

Guidance on the preparation of codes of practice for building

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Foreword

This Published Document has been prepared under the direction of the Sector Board for Building and Civil Engineering by a Panel, B/-/11, comprising members representing a broad experience of users of building codes.

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

This Published Document is not to be regarded as a British Standard.

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Introduction

The BSI report *A strategy for building codes*, commissioned by the Sector Board for Building and Civil Engineering, recommended that BSI give a high priority to the preparation of a document to give guidance on the preparation of codes of practice for building.

Issues to be addressed would include the needs of users, the use of a common framework for presenting information, the relationship with European standards and the structure, content and arrangement of codes, as well as the presentation of text and graphics.

1 Scope

This document gives guidance on the preparation of *codes of practice* for building which fall under the umbrella of B/-, the Sector Board for Building and Civil Engineering. However, this guide does not cover civil engineering and structural design codes, neither does it relate to fire standards which are the responsibility of a different Sector Board.

Whilst the guide is mainly concerned with the preparation of codes of practice, it also includes information on *specifications* to make the reader aware of the essential differences between the two types of document. Readers are reminded that the term 'British Standard' includes codes of practice as well as other types of document, such as methods and specifications.

The guide builds on previous editions of PD 6501 and makes reference to the most recent edition of BS 0 : Part 3 for detailed information on BSI requirements for the drafting and preparation of British Standards in general.

2 Framework for standards

BSI has commissioned a *Framework for standards* to enable not only British Standards, but also documents prepared by other authoritative organizations in the construction industry to be listed in a classified format (see annex A).

This framework, to which many references are made in this guide, should be used when drafting codes of practice:

- to indicate which codes are currently available;
- to facilitate the co-ordination and retrieval of information;
- to enable recommendations of special interest to be brought together and published as *derived* documents to meet the needs of specialized markets.

3 Types of British Standard and their characteristics

3.1 Types of standard

The main types of British Standard are:

- code of practice;
- specification (for products and practices);
- method (of calculation, test);
- guide;
- recommendation;
- classification;
- vocabulary (previously glossary).

3.2 Codes of practice and specifications

Codes of practice and specifications can relate to both performance (design) and execution (site practice) and are intended to be used by qualified readers. Also, they can both set out a number of alternatives to choose from and may be called up in building contract documentation.

However, the differences between codes and specifications are illustrated by reference to the following characteristics:

Codes of practice

- give alternative options and the circumstances in which they should be used;
- make recommendations;
- should only be called up in building contract documentation if specific, carefully chosen, clauses are quoted;
- give recommendations on the application of products in construction;
- can contain means of compliance with statutory regulations;
- are expressed using 'should', not 'shall'.

Specifications

- express requirements to be met in order to claim compliance;
- can be called up without reference to individual clauses in building contract documentation;
- are expressed using 'shall'.

Specifications lay down prescriptive requirements to be met and they contain or call up methods of verifying conformity with the requirements. They should be aimed at one contractual interface (or more than one if essential). Specifications do not lay down quality assurance procedures for organizations carrying out tests.

Practices for design and execution (on site) can be covered by either:

- a specification (Do it this way!), or;
- a code of practice which gives information and recommendations that allow a professional person to use their judgement to choose which method to use (Do it this way depending on the circumstance and these are the factors to take into account).

3.3 Methods

Methods may be included within specifications but, if they are called up by two or more specifications, they are usually published as a separate standard. A method should not be confused with a specification (see also **10.2** of BS 0 : Part 3 : 1997). Methods show how to determine values; specifications indicate which values are acceptable.

Methods may cover:

- measurement;
- calculation;
- verification of conformity to a specification (test);
- sampling and analysis;
- evaluation of performance;
- validation of specification requirements (method of specifying).

Methods of specifying can provide the basis for an agreement between contracting parties.

3.4 Recommendations

Recommendations generally provide a particular series of options or courses of action limited to a particular field. They may pave the way to the eventual formulation of a specification (see also **10.4** of BS 0 : Part 3 : 1997).

3.5 Guides

Guides are more discursive in content than a code of practice, giving broader and more general information on a subject. They establish principles that may in time lead to a code of practice. Where information is available, the decision as to whether there are sufficient firm recommendations to be made on a subject should be taken before work starts on a project (see also **10.5** of BS 0 : Part 3 : 1997).

3.6 Vocabularies

Vocabularies define the terms used in the industry. Terms already defined in an existing vocabulary are preferred and should be identified as such. Where it is not possible to use a term as defined, the reader should be warned (see also **10.6** of BS 0 : Part 3 : 1997).

3.7 The CEN strategy for design and execution standards

3.7.1 General

The aim of the CEN (European Committee for Standardization) strategy for *design* and *execution* standards is to facilitate communication of the technical options between parties in building projects within Europe.

In BSI terms, these are specifications or methods but, since some members of CEN feel that such documents should be traditional codes of practice, it is proving difficult to achieve consensus on the approach.

To ensure unambiguous reference in contracts, the documents should be drafted so that the application is clearly stated and a clear distinction is made between normative and informative parts.

CEN design and execution standards should not include in a normative way clauses that could not be made contractual for the parties concerned. Care is needed if the standard is framed in performance terms, since proving compliance can be difficult.

3.7.2 CEN design standards

CEN design standards constitute a reference which can be recognised by all parties, e.g. a calculation or a dimensioning standard.

A design standard would:

- specify the expected result in performance terms, or describe the characteristics required after completion (a specification);
- include the means of verification of performance or characteristics (a method);
- be capable of contractual use between parties at the preparatory stage of a project (a specification).

It could include:

- model proven solutions for the design of works (or parts of them);
- dimensioning rules (e.g. structural design standards);
- calculation methods (e.g. thermal calculations for buildings).

3.7.3 CEN execution standards

An execution standard would:

- specify the characteristics of the products used by reference to product specifications;
- specify how to execute the building work in order to obtain the expected result;
- specify methods for testing and quality control;
- specify methods to avoid or minimize hazards;
- be capable of contractual use between parties at the execution stage of the work.

3.7.4 Scope of design and execution standards

Although this may change in the future, current CEN policy is that design and execution standards should exclude:

- items normally dealt with in national regulations;
- items normally subject to traditional training and education at national level;
- nature of contracts, legal obligations, etc.;
- quality assurance systems;
- items concerning qualifications of enterprises and personnel;
- aspects relating to health and safety of workers on site.

Background information on CEN and ISO (International Standards Organization), as well as an explanation of their relationship with BSI, are given in annex B.

3.7.5 Application and acceptance of CEN projects

When a new or extended standardization project falls within the field of application of the CEN strategy, there is a procedure initiated to check whether the proposal complies with the objectives of the strategy. A flow diagram concerning the field of application and the acceptance procedure is included as annex C.

4 The purpose and use of codes of practice

4.1 Accepted good practice

The purpose of codes of practice is to:

- give recommendations of accepted good practice to achieve a standard of building, as followed by competent practitioners;
- set a series of good practice options or objectives for a range of circumstances and describe accepted ways of achieving them;
- enable the reader to make immediate use of the results of scientific investigation and practical experience.

They are not intended to:

- be a treatise or text book;
- cover every detail.

They can discuss the principles underlying a particular practice, the possible options for implementing the practice, the implications of adopting them and the circumstances in which they are applicable.

4.2 Accommodating different standards of practice

A code of practice may include a number of standards of practice, each one being accepted good practice for different circumstances. For example, it may be appropriate for there to be different standards, depending on whether the building concerned is classed as a 'prestige' or a 'utility' building. For each class of building, the different recommendations would represent accepted good practice.

However, a standard of practice lower than accepted good practice may be included in the recommendations if the code also includes the minimum building regulation standard. Clauses giving the building regulation standard should be clearly identified by a reference to the legislation and introductory text drawing attention to the status of the clause.

4.3 Litigation

Codes of practice provide evidence of accepted good practice or a benchmark for good design and construction and are widely understood to establish criteria for judging performance. It is also a fact that they are used by the courts as evidence in determining disputes.

For this reason, recommendations should be drafted so that their meaning is clear and acceptable circumstances are clearly defined; phrases such as 'generally' and 'in most instances' should be avoided.

4.4 Legislation

Increasingly, legislation is being written in the form of functional or 'goal orientated' requirements and government departments are publishing guidance, usually in the form of an approved code or approved document, to meeting the requirements. In a few cases, compliance with the code is mandatory; in most cases, compliance remains voluntary but may be taken as evidence tending to show compliance.

In addition, the approved documents to the Building Regulations recognize British Standards as relevant guidance and may refer to them to provide fuller guidance and also to admit an alternative approach to meeting the requirements. However, the parallel publication of codes by government (for regulatory purposes) and codes by BSI (to give good practice recommendations) makes demands on limited resources and results in overlapping and even conflicting guidance.

It is considered, therefore, that it would be in the best interest of government, BSI and the industry if codes incorporated guidance to support legislation as well as good practice recommendations, but clearly distinguished between them. The Memorandum of Understanding agreed between government and BSI recognizes this possibility.

If this aim is to be realized, it is essential that there is co-operation to identify the regulatory requirements, and regular liaison to ensure that each party is aware of any changes in requirements or recommendations planned by the other.

Where a code of practice is drafted with the intention of it being called up in legislation, clauses relating to the legislation should be highlighted typographically.

4.5 Reference in building contracts

Simple reference to codes (unlike reference to standard specifications) may not be sufficient to convert them into contractual requirements, since it may be necessary to specify which of the alternative options is required for the particular building project.

It remains the responsibility of the user to ensure that any reference to a code quoted in a building contract is appropriate. In many cases, it will be necessary to identify particular Parts or clauses.

4.6 Users of codes of practice

Codes of practice should be drafted with the needs of potential users in mind. Users fall into six groups according to their needs during the construction process. In considering their needs, the detailed role of individual types of user within each user group should be borne in mind. The full range of potential users and how they relate to the six user groups is given in annex D.



The six user groups are as follows:

- owner/occupier;
- designer;
- specifier/purchaser;
- product supplier;
- contractor/installer;
- inspector/tester.

Examples of the types and contents for codes of practice with which these user groups will be concerned are given in table 1 in relation to each of the project stages. The types of content are considered in more detail in 6.1. The make-up of the main user groups is considered in the checklist in annex D.

5 Preparation and drafting

5.1 Making the case for a code of practice

The scope of individual codes should be as concise as possible and should concentrate on issues where there are positive recommendations required by industry.

However, the proposer should be convinced that there are enough recommendations to warrant publishing a code of practice. The following steps should be taken to help check whether a code of practice is justified.

- Collaborate with the Construction Quality Forum secretariat at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to obtain feedback on key issues relating to the proposed code where authoritative recommendations appear to be required.
- Check whether technical guidance is available on the subject from other sources (see annex A).
- Collaborate with the BSI Marketing Department on the need for the proposed code of practice.
- Liaise with legislative bodies to determine related or relevant legislation. Discuss what they require of a code (in terms of content and timescale for publication) for it to be acceptable as a means of compliance. The Construction Sector Publications Unit may also be consulted.

- Ensure that the committee has a clear concept of what they are to produce, i.e. there is consensus between members as to the objective.
- Consult relevant Technical Committees for details of any conflicting/overlapping codes of practice, for example as a result of information obtained from application of the B/- Framework.
- Develop a work proposal form to set out the aims/audience as is used for product specifications (a standard form is available from BSI committee secretaries and on completion is considered by B/- or its panels). Include questions on the market for a code both at home and abroad. If it could be used abroad, determine the key issues for use in the particular countries and how they might affect its content and structure.

5.2 Programming the work

The programme for each code project should be short and intensive. Long programmes lose impetus and suffer delays through changes in representatives on committees. They may also be overtaken by new research and technological development.

‘Bought out’ secretariats should be encouraged, provided that impartiality is not jeopardized when the secretary has a vested interest.

5.3 External funding

External funding should be promoted. The Department of the Environment funds two schemes.

- The DOE Standards Support Scheme assists in funding technical expertise to support the UK input to the development of priority European and international standards, and the development of priority British Standards for construction.
- The Experimental Data Scheme is designed to part fund specific tasks that are needed to underpin new or revised standards for construction, as well as development work required for the preparation of British, European and international standards.

Committee secretaries have details of these schemes, including a model brief for the Standards Support Scheme.

Table 1. Type of content of codes of practice likely to be needed by users at each project stage

Project stages	Groups of users (contracting parties) with similar needs					
	Owner/ occupier	Designer	Specifier/ purchaser	Product supplier	Constructor/ installer	Inspector/ tester
General	briefing	briefing	—	—	—	—
Basic and building design	design	design	—	—	—	—
Construction design	—	design selection	design selection	—	design selection	—
Work off site	—	—	preservation	preservation	—	—
Work on site	—	—	—	—	installation storage quality control	installation storage quality control
Operation/ maintenance	use management maintenance	maintenance	maintenance	maintenance	maintenance	maintenance
Disposal	decommissioning demolition recycling disposal	decommissioning demolition	—	—	decommissioning demolition recycling disposal	decommissioning demolition recycling disposal