

Appendix 13. Quality Assurance procedures

Overview

Scientific standards will be maintained by the Programme Director in association with Steering Group members who, together with other relevant experts, will referee the work being undertaken. Each Sub-programme has a Management Group, which meets to review the work approximately every six months or as required.

Internal data entry

Data is entered directly into the Key Information database. Pull-down lists and multi-select boxes have been used wherever possible to minimize typing and, therefore, data entry errors. Relevant terms and definitions can be viewed within the database to ensure consistency of interpretation.

A systematic approach to sensitivity assessment is specified in the 'Rationale and user guide' (*MarLIN* Report No. 4). The rationale provides a standard approach to sensitivity assessment designed to ensure consistency between Data Researchers.

The quality of the information on which the sensitivity and recoverability assessments are based is ranked according to the evidence / confidence assessment protocol laid down in *MarLIN* Report No. 4 'Rationale and user guide' (Figure 2). The 'evidence / confidence' assessment is clearly indicated on the Biology and Sensitivity Key Information Web pages.

Data entry and scientific standards are maintained by a process of internal review and proof reading. All Key Information reviews are proofed by the Data Researchers. Key Information reviews prepared by voluntary or casual staff are checked by the Senior Data Researcher.

All Key Information reviews are signed off by the Programme Director before being sent to referees.

External data entry

External consultants and experts will be provided with the standard terms and a copy of the 'Rationale and user guide' together with any additional guidance required to ensure a standard approach. Key Information reviews prepared by external parties will be proofed and reviewed by the *MarLIN* team. Any ambiguities or errors will be corrected in correspondence with the external agency. The Key Information reviews will be signed off by the Programme Director (as above) before the material is subject to peer review.

Peer review

Key Information reviews will be refereed by relevant experts before they are placed on-line. Referees will be drawn from experts identified during the data research or recommended by the members of the Biology and Sensitivity Key Information Sub-programme Management Group. Referees may also be drawn from the Steering Group, the Biology and Sensitivity Key Information Sub-programme Management Group and staff of the Marine Biological Association.

Referees comments are received in a standard format (reproduced below) and amendments made to the Key Information reviews as required. The referees name appears on the Key Information review Web pages. In the event of a difference of opinion between *MarLIN* and the referee a second independent referee may be approached, at the Programme Directors discretion.

