



Meg Hillier MP, Chair
Public Accounts Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA
pubaccom@parliament.uk

www.gov.uk/hm-treasury

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Information on the OSCAR II system

At our last hearing the committee requested further information on the OSCAR II system's data collection, including the likelihood of full operation, the replacement of other systems and what the system will cover.

The Online System for Central Accounting and Reporting (OSCAR) is used by HM Treasury to carry out its financial management functions in relation to departmental budgets and estimates for approval by the UK Parliament. OSCAR data is a part of the government's transparency agenda covering plans, outturn and in-year data across multiple financial years.

Departments submit data into OSCAR on a monthly basis, enabling a common understanding of progress against budgets. The system also provides key management information and data for public reporting.

OSCAR supports the application of current standards including the Financial Reporting Manual and Consolidated Budgeting Guidance, as well as the publication of external reports including Whole of Government Accounts, Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis, Estimates, and Country and Regional Analysis reports.

However, the existing OSCAR system uses obsolete, unsupported software, has known technical and security deficiencies that cannot be remediated, and is hosted on the Public Services Network which is soon to be discontinued. OSCAR is also difficult to engage with, the user experience is poor, and report production often requires manual workarounds.

HM Treasury is currently working on a project to replace our existing version of OSCAR with a new and improved system – OSCAR II – by the end of November 2021. OSCAR II will offer a straightforward solution to inputting, holding, storing and updating data, with easy access that is available as soon as it is loaded, alongside intuitive reporting tools. OSCAR II will support wider data access to HMT and departments and provide the foundation for enhanced financial and non-financial analysis.

The following processes are currently live on OSCAR II:

- Workforce and Pay Remit – live in August 2019
- Private Finance Initiative – live in September 2019; and
- Whole of Government Accounts (Data Collection Tool) – live in July 2020.

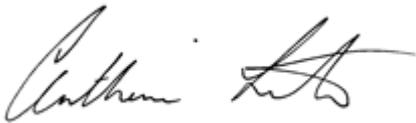
With the launch of the processes above, OSCAR II has now been released to all Central Government, Local Government, and Public Corporation bodies, in over 700 organisations with over 1,600 colleagues across government that can now input their data directly into OSCAR II. For the Whole of Government Accounts process this means that all WGA bodies are now able to input their data directly into OSCAR II, with improved data validation and a simplified and more automated counter-party elimination process.

The remaining processes are expected to go live over the course of 2020-21:

- Whole of Government Accounts (Consolidation)
- Cash Management
- Public Sector Finances (Forecast Outturn data)
- Budgeting & Estimates (Plans and Outturn data)
- Country and Regional Analysis; and
- Public Expenditure Statistical Analysis.

I would be very happy to share further details either at a future PAC hearing or in a briefing session.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catherine Little', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Catherine Little