

# Office for Science Quality Assessment Bill [HL]

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**B I L L**

TO

Establish an Office for Science Quality Assessment within the National Audit Office; and to authorise the Comptroller and Auditor General to assess any research used as a basis of published policy by a public department.

**B**E IT ENACTED by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows:—

**1 Office for Science Quality Assessment**

- (1) There is to be an Office for Science Quality Assessment.
- (2) The Office for Science Quality Assessment is to be part of the National Audit Office and to comprise—
  - (a) the Comptroller and Auditor General, who is to be the head of the Office; and 5
  - (b) a Chief Executive, appointed by the Comptroller and Auditor General, who is to have appropriate expertise in scientific and statistical methodology as determined by the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- (3) The Chief Executive is responsible for the administration of the Office for Science Quality Assessment and may appoint the staff he or she considers necessary for assisting him or her and the Comptroller and Auditor General in the discharge of the functions of the Office for Science Quality Assessment under section 2. 10

**2 Audit of research used by public departments** 15

- (1) The Comptroller and Auditor General, in his or her capacity as head of the Office for Science Quality Assessment, may assess any research cited or used as evidence on which a published policy of any public department is based.
- (2) The Comptroller and Auditor General must carry out assessments of the scientific quality of any research submitted to him or her by any public body. 20

- (3) Public bodies must make available to the Comptroller and Auditor General at his or her request any unpublished research on which a public body bases its policy and any data underlying published and unpublished research.
- (4) For the purposes of subsection (2), when assessing the research the Comptroller and Auditor General must have regard to its— 5
- (a) scientific reliability,
  - (b) scientific accuracy and replicability, and
  - (c) scientific and statistical validity.
- (5) In this section, “research cited or used as evidence on which a published policy of any public department is based” shall include research used as a basis for policy in— 10
- (a) green papers,
  - (b) white papers,
  - (c) impact assessments,
  - (d) any evidence (whether written or oral) provided by a public body to a Parliamentary select committee, 15
  - (e) evidence given to the National Audit Office, and
  - (f) any other publications that the Comptroller and Auditor General deems appropriate.
- (6) Subsection (1) shall not be construed as entitling the Comptroller and Auditor General to question the merits of the policy objectives of any department in respect of which an assessment is carried out. 20
- (7) Where the functions of the Comptroller and Auditor General in relation to any public department are by any enactment or agreement restricted to particular activities of the authority or body, any examination under this section in respect of that authority or body shall be correspondingly restricted. 25
- (8) The Comptroller and Auditor General must publish a report of any assessment made under subsections (1) and (2) within two months of completing that assessment.
- 3 Interpretation** 30
- In this Act—
- “policy” means any policy so far as it relates to the functions of a public department;
- “public department” has the meaning given in section 6(3) (public departments etc.) of the National Audit Act 1983. 35
- 4 Extent, commencement and short title**
- (1) This Act extends to England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.
  - (2) This Act comes into force at the end of the period of six months beginning with the day on which it is passed.
  - (3) This Act may be cited as the Office for Science Quality Assessment Act 2020. 40



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## **B I L L**

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*Lord Lilley*

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