

Structure and Focus of the Technical Guidance

Explains how the Technical Guidance is organised, the meta-structure each circular follows, and the conventions for versioning and stability badges.

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OUTCOME

After reading this Circular, you will understand how the Technical Guidance on Ocean Accounting is organised, the meta-structure each circular follows, the conventions for versioning, stability classification, and dependency tracking, and the production process for circulars. This Circular is a reference for authors, editors, and users of the Technical Guidance.

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ABOUT THIS CIRCULAR

RECOMMENDED CITATION

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<https://guidance.oceanaccounts.org/circulars/section-0/0-4-structure/>

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1. Outcome

¶1 After reading this Circular, you will understand how the Technical Guidance on Ocean Accounting is organised, the meta-structure each circular follows, the conventions for versioning, stability classification, and dependency tracking, and the production process for circulars. This Circular is a reference for authors, editors, and users of the Technical Guidance.

2. Requirements

¶1 None.

¶2 ⓘ Framework Position

¶3 This Circular is a meta-circular: it describes how the Technical Guidance itself is organised rather than providing substantive ocean accounting methodology.

3. Organisation of the Technical Guidance

3.1 Section Structure

¶1 The Technical Guidance is organised into seven sections:

Section	Title	Circulars	Purpose
0	Concepts, Definitions and Front Matter	8 (TG-0.1–0.8)	Foundational materials: conceptual framework, standards, glossary, QA principles
1	Using Ocean Accounts in Decision-Making	13 (TG-1.0–1.12)	Policy applications: how accounts inform planning, finance, and management. TG-1.0 is the section-framing circular: it is the entry point to the section, and establishes the vocabulary the other twelve use
2	Indicators	13 (TG-2.1–2.13)	Indicator methods: deriving decision-relevant metrics from accounts. One exception: TG-2.12 Spatial Data Frameworks is a data-methods circular on the Section 4 definition, numbered here for historical reasons and to be renumbered at the Second Edition
3	Accounts Compilation	16 (TG-3.1–3.16)	Core methodology: building accounts tables from data sources
4	Data Methods	12 (TG-4.1–4.12)	Data methods: collection, processing, quality assurance
5	Geographic and Thematic Case Studies	12 (TG-5.1–5.13; 5.12 reserved)	Implementation examples from partner countries
6	Thematic Methods	15 (TG-6.1–6.15)	Deep-dive methods for specific ecosystems, sectors, asset classes and intervention classes

3.2 Circular Numbering

¶1 Each circular is identified by: TG-[Section] . [Number]

- ¶2 **TG-0.1:** Section 0, Circular 1
- ¶3 **TG-6.14:** Section 6, Circular 14 (Marine and Coastal Tourism Accounting)

¶4 The number `.0` is reserved for a section-framing circular: one that establishes the vocabulary and the routing the rest of its section depends on, and that carries no method of its own. Section 1 has one, TG-1.0, because the terminology of ocean economy measurement is used by the other twelve circulars in that section. Sections without such a circular begin at `.1`, and a `.0` is not to be created to complete a pattern.

¶5 The version number is recorded in the circular's YAML frontmatter as a separate `version` field (e.g., `version: "0.2.0"`). Major increments reflect substantive content changes, whilst minor increments reflect editorial improvements.

3.3 Stability Classification (Badges)

¶1 Each circular carries a stability badge indicating its relationship to underlying standards. See TG-0.5 Navigating the Technical Guidance for full definitions. Summary:

Badge	Meaning	Update Trigger
Core	Based on adopted international standards (2025 SNA, SEEA CF, SEEA EA)	Only when standards are formally revised
Applied	Interprets standards for ocean context; stable but may evolve	Annual review cycle
Emerging	Addresses topics where standards are still developing	Updated as standards crystallise

4. Circular Meta-Structure

¶1 All circulars follow a standard structure to ensure consistency for readers. This section specifies the template for circular authors.

4.1 YAML Frontmatter Specification

¶1 Every circular begins with machine-readable YAML frontmatter:

```
---
title: "Circular Title"           # Required: Full title
circular_id: TG-X.Y              # Required: Circular identifier
badge: Applied                   # Required: Core | Applied | Emerging
version: "0.1.0"                 # Required: consultation version (0.Major.Minor)
circular_status: Draft           # Required: Draft | Completed | Planned
last_updated: Month Year         # Required: e.g. May 2026
prerequisites:                   # Required: List of prerequisite circular IDs (empty array
[] if none)
  - TG-0.1
  - TG-X.Z
enables:                         # Optional: Circulars this one enables
  - TG-A.B
---
```

¶2 **Editorial fields only.** The block above is what a circular author writes. Each page also carries platform frontmatter – `project`, `visibility`, `status`, `content_type`, `brand`, `sidebar_category` and `sidebar.order` – which the `/new-page` skill sets and authors do not hand-edit.

¶3 **status and circular_status are different fields.** `status` is the platform publish gate (`working` or `published`) and governs whether a page is built at all. `circular_status` is the editorial state (`Draft`, `Completed`, `Planned`) shown in the metadata table. A page can be `status:`

published and `circular_status: Draft` at the same time – that is the normal state for a circular out for consultation.

¶4 **Note on badge** : See Section 3.3 for stability classification definitions. **Note on publication version**: The `version` field reflects the public publication version, not the internal pipeline draft count. Pipeline drafts (e.g., draft-v4, draft-v6) are production artefacts only, and the publication version is confirmed by the Secretariat before a circular moves to Completed status.

4.2 Metadata Display Block

¶1 The site renders a metadata table automatically from YAML frontmatter (`circular_id` , `version` , `badge` , `circular_status` , `last_updated`). Authors do not hand-write the display block in the markdown body.

¶2 Required frontmatter fields for the metadata table:

```
circular_id: TG-X.Y
version: "0.1.0"
badge: Applied           # Core | Applied | Emerging
circular_status: Draft   # Draft | Completed | Planned
last_updated: Month Year  # e.g. May 2026
```

¶3 **Note on Last Updated**: Manually maintained by the author at publication time.

4.3 Standard Section Structure

Standard Circular Template (Sections 1–4, 6)

```
# Circular Title

## 1. Outcome
[What readers will achieve -- 1-2 paragraphs]

## 2. Requirements
[Prerequisites with hyperlinks to other circulars]

## 3. Guidance Material
### 3.1 [Topic]
### 3.2 [Topic]
...
[Core methodology -- bulk of content]

## 4. Acknowledgements
**Authors:** [To be confirmed]
**Reviewers:** [To be confirmed]

## 5. References
[Footnotes or bibliography]

## Appendixes (if needed)
### A. Worked Example
### B. Sample Code
### C. Detailed Tables
```

¶1 **Note on numbering**: Acknowledgements is always second-to-last and References always last, numbered consecutively after whatever Guidance content is present. An optional “Limitations and Considerations” section may appear between Guidance Material and Acknowledgements, in which case it becomes Section 4, whilst Acknowledgements and References shift to Sections 5 and 6 respectively.

Case Study Template (Section 5)

¶1 Section 5 circulars use an adapted structure for country/regional case studies:

```
# [Country/Region]

## 1. Outcome
## 2. Requirements
## 3. Country/Regional Context
## 4. Implementation Approach
### 4.1 Institutional Arrangements
### 4.2 Data Sources
### 4.3 Methods Applied
## 5. Accounts Developed
## 6. Decision Applications
## 7. Lessons Learned
### 7.1 Successes
### 7.2 Challenges
### 7.3 Recommendations
## 8. Acknowledgements
## 9. References
## Appendixes
```

¶2 **Note:** This template has not yet been validated against compiled Section 5 drafts. Authors should cross-check against TG-5.x working drafts when available.

Front Matter Template (Section 0)

¶1 Section 0 circulars have unique structures appropriate to their purpose:

- ¶2 **0.1 General Introduction:** Extended conceptual content with figures
- ¶3 **0.5 Navigating:** Primarily visual/tabular (dependency graphs, pathways)
- ¶4 **0.6 Glossary:** Definition list format organised alphabetically
- ¶5 **0.7 QA Principles:** Reference document format with standards citations

¶6 Any Section 0 circular not listed above follows the Standard Circular Template.

4.4 Section Content Guidelines

Section	Purpose	Key requirements
1. Outcome	State what readers will achieve	1–2 paragraphs; active voice; specific capability or knowledge gained
2. Requirements	List prerequisites	Hyperlinked circular IDs with brief description; “None” if no prerequisites
3. Guidance Material	Core methods and explanations	Hierarchical subsections; cite standards with paragraph numbers; tables and figures for complex content
4. Limitations (optional)	Caveats and misapplication risks	Include when methodology has significant limitations; flexible length
Acknowledgements	Authors and reviewers	List with affiliations
References	Citations	Footnote format for in-text citations; numbered list acceptable when no in-text anchors present

4.5 Section Scope Tests

¶1 Each section’s scope is stated in Section 3.1. The tests below say what that scope means when an author is deciding whether a passage belongs in the circular they are writing. They were derived

from the Section 1 review of September 2026 and the Section 3 review that followed it, both of which found method distributed across sections that had no rule to test it against.

Section	The circular gives	It cross-refers for
1 Decision-Making	Which accounts and indicators bear on a decision, how to read them, how to present them	How they are built (2, 3, 4, 6)
2 Indicators	The indicator's definition, normalisation and aggregation	The account it is derived from (3)
3 Accounts Compilation	The account table – its rows, columns and accounting identities – and the compilation procedure that populates it	Sector-specific method (6), measurement protocol and data source (4), the indicator derived from it (2), the decision that uses it (1)
4 Data Methods	The variable delivered to an account: definition, source, unit, coverage, reference value, uncertainty, quality tier	The account the variable enters (3)
5 Case Studies	What one country did and what others can act on	Every method it applied
6 Thematic Methods	Method specific to one ecosystem, sector, asset class or intervention class	The generic account structure it populates (3), the measurement protocol (4), the indicator derived from it (2), and readiness and sequencing (0.8)

¶2 Two consequences are worth stating explicitly, because both have been breached in practice:

- ¶3 **A Section 4 worked example may show a variable being produced and quality-assured; it should not show an account being balanced.** Balancing an account is Section 3 work, and so is the valuation choice that populates a monetary cell.
- ¶4 **Section 3 keeps what generalises across assets** – the boundary decision, the classification into SEEA asset categories, the account rows and identities. Sector-specific method belongs in Section 6, named by circular. Where a Section 3 circular is the only place a method appears, it moves rather than being deleted.
- ¶5 **Section 6 is not only ecosystems and industries.** The row above was widened in September 2026 after a read-across of the whole section found four circulars that the earlier wording did not admit: TG-6.11 treats an asset class, TG-6.12 a residual-flow class, TG-6.13 a spatial interface between two accounting domains, and TG-6.15 an intervention class. All four give method specific to their subject and cross-refer for the generic structure, which is the operative half of the test; the earlier wording named only ecosystems and sectors and so excluded them by accident rather than by decision.
- ¶6 **Where two Section 6 circulars can record the same entry, one of them owns it and says so.** The read-across found four such overlaps – submerged artificial structures, the coastal protection service, blue carbon pricing, and nutrient loads to coastal waters – each recorded in two places without a rule. A Section 6 circular that shares an account entry with another must name the owner in its boundary statement or at the point of overlap.

¶7 Every circular in Sections 1 to 4 and 6 should carry a short boundary statement, in its `:::note[Framework Position]` block or immediately after it, naming which account or decision it owns and which circulars own the method it excludes. TG-3.9 is the model.

5. Page Length Guidance

¶1 Page counts refer to rendered PDF A4 pages at approximately 500 words per page. These are guidance targets, not enforced limits.

Section	Typical Length	Notes
Section 0 (Front Matter)	Variable	0.1 and 0.5 are longer by design
Section 1 (Decision-Making)	4–6 pages	Conceptual + examples
Section 2 (Indicators)	~4 pages	Methods focus
Section 3 (Accounts Compilation)	6–8 pages	Detailed methodology
Section 4 (Data Methods)	4–6 pages	Practical procedures
Section 5 (Case Studies)	8–12 pages	Full treatment
Section 6 (Thematic Methods)	6–8 pages	Ecosystem/sector deep-dives

6. Version and Revision Policy

6.1 Version Numbering

¶1 Format: `v0.[Major].[Minor]` – the leading `0.` marks the consultation edition, which is not adopted guidance

- ¶2 **Major version** (v0.1.0 → v0.2.0): Substantive content changes – new standards incorporated, significant methodological corrections, structural reorganisation
- ¶3 **Minor version** (v0.1.0 → v0.1.1): Editorial improvements – clarifications, added examples, typographic corrections, updated cross-references

6.2 Revision Policy

- ¶1 All circulars undergo **annual review** to assess whether updates are needed
- ¶2 **Core** circulars are updated only when underlying standards change
- ¶3 **Applied** and **Emerging** circulars may be updated based on implementation experience

6.3 Superseded Versions

¶1 Superseded versions will be archived, with the URL scheme to be confirmed. The current version always appears at the canonical URL.

7. Production Process

7.1 Circular Development Workflow

¶1 Table 7.1 below summarises the full per-circular review lifecycle for the Second Edition.

Phase	Description
Triage	Issues raised against each draft are triaged (immediate-fix, verification-needed, user-input-needed) and recorded in the draft's issue inventory.
Draft compilation	A new draft is compiled applying all closed/fixed resolutions; each draft has a paired revision log.
Director review	The draft undergoes a director-level quality gate; findings logged in <code>director-review-vN.md</code> .
Director fixes	Actionable director-review findings are applied to the draft.
Secretariat review	New issues raised are logged in <code>secretariat-review-vN.md</code> and feed the next triage cycle.
Publication	Approved circular published with DOI assignment.

¶2 Internal production uses an extended triage / director-review / Secretariat-review pipeline. Details are documented in project tooling and are not part of this public-facing circular.

7.2 Publication Cadence

¶1 Circulars are published on a monthly cadence following Secretariat review, with publication frequency varying by batch. Priority circulars may be fast-tracked, and updates to existing circulars are published as needed.

8. Dependency and Prerequisites

8.1 Dependency Tracking

¶1 Dependencies are tracked in two ways:

1. ¶2 **YAML frontmatter:** `prerequisites` and `enables` fields in each circular
2. ¶3 **Prose requirements section:** Human-readable list with hyperlinks (Section 2 of each circular)

¶4 The `prerequisites` field and the prose Requirements section must be kept synchronised. The `enables` field is machine-readable only and has no prescribed prose counterpart.

8.2 Dependency Principles

Principle	Guidance
Explicit prerequisites	Only list circulars that are genuinely required.
Minimal dependencies	Avoid unnecessary prerequisites that create barriers.
Bidirectional tracking	When adding a prerequisite, update the <code>enables</code> field of the prerequisite circular.
Foundational circulars	Explicit listing of foundational circulars (e.g., TG-0.1) is recommended even when transitively covered; omit only for mid-chain intermediaries.

8.3 Dependency Graph

¶1 See TG-0.5 Navigating the Technical Guidance for the visual dependency graph.

9. Cross-Cutting Themes

¶1 Cross-cutting themes are catalogued in TG-0.5 Navigating the Technical Guidance. Authors should ensure consistency with the treatments described there. Key threads include:

Theme	Thread
Spatial methods	0.1 (BSU concept) → 3.1 (spatial asset delineation) → 4.1 (remote sensing) → 6.x (ecosystem-specific)
Monetary valuation	1.9 (whether and when to value) → 2.4 §3.10 (method preference order and the methods themselves) → 3.1 §3.3 (asset-level NPV) → 6.x (context-specific) → 5.x (case studies)
Uncertainty	0.7 (QA principles) → relevant methods circulars
Governance	1.1–1.2 (decision-making entry points) → 3.7 (governance accounts) → 5.x (all case studies)
Traditional knowledge	0.1 (conceptual framing) → 3.6 (traditional knowledge accounts) → 5.x (case studies)
Sub-national applicability	3.11 (sub-national accounts) → 5.x (case studies, where applicable)

Theme	Thread
Ocean economy	1.0 (terms, and what an account can certify) → 3.3 (boundary and account) → 2.5 (indicators) → 1.1 / 1.10 (use) → 5.x (case studies)

10. Acknowledgements

- ¶1 **Authors:** [To be confirmed]
- ¶2 **Reviewers:** [To be confirmed]

11. References

1. ¶1
GOAP. (2024). *Discussion Paper: Modular Structure for GOAP Technical Guidance* (internal working paper, GOAP Secretariat, not publicly distributed). Global Ocean Accounts Partnership.

2. ¶2
United Nations. (2025). *System of National Accounts 2025*. United Nations.

3. ¶3
United Nations. (2021). *System of Environmental-Economic Accounting—Ecosystem Accounting*. United Nations.

4. ¶4
UNECE. (2019). *Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM)*, Version 5.1.

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