the extent to which the sampling frame is representative of the target population. In this connection the extent and detail of the description will depend both on the methodological approach and on the client's specific demands. Regarding the sample, at least the sample size, the method of drawing the sample, the recruitment or selection of respondents and any weighting procedures to be applied shall be described.
When stating the size of the sample, an indication shall be made not only of the total number of cases but also of the extent to which the results obtained for sub-groups will be reliable.

Research proposals shall describe the precise structure of the target group to be studied and, where necessary for methodological reasons, also the method of recruitment.

In qualitative research projects, the minimum length of time that must have elapsed since participants last took part, if ever, in a group discussion or individual depth interview shall be indicated. Proposal for such research projects shall also make clear how respondents will be recruited (from a pre-recruited panel or selected by some other means).

The number of individuals to be interviewed and/or the number of groups and intended number of participants in each shall be specified.

4.1.3.4 Description of data collection and processing

The research proposal shall describe the relevant aspects of data collection as described in clause 5. The estimated or anticipated length of the questionnaire and/or interviews or group discussions shall be stated in the research proposal.

In qualitative research project, the place of interview shall be specified and whether or not viewing facilities are available.

The research proposal shall describe the relevant aspects of data processing as described in clause 6, such as coding, editing, data entry, and file preparation.

4.1.3.5 Secondary analyses

When secondary analytical sources are to be used, the nature of the sources and their appropriateness and reliability should be specified.

4.1.3.6 Reporting and presentation of results

The research proposal shall give details of the scope and means of reporting. This applies to both technical and strategic aspects of content. The technical aspects of content may include the proposed individual analyses to be conducted. The strategic aspects of content primarily concern the extent of the advisory service offered by the research service provider. It shall be stated whether the services to be rendered are confined to the execution of the research project itself, including the development of the tools needed for this purpose; or whether in addition they include reporting in the sense of an interpretation of the research results; or whether beyond this they also encompass strategic recommendations derived from the results.

Especially in qualitative research projects, the proposal shall state whether verbatim comments from interviews and/or group discussions will be included in the report. The proposal shall also state what records of the interviews / group discussions will be available.

4.1.3.7 Subcontracting individual research steps

The research proposal shall describe whether individual research steps are to be subcontracted to other external service providers (subcontractors).

4.1.3.8 Compliance with relevant law and professional codes

The research proposal shall refer to applicable law and published codes of ethics in market, opinion and social research.

4.1.3.9 Quality controls

The proposal shall indicate that the research service provider commits to this International Standard.

4.1.4 Price

The research proposal or cost quotation shall specify the price of the proposed research approach and the services provided. Key factors which can lead to a change in the fixed price shall be clearly identified. A time period shall be named for the duration of which the calculated prices are valid. It should also specify the terms of payment.

4.1.5 Research contracts

The cooperation between the research service provider and the client shall be documented in writing. It is acceptable to use the final version of the proposal and a written acceptance for this purpose.

NOTE When the research service is of a complex or long-term nature there might be a need for a specific service level agreement where deliverables and responsibilities are provided in detail

4.2 Project schedule

Unless previously agreed the client shall receive a research project´s schedule, including all relevant timings and responsibilities. If relevant this project schedule shall include the following:

- client supplied documents, materials and products;
- client opportunity (or requirement) to approve the questionnaire or discussion guide;
- fieldwork;
- client opportunity (or requirement) to approve the analysis specification;
- output delivery for data, presentations and report.

Changes in the timetable made by the client or by the research service provider shall be announced to and approved by the other contracting party as soon as possible. Any such changes should be documented

4.3 Assistance by and cooperation with clients

4.3.1 Client briefing for research service provider

Any briefing shall be documented.

If the research objectives and/or other requirements do not appear to be described fully enough in the client´s documents, the research service provider shall request a more detailed briefing from the client.

NOTE For many research projects, a briefing of the research service provider by the client is essential in order for the research problem to be approached with an adequate research design. This kind of briefing can be advisable for each step in the research process – from the submission of the research proposal to the presentation of the results.

4.3.2 Changes in the specification of work

The research service provider shall be responsible for agreeing and confirming in writing with the client any changes including the deliverables, timing and cost of a project. If specified subcontractors are changed/substituted or subcontractors newly commissioned after the proposal documentation stage the client shall be informed.

4.3.3 Questionnaires and discussion guides

The client shall be given the opportunity to participate in the design and/or the review of the questionnaire or discussion guide. Client approval of the questionnaire or discussion guide is required. This approval shall be documented.

4.3.4 Observing and checking data collection

Under the following circumstances the client may be permitted to observe the collection of data: the respondents taking part in the research project have agreed with this beforehand and their identity will be protected within the requirements of the applicable law and the professional rules (eg ICC/ESOMAR Code). These requirements also apply if the client receives transcripts or recordings of group discussions or individual exploratory interviews.
Clients shall be informed if their observation could threaten the quality of the data collected.

A client shall be entitled to make spot checks of the original questionnaires, or the records of group discussions or individual exploratory interviews, in the offices of the research service provider. The research service provider shall take adequate steps to ensure that identity of respondents is protected.

4.3.5 Code frame and data analysis

At the client's request, the research service provider shall make the code frame and the methods used to analyse the data available.

4.3.6 Presentation of results to the client

The client shall be consulted on the way the research results are presented.

4.4 Questionnaires and discussion guides

4.4.1 Conception and design of questionnaires

Because the content, structure and design of the questionnaire can affect the research findings, the possible effects of the wording and the sequence of individual questions as well as the number of response alternatives and their order on the research results shall be taken into account when implementing the questionnaire design.

NOTE In addition to this a clear filter structure and clearly understandable instructions are quality-relevant features of questionnaires. The latter are particularly important in the case of self-administered questionnaires (eg mailed, e-mail, online, TDE and fax surveys) as with these methods of data collection the respondents have to complete the questionnaire without the assistance of an interviewer.

4.4.2 Translation of questionnaires and discussion guides or any other project-related documents

The need for translation shall be pointed out in the proposal.

Translation shall be done by a person or persons with language skills comparable to mother-tongue competence in the source and target languages and at least one of whom shall have experience with the wording of this type of document.

Revision shall be done by a person or persons other than the translator with the appropriate competence in the source and/or target languages to examine the translation for its suitability for purpose.

The client shall be given the opportunity to review the translation.

The outcome of the translation and the revision procedures selected shall be recorded and the research service provider shall act accordingly.

4.4.3 Pre-testing questionnaires

If the client or the research service provider consider it as necessary, a questionnaire pre-test shall be carried out. If there is any pre-test the findings and their implications shall be documented.

4.4.4 Project-related briefing and training of interviewers and moderators

The research service provider shall ensure that both the field workers and any associated subcontractor are adequately briefed and issued with appropriate instructions for using questionnaires and discussion guides. Briefing shall be documented.

If the methodological requirements which will be made of the interviewers in conducting a research project go beyond the scope of the skills taught in the basic training programme, a project-related training programme shall be carried out which takes these into account.

The moderators of group discussions and explorative interviews shall be briefed in the specific topic areas.

4.5 Managing sampling, data collection and data analysis

4.5.1 Managing drawing and weighting of samples

4.5.1.1 Requirements

The characteristics of a sample shall be defined according to the specific requirements of the chosen selection procedure (eg, stratification, clustering, assignments, selection, etc.). The approach used in drawing the sample shall be documented.

The characteristics of the sample shall be checked by the research service provider on the basis of the sampling criteria specific to the research project. This applies equally to fieldwork conducted by the research service provider and to work conducted by subcontractors.

NOTE For qualitative sampling requirements see clause 5.5

4.5.1.2 Size of sample

The size of the sample shall be chosen in such a way that the sample variation achieved both in the overall sample and in the sub-groups relevant to the analysis is acceptable for the purposes of the research project.

4.5.1.3 Quality criteria for probability samples

The particular sampling approach shall ensure that each person or unit within the target population or sampling frame has a calculable probability of being included in the sample. The source of data used for selecting sample points and/or individual persons or units shall be documented. Subsequent weighting of the respondent records may be used to counteract biases in structure due to non-responses, undercoverage and other causes.

4.5.1.4 Quality criteria for quota samples

For a quota sample the intended target population shall be known and defined in terms of the relevant criteria. The characteristics relevant to the overall population shall be included in the quota plan. The source and date of the origin of the quota controls shall be provided.

For population samples the characteristics may include regional spread, age, gender, marital status and those characteristics which indicate membership of a social class, such as profession, education and net household income, race/ethnicity, labor force status.

The number of interviews required for each characteristic to be controlled shall be specified in a quota plan.

The requirements of the quota plan shall be fulfilled as exactly as possible. For quality assurance purposes characteristics relevant to the research goals but not dictated by the quota plan shall be detailed exactly.

4.5.1.5 Quality criteria for access panels

NOTE Access Panels are large databases which are used for drawing all kinds of ad hoc samples (specific target groups and/or national population). Continuously reporting panels (e.g. TV-rating-panels, consumer-panels) are not covered by the definition of Access Panels.

When access panels are used for drawing samples for a research project, the research service provider shall document and report to the client:

- Size of the original database;
- Method of recruiting panel members;
- Structure of the database (socio-demographics and other criteria);
- Criteria of selection for the sample;

- Method of data collection for the sample; and
- Accuracy of the sample.

If available, relevant data from other sources than access panel should be documented in order to detect potential biases.

4.5.1.6 Documentation of data weighting

If a weighting process is used it shall be appropriately described together with the weighting variables applied. Source and date of weighting targets shall be provided. The weighted and unweighted sample structures shall be documented.

4.5.2 Coding, editing and other data processing

In case of quantitative research projects, the research service provider shall ensure that the data processing is performed in a way to minimize errors, the coding of the open-ended questions is checked for errors and the analyses and tabulations are correct. Standardized quality controls for this purpose shall be established and documented

NOTE Full requirements are in clause 6.

4.6 Monitoring the execution of research

The research service provider shall monitor the most important study processes so that they are conducted according to agreed specifications (see 4.1.3). The most important processes include, sampling procedure, questionnaire or discussion guide development, data collection, data processing, analysis and production of documents.

4.7 Research documents, materials and products

4.7.1 Handling and Storage

A research service provider is obliged to handle the documents, materials and products made available to it carefully and in accordance with the client’s instructions. They shall be stored in accordance with their specific requirements. All documents, materials and products which are no longer required after the research project has been completed shall be returned to the client unless explicitly otherwise requested.

The research service provider shall take suitable measures in order to protect the documents, materials and products entrusted to its care. Where documents, materials or products are presented to the persons chosen to take part in a research project, or where these persons are to be given the opportunity to use them, the research service provider shall ensure that the research conditions are the same for all persons and that the products are not damaged, soiled or altered in the course of the research project in a way that might affect the results. If the research service provider transports or dispatches materials or products, it shall ensure that secure forms of packaging and suitable methods of transport are employed.

4.7.2 Safe keeping

It shall be ensured that the documents, materials and products of confidential or sensitive nature provided by the client are treated confidentially both inside and outside the research service provider. At the client's request, the research service provider shall give details of the concrete measures taken to safeguard confidentiality. The research service provider is obliged to store documents, materials and products belonging to the client in a manner which does not permit unauthorised persons access to them. Where possible, access should be confined to those persons immediately involved in the research project.

4.8 Reporting of research results

4.8.1 Documentation

The research results shall be delivered to the client in the form already described in the research proposal or agreed at a later time. The report about the research project shall contain the necessary basic information which allows the reader to understand the way the research project was conducted (see 7.1 and 7.2) and potentially replicate it, and the potential and limitations of its results.

For continuous research, the research service provider shall document and agree with the client the content and frequency of interim reporting to cover general research issues.

4.8.2 Interpretation

The interpretation of the results of empirical research shall pertain to the research problem and shall be supported by the empirical findings of this research project and where applicable, by other data.

Interpretations and recommendations based on empirical research should be distinguished from personal views and opinions.

4.8.3 Presentation

The results relevant to the aim of the research shall be presented in full. The client shall be consulted on the way the research results are presented.

In quantitative studies the research results shall be presented either in the form of absolute figures or relative values. When relative values are quoted, it shall be possible to deduce the absolute figures directly from these. For this reason, the base shall always be included when percentages are quoted.

If the data have been weighted, the results of the research project shall be presented in a weighted form together with the weighting factors. If the client is receiving a data record the weighting factors shall be included in the data record.

The oral presentation of the research results shall involve persons who are on the one hand familiar with the subject matter of the research project and on the other hand also with the way in which the research project was carried out. This is to ensure that the client's questions regarding both content and method can be answered satisfactorily.

4.8.4 Publication

Research service providers may publish research results for scientific or other purposes if they have conducted the research project for their own interest, or if such publication has been contractually agreed with the client commissioning the research project or the latter has consented to such publication. This also applies to the presentation of research results in the context of conferences. When publishing research results their presentation shall be clearly distinguished from their interpretation. Research service providers shall also draw clients' attention to the responsibilities regarding the publication of research results.

NOTE The responsibility for the publication of research results normally lies with the copyright owner.

4.9 Research records

4.9.1 Identification

Research records shall be adequately labelled for identification and retrieval and traceable to a specific research project. Research records shall include the following:

- the research proposal and/or cost quotation;
- the final version of the questionnaire or discussion guide and stimulus material;
- the primary records (completed questionnaires, records of qualitative research etc.);

- the data processing specifications, coding sheets, edit records and other significant material relating to data processing;
- copies of delivery material passed to the client;
- full methodological details of the research (see7.1 and 7.2); and
- quality records related to the monitoring the execution of research.

4.9.2 Retention

In order to be able to answer questions about the conducting of the research project and the results even after the research project has been concluded, the retention period of the following records shall be as follows:

- primary records: 6 months
- final records (eg questionnaire, code sheets): 24 months

The research service provider shall inform the client about the retention periods. The research service provider and the client can agree on a longer or shorter retention period.

If the research is later repeated, or further research is later carried out within the same project, the storage period shall be said to begin upon conclusion of the entire research project.

4.9.3 Storage

Every effort shall be made to store records in a manner adequate to ensure that they do not deteriorate, that they can be retrieved within a reasonable time and that their confidential nature is not compromised. Procedures shall be in place to ensure that project records kept in electronic form are backed up with at least a second copy of files kept off site.

4.9.4 Safe keeping

Unless otherwise agreed, all research records are, as a rule, only available to the client in question. The research service provider shall not make them available to third parties. The research service provider shall also ensure that the research results and the report are protected by appropriate measures against unauthorised access while being stored in the research service provider’s archives. This includes the protection of results and reports stored on electronic data carriers against unauthorised alteration.

4.9.5 Supplying electronically stored data to the client

4.9.5.1 Checking for completeness

Before being handed over to the client, electronically stored data shall be checked for completeness. More specifically, it shall be checked whether the data records being passed on are complete in terms of the number of cases and the variables measured and whether they contain any additional, contractually agreed information.

4.9.5.2 Data format

Electronically stored data shall be passed on to the client in the format described in the research proposal or agreed upon at a later time.

4.9.5.3 Description and documentation

Every electronic data carrier handed over to the client shall be identified by means of a label indicating the data records it contains and – where necessary – specific technical details regarding installation. In addition, where necessary, a suitable description of the data records shall be supplied together with it; either in the form of a file on the electronic data carrier itself or in a suitable printed form.

4.9.5.4 Electronic transmission

At the client's request the research service provider shall use suitable encryption procedures for the electronic transfer of data.

5 Data Collection

5.1 General

The research service provider shall implement procedures to safeguard respondent confidentiality and to provide respondent reassurances (see also 5.3.2).

Respondent identifiers on data records (eg questionnaires) shall be used for purposes of research administration and quality control only and shall be retained only for as long as these purposes necessitate.

Data may be attributed to individual respondents subject to their explicit consent and provided that the data are used for research purposes only.

5.2 Management, recruitment and training of fieldworkers

5.2.1 Data collection management structure

The research service provider shall define in writing its data collection management structure including job titles and responsibilities.

NOTE Data collection management includes; head office and area managers (including those managing recruiting), local supervisors, phone unit supervisors, fieldworker team leaders and support staff involved in data collection. Individuals may work on a full or part time basis.

Data collection management staff shall be appropriately trained for the tasks they undertake including; allocation of work, progress control, training and appraisal of fieldworkers and validation of work. Data collection management staff shall also be regularly appraised and continuing training given as required. The training given to data collection management staff and their competencies shall be documented by the research service provider.

5.2.2 Fieldworker recruitment

The research service provider shall evaluate the suitability of potential fieldworkers on the basis of their previous work experience and qualification and/or a recruitment interview and/or references from previous employment. The level of relevant experience, if any, (for the work to be undertaken including on specific projects) of the recruit shall be established. Suitability evaluation may need to include language skills including the ability to follow instructions in the languages to be used for data collection instructions and competence equivalent to mother tongue in the languages to be used for data collection.

All relevant information relating to fieldworkers, obtained in the recruitment process or subsequently (eg training records, results of validation, etc.) shall be documented (including as computer files) and retained whilst the individual carries out work for the research service providerand for one year thereafter.

NOTE Whilst the above retention period of one year meets the requirements of this standard, other requirements including legal, may necessitate a longer retention period of fieldworkers' personnel records.

Where fieldworkers are recruited through a staffing agency, recruitment records may be less detailed but should show key skills and previous, relevant experience.

5.2.3 Basic training for new fieldworkers

Apart from exceptions as per below, all fieldworkers shall be given basic training to the level specified below. This training shall be provided by the research service provider except where confirmation is received from another research service provider, which meets the requirements of this standard, that relevant basic training (for the tasks to be undertaken) has been provided. Providing requirements as below are met, the methods of training shall be a matter for the research service provider.

The content and scope of basic training shall be appropriate to the nature of the work to be carried out (eg face to face interviewing, phone interviewing, qualitative respondent recruiting, retail auditing etc). If the fieldworker is used subsequently for different types of work (ie different to the type covered in the basic training already received) including the use of computer aided interviewing (CAI), appropriate additional basic training shall be given.

Except for some types of observation research (eg mystery shopping) basic training shall include as a minimum:

a) General principles of market, opinion and social research;
b) Ethical requirements (eg as per ESOMAR, WAPOR and other professional codes) including respondent safeguards and data protection issues;
c) Interviewing (or other relevant techniques) skills;
d) Where relevant, the use of computers (eg CAI)
e) Interviewing (or other forms of data collection methods) role playing and trial interviews.

Where possible, interviews carried out during the first day's work, of the first assignment after basic training, should be monitored (eg as per 5.4.2 for phone interviewing) or accompanied by data collection management staff with feedback provided to the interviewer. If such monitoring or accompaniment is not undertaken, all work from the first assignment shall be validated as per 5.4 and 5.5.

The minimum basic training duration for face to face and phone interviewing and qualitative recruitment interviewing (excluding additional organisational training - see 5.2.4) shall be six hours. Approximately half of this training duration shall be interactive to allow dialogue between trainer and trainee.

For observation research such as mystery shopping, no minimum duration is specified for basic training duration and training may be combined with briefing for the first assignment.

For one-off projects, where the data collection tasks are considered to be relatively simple, the minimum duration of basic training may be shorter than specified above and may be combined with project briefing. Reasons for such shorter training shall be documented and if the fieldworker is subsequently to be used in another project full basic training shall be given.

NOTE 1 The durations specified for basic training should be regarded as minimum levels and depending on the nature of work to be allocated, fuller training may be required.

The basic training given to fieldworkers shall be documented including content, duration and who has given it. The trainee and trainer shall authenticate the training records by signature or in an equivalent manner.

NOTE 2 It is considered to be a good practice to make available on request from another bona fide research service provider, records and/or confirmation of the basic training given to individuals.

5.2.4 Fieldworker organisational training

In addition to basic training as per 5.2.3, the research service provider shall train all fieldworkers in the specific requirements of the research service provider including how data collection is organised and managed. The methods of delivering this type of training and its content can be a matter for the research service provider but fieldworker personnel records shall show the training given and how it is delivered.

NOTE Organisational training can be linked to basic training or to briefing for the first assignment.

Key requirements and general instructions to fieldworkers shall also be included in a manual available to all fieldworkers used by the company.

5.2.5 Continuing training and appraisal of fieldworkers

Fieldworkers who are regularly used by the research service provider - five projects/waves or more in a calendar year - should be appraised at least annually and less frequently used fieldworkers appraised at appropriate intervals. Any such appraisal shall be interactive to allow dialogue between fieldworker and the research service provider’s data collection management (face to face or by phone) and include feedback from validation of work.

The appraisal should be based for example on the result of questionnaires editing, fieldwork validation or accompanied or monitored interviews. Appraisal may identify the need for further training of individual fieldworkers or the need for such training may be identified in other ways.

NOTE Further training, as above, is to be distinguished from the need for additional training when a fieldworker is allocated to new types of work or new responsibilities, e.g. specialist interviewing, supervisory (as per 5.2.3).

Reports of appraisals and details of any additional training provided shall be documented and retained with fieldworkers’ personnel records. Both parties shall authenticate that the appraisal/training has been completed by signature or in an equivalent manner.

5.3 Conducting data collection by fieldwork

5.3.1 Fieldworker ID

Fieldworkers, except those only working by phone, shall be issued by the research service provider with an ID, preferably including a photograph. The ID shall be valid for only a defined period (eg two years). The ID shall include the name of the fieldworker, date of issue and date it expires, and the name and contact details of the research service provider. Records shall be kept showing to whom IDs have been issued and date of issue.

5.3.2 Respondent reassurance

All approaches to respondents shall include a brief description of the principles of respondent confidentiality the general research purposes for which the data may be used and that co-operation is voluntary. The name of the research service provider shall be given to respondents.

Documented respondent reassurance (eg a small leaflet) shall be offered to face to face respondents. This shall include contact details of the research service provider. Phone respondents shall be offered contact details of the research service provider on request.

5.3.3 Data collection from children or vulnerable respondents

Special care shall be exercised where respondents are children (legally defined as minors in the area where data collection is carried out) or where respondents are considered to be otherwise vulnerable. In these cases appropriate steps shall be taken to ensure that parents/guardians or the equivalent, as well as the respondents themselves, understand what is entailed and give their consent based on adequate information. Records shall be kept (eg as part of the questionnaire) to show that this requirement has been met.

5.3.4 Project briefing

Fieldworkers shall be given a briefing and instructions for each project (or the specifics for each wave of a project), even if they start to take part after it has already started. The briefing and instructions shall be the responsibility of a member of staff with a full understanding of requirements for the project. Briefing and instructions may be delivered face to face, by phone, in writing or otherwise but records shall be kept to show the coverage of the briefing and instructions and that all fieldworkers allocated to the project have been briefed/instructed.

The briefing for a quantitative project must include, when available, at least the following information:

- the fieldwork dates;

- the requirements for the sample;
- quotas to be covered;
- methodology;
- other special requirements of the project; and
- instructions/conditions for administration of the questionnaire.

The briefing for a qualitative project must include, when available, at least the following information:

- the fieldwork dates and times;
- key recruitment criteria;
- required quotas;
- the number of respondents to be recruited for each group discussion or in-depth interviews;
- acceptable and unacceptable methods of recruitment (for example, specifying when it is acceptable or not to use snowball sampling, telephone contacts or panels, etc.); and
- specific exclusions and restrictions applicable to respondents who have already attended group discussions or in-depth interviews.

5.3.5 Date and duration of fieldwork

The date and duration of each interview, observation, etc., shall be recorded on the questionnaire or equivalent, as shall the identity of the fieldworker responsible for collecting the data. In the case of hard copy questionnaires the fieldworker shall sign the questionnaire to undertake that the interview, observation etc has been carried out to the research service provider's instructions.

NOTE The date and duration of an interview etc is relevant to validation of the interview (see below). Date and duration may be automatically recorded where computers are used in data collection - CATI/CAPI.

5.3.6 Respondent incentives

Where incentives are given to respondents the nature of these incentives shall be documented as part of project records.

Incentives should be used as a token of appreciation and to stimulate participation. As part of quality assurance the incentive for taking part should be as neutral as possible in terms of the research project and the target group to ensure that the type and scope of the incentives do not lead to response bias.

5.4 Fieldworker validation (excluding qualitative research)

5.4.1 General

NOTE 1 For validation of qualitative research see 5.5.

NOTE 2 The purpose of validation is to establish that data collection by fieldworkers has been carried out to project instructions including following questionnaires and general requirements (eg as covered in fieldworker training).

Validation should be carried out as soon as practical after the fieldwork (and not more than six weeks afterwards) and wherever possible before the resulting data are processed and/or reported to clients.

Validation shall be organised by data collection management staff and in all cases validation shall be carried out by a second person (ie other than the fieldworker whose work is being validated).

All data collection of each project (or wave) shall be validated using methods as per 5.4.2 below. The aim should be also to validate the work of as many as practical of the fieldworkers allocated to the project but taking account of:

- A need for work of all recently recruited fieldworkers to be validated on their first project;
- A need for validation of regularly used fieldworkers so that their work is frequently validated but not necessarily for each project. Results of validation may influence the frequency of subsequently validating an individual’s work.

Documented records for fieldworkers used by the research service provider shall identify the validation, including dates and projects, of each individual’s work.

Where validation identifies discrepancies or problems, corrective action shall be taken at two levels:

- At the project level – eg replacement of interviews, further validation, qualifying of data produced etc.;
- At the fieldworker level – eg retraining, future work allocation etc. In the case of serious discrepancies (eg fabricated interviews) recent or concurrent work by the individual shall be subjected to rechecking and validation.

5.4.2 Validation methods

Depending on the type of data collection concerned, validation shall be undertaken, as specified below by means of checking the data records produced (eg questionnaires, CAI datafiles etc) and/or respondent re-contact (also termed backchecking) and/or monitoring.

Checking of data records may be used in conjunction with other methods but in some types of data collection this may be the only practical form of validation (eg observational research such as "mystery shopping" and retail audits). Checking of data records may include, as appropriate, completeness of the data records, keeping to samples/quotas, consistency of responses and comparison of responses against normal data or between fieldworkers. Checks may be made manually or by computer. This may be linked to checking of associated records eg receipts of purchases from mystery shopping.

Respondent re-contact shall cover that the interview or equivalent took place, the length of interview, responses to key questions including demographics and other qualifying questions related to quotas etc and that instructions were followed. Re-contact may be by any medium involving direct communication with the respondent eg face to face, phone, post or e-mail. Re-contact may be an appropriate method of validation for all types of interviewing and especially face to face interviewing including at central locations (where face to face re-contact may immediately follow the interview).

Monitoring shall involve listening to interviews at the time they are being carried out, using appropriate equipment, or listening to recordings of the interviews. Both interviewer and respondent shall be audible. Interviewers shall be aware that any interview may be monitored but not know whether a specific interview is being monitored. Where interviewing is multi-lingual, staff fluent in the relevant languages shall carry out monitoring. Monitoring is particularly suitable for phone interviews carried out from suitably equipped central locations (phone units) but can also be used for validation of a batch of face to face interviews if all are recorded. In the case of CATI intervewing monitoring shall include observation of the interviewer screen.

5.4.3 Validation levels

Validation shall be carried out to at least the levels below (depending on the type of validation). Validation levels shall be calculated on the basis of achieved interviews and achieved validations.

Where checking of data records is the only method of validation that can be used (eg observational research, retail audits) the required level shall be 100%. No specific level is specified where checking of data records are used in conjunction with other methods.

For all projects where data collection is by interview (apart from exceptional cases as below) validation shall be by either re-contact or monitoring to the levels shown below, whether or not checking of data records is also used.

The minimum re-contact validation level shall be 10%.

The minimum monitoring validation level shall be 5% with the complete interview that is monitored listened to.

In exceptional cases it can be organisationally impossible to carry out re-contact or monitoring to the required level, or at all, or it may be considered contrary to respondents' interest. In such cases project records shall explain why this is the case and what other steps (eg checking data records) have been taken to validate data collection.

5.4.4 Validation records

Reports shall be prepared on the validation carried out for each project/wave of project. The reports shall include:

- Who carried out the validation;
- A description of the methods of validation used including what was covered in respondent re-contact, if applicable;
- Identity of fieldworkers whose work has been validated;
- Description of any discrepancies found;
- Report of corrective action taken or planned at both the project level and fieldworker level; and
- That the required validation level has been attained – eg number of interviews in total and number validated.

Validation records shall be retrievable by both project/wave and individual fieldworker.

5.5 Qualitative data collection

5.5.1 Respondent recruitment

NOTE Recruitement of respondents in qualitative studies is commonly a separate stage from qualitative moderation of groups or depth interviews. Recruitment is commonly carried out by fieldworkers rather than by the research staff involved at the moderation stage.

Details of respondents shall be recorded on recruitment questionnaires or equivalent records and these shall be made available to moderators and retained as project records subject to respondent confidentiality – see 5.1.1.

5.5.2 Respondent recruitment validation

NOTE The primary aim of validation of respondent recruitment is to confirm the demographic and other recruitment criteria of respondents. Another aim of validation is to avoid respondent participation in excess of that it is specified in the research proposal (see 4.1.3.3).

All projects shall be validated using one of the methods below and the requirements for validating a wide range of fieldworkers – as per 5.4.3 – shall apply. The need for action to be taken where discrepancies are found - as per 5.4.3 – shall also apply.

Validation may be by respondent re-contact or monitoring (as per 5.4.2) if recruitment is by phone from a central phone unit. Cooperative initiatives by research service providers to prevent excess respondent participation can also be employed.

Respondent re-contact may be carried out between recruitment and the date of groups or depth interviews, at groups/depth interviews or afterwards in which case validation should be completed as soon as possible (and not more than six weeks afterwards) and in any case before the data is processed or reported to clients.

Re-contact may be by any medium involving direct communication with the respondent eg face to face, phone, post or e-mail. Where validation is carried out at the group/depths a self-completion or administered validation questionnaire may be used but shall be administered by other than the original recruiter.

Validation levels for re-contact shall be a minimum of 10% of recruited respondents per project or at least two respondents if the recruitment sample is less than 20. Some projects may require higher levels of validations, even up to 100%.

Validation levels for monitoring shall be a minimum of 5% of recruited respondents per project or at least two respondents as per above.

Validation records shall be as per 5.4.4.

5.5.3 Qualitative moderation

Groups and depth moderation shall be carried out by appropriately skilled and trained staff.

NOTE Fieldworker training requirements as per 5.2 are not applicable to qualitative moderators.

Moderators shall be briefed and fully prepared including in the use of any techniques not explicit in the discussion guide.

Each moderator shall familiarise him/herself with the objectives of the research project, the issues to be explored, the stimulus material and the particular techniques to be used, as relevant, prior to the commencement of fieldwork.

Moderators shall record their observations respecting all of the groups they moderated for each project. These observations shall include the following aspects, when applicable:

a) The suitability of respondents for the desired profile;
b) The suitability of the room(s) used and their audiovisual facilities;
c) The performance of the host or individual who received the group.

Where moderators consider that the recruited respondents do not match requirements they shall report the discrepancies to the appropriate management of the research service provider.

5.5.4 Recording of qualitative research and respondent confidentiality

Full records shall be made of group or depth responses and normally this will be by recording (eg audio or video). Respondents shall be made aware of and give their consent to recording, the intended use of recordings (including use by any third parties) and any transfer of data (eg to clients). It may be considered appropriate to have respondents confirm their consent in writing.

NOTE According to the international professional rules of market, opinion and social research the use and transfer of recordings is permissible for research purposes only.

Where third parties (including the client of the research service provider) are to observe the groups or depths respondents shall be made aware of and consent to this, especially where the observation is from a hidden viewing area.

Recordings shall be labelled to identify the project and respondents (including by cross-reference to other records) and date of the group or interview.

5.6 Self-completion data collection

NOTE These clauses cover data collection where the respondent, at the time of providing data/responses, has no face to face or telephone contact with a fieldworker or other representative of the research service provider. Self-completion includes (but not exclusively) postal research such as mail surveys or other situations in which hard copy questionnaires are left for self-completion such as diary surveys; electronic data interchange (EDI) where data are obtained directly from businesses' own computer stored records; disk by mail where a diskette containing a self-completed questionnaire is sent to the respondent via postal mail and the respondent installs and fills out the questionnaire and sends the diskette back to the research provider; touch-tone data entry where the respondent calls a computer and responds to questions asked by the computer via the telephone keypad; voice recognition entry where the respondent answers into the telephone and the computer verifies the answers by repeating them; completion and return of questionnaires via the Internet and internet on-line focus groups or other interactive internet methods. Internet questionnaires can be e-mailed to individual respondents by the research service provider or can be downloaded by respondents from the research service provider's (or the research service provider's supplier) web site. Respondent samples can be ad hoc to a specific project or drawn from respondent access panels.

5.6.1 Sampling for self-completion/Internet research

At the proposal/research design stage or in reporting to clients, details of the sampling methodology used, how potential sampling problems including representativeness and self-selection of participating respondents have been addressed and the impact of these on the quality of resulting data shall be described.

Where access panels are used, details shall be provided of the recruitment of the panel and the selection of respondents from it, with the implications for resulting data discussed.

5.6.2 Respondent validation

At the proposal/research design stage or in reporting to clients, details shall be provided on how respondents have been/are to be validated, including to deal with the issue of lack of control of who provided the responses in self-completion and internet data collection. As in the case of sampling, the impact of these issues on the quality of resulting data shall be discussed.

5.6.3 Self-Completion Questionnaires

Questionnaires shall be tested before use and the results of such testing and any action taken shall be documented; provided that if substantially the same questionnaire has been tested (with these tests documented) and used before in a comparable situation, such testing can be of a more limited scale. Instructions for self-completion shall be included as part of the questionnaire or associated material.

5.6.4 Respondent safeguards

For all self-completion data collection, but especially via the Internet, procedures shall be implemented to ensure the security and confidentiality of respondents and of the data they provide. Such procedures shall take account of the services provided by any suppliers used by the research service provider in carrying out this type of data collection.

Assurances of security and confidentiality shall be given to respondents including by means of a statement forming part of the questionnaire or associated material.

Respondents shall be made aware, before participation, of relevant information that may affect their decision to participate including; the general subject matter, the general purpose of the data collection, and the approximate amount of time required to provide responses (unless this is self-evident from the questionnaire). Where the intended respondents are children appropriate safeguards shall be observed as per 5.3.3.

5.7 Data collection from secondary sources

The sources of secondary data, such as published material, databases, etc., as well as their nature and reliaility shall be recorded and where the data are used in client reporting these sources shall be acknowledged.

5.8 Data collection records

Complete records (including as computer files) shall be made of the data collection stage including what was planned and what was actually achieved.

NOTE These records do not have to be kept separately from other records of the project – eg they do not need to be kept specifically by the data collection department.

Records shall include, where relevant to the project:

1. Copies of all data collection materials used in the project including questionnaires and stimulus material, fieldworker briefing material, interview quota sheets etc;

2. The sampling methods used including sampling frames and other sources, selection, quotas etc;

3. Identities of all fieldworkers and the quantity (eg number of interviews) and type of work (eg face to face interviews, phone interviews, recruitment etc) allocated to and achieved by them;

4. Full records of data collection validation and of any corrective action taken (see also 5.4.1);

5. Where relevant, response rates and penetration levels or equivalent measure;

6. A summary of variations between the data collection plan and what was actually completed including sample sizes in total and by significant sub-groups. These variations and the implications may need to be reported to the client;

7. In the case of interviews or group discussions that are audio or videotape recorded, the tape shall be labelled with the date of the recording. The duration shall be clear from the recording;

8. Data collection management staff involved in the project; and

9. Any other project records specifically required as per this section.

6. Data management & processing

6.1 General

The research service provider shall have in place a documented methodology to demonstrate that data entry, coding, editing, weighting, file preparation and tabulation have been conducted according to the standards outlined in this clause and evidence that the standards have been applied shall be available.

6.2 Electronic Data Capture Projects - CATI or CAPI and online

The research service provider shall ensure that data entry or capture specifications for CATI and/or CAPI and online projects are correct as specified and accurate.

The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to test both the design and the execution of these electronic forms of questionnaires. The type of tests and the persons involved shall be documented. Once the tests have been completed they shall be signed off by the person carrying out the tests.

Confirmation of the client's acceptance of the electronic script (where this is agreed with the client) shall be documented.

In the event that interviewing is undertaken at several locations, it is strongly recommended that there is only one point at which the questionnaire can be amended, tested and distributed. Changes shall be clearly documented and version control shall be implemented.

NOTE See 4.4.1 for questionnaire design

6.3 Hard Copy Data Entry

6.3.1 Specifications

Where logic data entry is used, the in-built checks shall be documented and tested prior to use. The nature of the tests used and the results obtained shall be documented. Unresolvable attempted entries (which are not accepted because of the in-built logic checks) shall be referred to the Project Manager /Executive responsible for the project for a decision and resolution, with a record kept of any changes made to the data.

Unless otherwise specified where simple data entry is used, data shall be keyed in as recorded on the questionnaire. A record of any instructions shall be kept on file.

6.3.2 Data Entry Verification for Paper documents

A systematic method of verifying a minimum percentage of data entry work shall be carried out on a project or stage/wave. In the case of logic data entry the minimum total percentage verification per project shall be 5% of entries and for simple data entry it shall be 10% of entries. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of verification each operator's work and the verification shall be undertaken by a second person.

If an individual operator's work contains frequent errors, that individual's work (on the project) shall be 100% verified/re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that operator until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the re-training shall be reviewed and documented.

The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

6.4 Accuracy of databases not requiring data entry

The Research service provider shall have in place defined processes to ensure that data sets created by means other than hard copy data entry are accurate.

This may include, but not be limited to, data sets created via:

a) Scanning;
b) Electronic data collection (for example interactive voice recognition surveys, online surveys, web based surveys);
c) CAI databases; and
d) Databases created by importing or merging data from one source or program into another.

The process of automatic data entry (eg scanning) shall be verified at each project/ stage. The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to test both design and execution of the automatic data entry process. The type of tests used and the staff involved shall be documented.

In case scanning procedures are used rejection and substitution rates shall be estimated. The procedures for handling rejected entries shall be documented.

6.5 Coding

6.5.1 Developing code frames

The research service provider shall ensure that Coders working on the project are provided with instructions that shall include, as a minimum:

a) an overview of the project;
b) identification of questions or variables to be coded;
c) the minimum proportion or number of a sample (and its make-up) used to produce code frames;

d) where necessary or appropriate, specific sub groups required to develop code frames (e.g. region, user or non user);
e) guidelines for the inclusion of codes in the code frame;
f) any use to be made of code frames from a previous project or stage; and
g) any other requirements or special instructions specific to the project.

NOTE For some variables the research service provider can use existing established classification standards, such as those for industry, occupation and education.

6.5.2 Code frame approval

The project manager/executive responsible for the project shall approve the code frame prior to the commencement of coding and that shall be documented. This approval may involve netting of codes, abbreviating codes, re-wording of codes, re-coding or deletion of codes.

Where “Don’t know” and “No answer” responses have been used, these shall be distinguishable from each other.

6.5.3 Coding training

The coder(s) shall be trained on how to use a code frame eg decisions or rules regarding what should be included or excluded from a given code.

6.5.4 Updating

After code frame approval, where further codes become appropriate in the process of coding, all copies of the code frame shall be updated and any questionnaires already coded shall be amended accordingly.

6.5.5 Other Categories

The research service provider shall have clear rules or guidelines for the treatment of responses in “Other” or catch-all categories. Where the catch all “Other” category exceeds 10% of responses to be coded the responses shall be reviewed with a view to reducing the size of the group.

6.5.6 Verification

The research service provider shall have defined procedures for the verification of the coding for each project. Procedures shall ensure that there is a systematic method of verifying a minimum of 5% of questionnaires coded per project and the verification shall be undertaken by a second person.

NOTE There are two basic approaches to verification, dependent and independent. Dependent verification means that the second person has access to the original coding. Independent verification means that the second person does not have access to the original coding. In independent verification the original coding and the verification coding are compared and if they differ the correct code is decided by an adjudication process. Independent verification detects more errors than dependent verification.

If a coder’s work contains frequent errors, that coder’s work (on the project) shall be 100% verified/re-worked. If necessary, appropriate retraining shall be given to that coder until error rates are acceptable. The effectiveness of the re-training shall be reviewed and documented.

The research service provider shall define the meaning of frequent errors and document that definition.

6.6 Data editing

6.6.1 Editing data

An accurate record of any changes made to the original data set shall be kept.

Where forced editing is used, the logic of the forcing shall be documented and test runs carried out with the results documented to show that the forcing has the desired effect.

Where report editing is used and edits reports produced, there shall be a record of the decisions taken as a result of the editing reports.

No data shall be assumed/imputed without the knowledge and approval of the project manager. Comparison to the original data source shall be the first step in the process. Any imputation processes shall be documented and available to the client on request. All edit specifications shall be documented.

6.6.2 Pre-data entry

Where paper documents are hand edited prior to data entry it shall be possible to distinguish the original answers of the respondent or interviewer from the codes or answers allocated by the person(s) carrying out the editing.

When this type of editing is used, the logic and rules being applied shall be documented and any staff working on this element of the project shall be briefed as to the types of checks and corrections they may action.

6.7 Data file management

Care shall be taken in file management to ensure that:

a) files or records within a file are not duplicated;
b) the latest version is used;
c) original and cleaned data sets are clearly identifiable; and
d) frequency counts or other records are made before and after data editing to allow comparisons to be made.

NOTE: See quality of weighting procedures in 4.5.1.

6.8 Data analysis

6.8.1 Specifications for data analysis

The analyst/researcher shall undertake data analysis according to the specifications provided by the project manager/executive responsible for the project.

6.8.2 Analysis records

The research service provider shall keep accurate and descriptive records regarding the analysis output, to ensure that any analysis undertaken can be replicated at a later date.

6.8.3 Data analysis verification

The research service provider shall have in place procedures to ensure the tabulations and other outputs have been checked.

Checks shall include as a minimum:

a) completeness – all tables are present as specified;
b) abbreviations for headings or open-ended responses accurately reflect the full content;
c) the base for each table is correct against other tables or frequency counts;
d) the standard break is checked against source questions;
e) all derived data items are checked against their source;
f) the figures for sub-groups and nets are correct;
g) investigation of any blank tables (no data);
h) weighting checks (e.g. by test tables);
i) checking frequency counts prior to running tables in order to ensure that both accuracy of data and to determine base sizes for sub-groups ;
j) spelling and legibility; and
k) that any statistical analysis used are appropriate and correctly executed.

For any subsequent outputs appropriate checks shall be applied.

6.8.4 Data tables

When data is reported to the client, such as in a stand alone hard or soft copy of data tables, the following shall be taken into account, if applicable:

a) the actual source question to which the data pertains shall be referenced;
b) a description of any weighting method applied to the data shall be included;
c) cany sub-groups used shall be clearly identified;
d) the bases for each question shall always be available so that the number of respondents who have actually answered the question is identified;
e) the number or proportion of respondents who replied "don´t know" or gave "no answer";
f) both weighted and unweighted bases shall be available;
g) all variables used in the analysis of the data shall be clearly and completely defined and fully explained. This includes any significance testing, indexing, scoring, scaling, and calculations of means, median, modes and standard deviations; and
h) sample variations (eg standard error, standard deviation).

6.9 Elctronic Data Delivery

If data are delivered to the client in electronic format directly, the following shall be checked prior to data release:

a) file format is compatible with the software specification agreed with the client;
b) completeness – the correct number of files and records are in each file;
c) any file shall be accompanied by a structural description where applicable;
d) any file is labelled with the contents and where applicable accompanied with instructions on limitations of use; and
e) when requested, files shall be encrypted.

6.10 Back up, retention and security of data

All data shall be held securely to prevent unwarranted access or accidental loss.

The research service provider shall ensure that all data are stored and retained in accordance with the professional rules (eg ICC/ESOMAR and WAPOR Codes), the applicable law and legislative regulations and any negotiated agreement with the client.

Data pertaining to data processing and analysis may include, but is not limited to:

a) raw data files;
b) other electronic files;

c) hard copy questionnaires and show materials;
d) code frames;
e) project files including project management information; and
f) emails and other correspondence

The research service provider shall establish and maintain procedures to ensure that DP (Data Processing) computer files are clearly identified.

Where data has been edited, cleaned, recoded or changed in any other way from the format, content and layout of its original format, the original data, final data and programme files that change the data (as a minimum) shall be kept so that the final data set can be easily reconstructed.

Extra analyses may be requested after the main processing and such analysis shall conform to the DP (Data Processing) requirements of this standard.

7 Report on research projects

7.1 Quantitative research

In quantitative research the following minimum details shall be documented in the project report. These allow the reader to understand the way the research project was conducted and the potential and limitations of its results:

- name of the client;
- name of the research service provider;
- objectives of the research project;
- target group for the research project;
- achieved sample size;
- date of fieldwork;
- sampling method including the procedure for selecting respondents;
- data collection method;
- response rate (in the case of probability samples) and the definition and method of calculating it;
- type of incentives, if applicable;
- number of interviewers, if applicable;
- interviewer validation methods , if applicable;
- the questionnaires, any visual exhibits or show cards, and other relevant data collection documents;
- documents, materials or products, if applicable;
- weighting procedures, if applicable;
- estimating and imputation procedures, if applicable;
- accuracy of the findings, including - when probability samples are used - estimates of sampling variance;

- what results are based on sub-groups and the number of cases used in sub-group analysis; and
- known error from non-coverage, non-response, miscoding, and other sources.

7.2 Qualitative research

In the case of qualitative research the following specific details shall be documented in the report about the research project:

- name of the client;
- name of the research service provider;
- objectives of the research project;
- target group for the research project;
- number of persons interviewed and/or participants to the groups;
- date of fieldwork;
- fieldwork method (interviews, groups…);
- recruitment method;
- type of incentives, if applicable;
- number of interviewers/moderators, if applicable;
- interviewer/moderator validation methods, if applicable;
- documents, materials or products, if applicable;
- the interview and/or discussion guide.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[1] ICC/ESOMAR International code of marketing and social research practice 1995

[2]Code of professional ethics and practices (WAPOR)