

**Nominet abandons cancellation policy
United Kingdom - Hogan Lovells LLP**

Domain names

September 15 2014

Nominet, the '.uk' domain name registry, [announced](#) on July 30 2014 that it was abandoning its plans to automatically cancel '.uk' domain names that could not be validated pursuant to its [Data Quality Policy](#), which was introduced in April 2014 and came into force the following month. The automatic cancellation policy was due to commence from September 22 2014; however, under the amended policy, domain names that do not meet the validation procedure will now remain suspended until the data is corrected or they expire.

Nominet's Data Quality Policy aimed primarily at obliging registrars to "ensure that a reasonable, minimum proportion of the data they submit to us can be validated by us". The policy also stipulates that registrars must suspend '.uk' domain names within 30 days where they are unable to validate data. Nominet warns that it will keep track of registrar compliance with the policy via data quality audits of registrars and the regular data quality reports that registrars must submit to Nominet.

The policy issued a stern warning to registrars that Nominet "may validate any registrant data submitted to us. Where Nominet determines that data submitted cannot be validated, registrars will be required to take steps to resolve the issue". One of the key data elements that the policy concerns is the email address associated with a domain name and the onus is again placed on registrars to "ensure that the email address for the registrant is a reliable means by which to contact the registrant".

The original policy provided for the planned automatic cancellation of domain names that did not meet the necessary validation checks after 30 days, with an initial 'data quality transition period' from May 7 to September 22 during which domain names were not automatically cancelled where validation could not be completed. This programmed automatic cancellation has been scrapped under the policy change and domain names not meeting the validation requirements will now remain suspended using the so-called 'data quality lock' until the data is corrected or they expire.

Nominet stated in its announcement regarding the softening of its policy that it:

"responds to feedback received following the introduction of the Data Quality Policy in May, which we recognise was a significant change for both registrants and registrars. We also believe that suspension may be more effective overall in improving data quality by giving more time for registrants and registrars to make corrections."

The Nominet Data Quality Policy reflects an international climate tightening up in relation to WHOIS data accuracy, notably as embodied in the WHOIS validation procedures applicable to gTLDs as imposed under ICANN's 2013 Registrar Accreditation Agreement. The requirement for registrants to respond to automated WHOIS data checks under this policy [has caused websites to go down and has raised the ire of registrar and registrant groups](#).

Whilst enhanced WHOIS data accuracy can only be a good thing, there is clearly a delicate balancing act involved when it comes to weeding out those domain name registrants who are deliberately seeking to deceive and those that simply may not be in a position to meet validation requirements within a specified time frame where this is not due to bad faith.

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