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## **ISO 20252 IMPLEMENTATION**

### **Introduction**

During the past few months, a number of companies already certified to BS 7911 have prepared for and/or been assessed to ISO 20252. During assessments some issues have arisen over the interpretation of specific requirements of the standard. This document clarifies these issues and has been endorsed by the three MRQSA approved certification bodies.

References below are to clause numbering of ISO 20252:2006.

### **Subcontracting/outsourcing**

Requirements for subcontracting/outsourcing (the two terms are used synonymously) are defined in clause 3.5. It is a requirement of the Standard, that where parts of the research service are subcontracted, the relevant processes should be carried out by the subcontractor in conformity with the relevant requirements of the Standard. The only exception to this is where the choice of subcontractor is outside the control of the research provider e.g. nominated by the client.

To ensure the requirement is met, the research provider needs to provide a full briefing or specification to the subcontractor describing the procedures that need to be followed in the particular processes (e.g. fieldwork) to meet the requirements of the Standard. This applies whether the subcontractor is working in the UK or overseas. Clearly if the subcontractor is certified to ISO 20252, this can be taken as strong evidence of adherence to the Standard and the briefing may be more limited. However, as the standard is relatively new, for some years to come, this type of assurance is unlikely to be commonly available and particularly from overseas subcontractors. It is recommended that:

- For each project, the subcontractor shall be given a document specifying what is required of the subcontractor to carry out the relevant processes in conformity with the standard. In the case of data collection subcontractors this would cover, for example, appropriate elements of clause 5 including such as interviewer training and briefing, fieldworker ID, respondent reassurance and fieldworker validation to the defined levels. If the subcontractor has previously carried out the same type of processes for the primary provider, a reference to a previous briefing document may be enough and if the subcontractor is certified to ISO 20252 it may

be considered sufficient to state in writing that the work has to conform to the Standard .

- The above briefing document may be linked to a contract between the two parties, but, in any case, the subcontractor shall give a written assurance that work will be carried out in conformity to the briefing specification.
- The contract with the subcontractor should include a requirement for the subcontractor to provide, on demand, evidence that the relevant requirements have been met. Whether such evidence is actually requested is a matter for judgement by the research provider.
- On completion of the work, the subcontractor should also (or instead of documentary evidence) be requested to give written confirmation of conformity, in the particular project, to the briefing specification and the Standard.

### **Fieldworker ID**

The form of ID most commonly used by UK research providers is the MRS ID Card and this is re-issued each year and shows the current year (e.g. 2007). This implies validity through the calendar year and it can be assumed the date of issue is January 1<sup>st</sup> of the year and expiry December 31<sup>st</sup>.

### **Qualitative Respondent Validation**

It should be noted that there is no requirement to confirm respondent identity – the third paragraph of 5.5.2, mentioning this issue, is a “should” –i.e. good practice - and not a “shall” sentence. In practice, since this is an important issue, group moderators normally will confirm identity in some way.

Clause 5.5.2 requires that all recruited respondents are validated (to confirm that the recruitment specification has been met) but allows a wide choice of validation methods including by monitoring of attempts to recruit by phone and by re-contact of recruited respondents by various media either before the group or depth interview or during the group/interview. In the later case, a validation questionnaire may be used but the use of “may” in the clause implies that other methods are equally valid although not defined. Other methods, which can be accepted as valid, include the moderator’s own judgement on the whether the respondents meet the recruitment specification and, in practice, this is nearly always a method used whether or not other forms of validation are employed. If this is the sole method of validation, however, its subjective nature should be considered.

The clause in addition requires records to be kept of validation. If the moderator judgement is used as a form of validation, records need to be available of such judgement and, to allow traceability, this needs to be a documented report (e.g. in the form of an email) from the moderator. If the moderator judges that the recruitment has met the specification, the report can be quite brief. If, on the other hand, problems are identified these need describing and the subsequent action taken also needs to be documented by field management.

### **Reporting**

The intention behind requirements for reporting is that of transparency to the client. Clauses 7.2 (quantitative) and 7.3 (qualitative) specify the methodological details (relevant to the project) that need to be reported. Client project reports may include several documents and detailed methodological details may be a separate appendix to the main report. The full methodological details may be passed to the client as a matter of course. However, some clients may be uninterested in detailed methodology or do not have the training and expertise required to evaluate whether the methods are appropriate. The requirements of the Standard can be met by having the details available to the client on request providing the client is made aware that this is the case. Other reporting documents or the proposal can be used to ensure the client is aware of the availability of the full methodological details. In all cases, whether the details are passed as a matter of course or on request, they need to be fully documented as part of project records.