VolA[[1]](#footnote-1) / OSCAR transition plan

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# Background

Until recently, the only comprehensive listing of observing systems was collected in WMO Publication No. 9, Volume A. Publication No. 9 contained metadata of global observing stations of Members. Volume A was not always updated when changes occurred, and the procedures depended heavily on emailed correspondence from Volume A focal points which were then manually updated by a WMO staff member.

OSCAR will take over the role of Volume A and collect detailed information about the observations made by observing stations, in addition to the legacy Volume A information. Apart from containing detailed observing station metadata, OSCAR also plays a crucial role in the Gap Analysis, helping to compare actual capabilities with WMO requirements. OSCAR can be updated directly by Members and other stakeholders, such as global and regional centre and also connected to existing station databases.

A first version of OSCAR has been developed and presented to Cg-17. OSCAR will be operated by MeteoSwiss for the next 5 years under a MoA signed with WMO.

A fully functional OSCAR is required for provision of VolA information through OSCAR, therefore the elements of this transition plan also comprise those related to operationalizing OSCAR.

# Objectives

The objective of this plan is to make sure that all the necessary steps have been taken before operationalizing OSCAR and migrating VolA. It makes explicit the dependencies between the various activities and therefore helps establishing a reliable date for the commencement of OSCAR operations. It also ensures that Members have been properly consulted and informed of the changes to Volume A and operations of OSCAR. Finally, it establishes the procedures for the initial operations and further development of OSCAR

# Benefits

* Smooth start of operations of OSCAR, leading to Members trusting the system
* Optimal uptake of OSCAR, more quickly realizing the benefits of OSCAR
* Improve future OSCAR development, leading to increased benefits from OSCAR

# Timescale

The transition from Volume A to OSCAR will take place in 2 phases: The pre-operationalization phase, and the initial operations phase.

The first phase will conclude with the operationalization of OSCAR. The precise date at which this will happen is dependent on the successful completion of key activities described in this plan. These are successful testing of OSCAR and the legacy Volume A format produced by it, by key stakeholders (Members, NWP centres), establishment of user support procedures, documentation and capacity development and information of Members of new operational arrangements. Nevertheless, on current planning, OSCAR is expected to go operational in December 2015.

In the second phase from January 2016 - December 2017 the system will be available for population and usage, and the users are expected to be trained for use. However, during the second phase Members will still have the option to use the traditional procedure for updating Volume A in order to communicate changes of observation stations to WMO. This phase will conclude with full adoption of the system after which OSCAR will be the sole source for observational metadata.

# Approach

The strategy of migrating Volume A to OSCAR is as follows. At some point in time before the operationalization date, the Volume A flatfile will be imported into OSCAR. From them on, Members will have the choice of either continuing to update the Volume A information in the traditional fashion, or to make update online in OSCAR. Updates that reach the Secretariat in the traditional way, will be manually processed and input into OSCAR by WMO staff. Updates made by Members are directly available in OSCAR. To provide a backwards compatible Volume A for legacy systems, a special view has been implemented in OSCAR that exports information in a way resembling the traditional Volume A format.

To make sure this transition will work, the OSCAR system populated with test Volume A data, will be tested by various user groups, including Members, to get feedback on the quality of the information in the system, as well as its usability. Members will also be made aware with sufficient time of the changes to Volume A format and maintenance procedures. Documentation and Capacity Building on OSCAR will also be provided.

# Deliverables

The deliverables of this plan are categorized into two high level categories. First, those related to the operationalization of OSCAR, second those to do with the phase in which OSCAR will be already operational, but will continue being developed.

## Pre-operationalization phase

## An initial transfer of Volume A data into OSCAR took place in the implementation phase of WIGOS, so that this information can be verified in the OSCAR system for accuracy and completeness. During the pre-operationalization phase of OSCAR, there will be activities to prepare the users on how to use the tool, test and refine the system’s functionalities. OSCAR will also be further developed during this period. The main deliverables are as follows.

### Comprehensively tested OSCAR

The system will be tested in various ways:

1. Beta Testing with a user group composed of experts from the member countries.
2. Numerical Weather Prediction centre testing by ECMWF and NCEP to ensure the system-to-system connectivity and quality monitoring.
3. WMO Internal testing by the WIGOS Program Office and OSCAR development teams, which includes the verification of the import of JCOMM Ops, Radar, and the Volume A data into OSCAR.

### Preparation activities for OSCAR deployment and operations

There are 4 components to preparing for OSCAR operations, with the deliverables:

1. The <https://oscar.wmo.int> domain name created jointly with MeteoSwiss.
2. Ownership attribution decisions for observing systems in politically challenging Member states.
3. OSCAR National Focal Point nomination letter to Members, including the terms of reference.
4. Communication packages in various media for the upcoming change to OSCAR, including the WIGOS newsletter, formal correspondences, and website updates.

### Operational Procedures and Responsibilities

There are tasks to ensure the long-term support of OSCAR and its evolution are addressed during the pre-operational phase of OSCAR. The deliverables include:

1. A defined strategy for maintaining legacy Volume A data during the transition period, which includes training WMO staff to use OSCAR to update volume A records.
2. Providing services to support user training and support for questions.
3. Determining the role of Regional WIGOS Centres in supporting and maintaining OSCAR
4. Determining the quality control procedures and policies for OSCAR.
5. Planning the requirements management process for OSCAR enhancements

### Capacity Development

In order for OSCAR to be widely adopted, the users will need to be exposed to its capabilities and trained in data entry and data analysis procedures. As such, the WIGOS Program Office will be developing training materials, user manuals, and conducting workshops within the regions. The deliverables are:

1. A one day training module on OSCAR for use at workshops and modified for the various target audience.
2. Online interactive materials for self-training purposes.
3. Training workshops in the regions, including dedicated workshops on WIGOS and OSCAR, and opportunistic workshops during other training events.

### Documentation of OSCAR

OSCAR will need to be documented for users to understand its various functions. The deliverables for documentation are:

1. Various versions of the User Manual that are updated with feedback from the training workshops as well as evolution of OSCAR system capabilities.
2. An interactive, within-tool help system that explains each data field and button in the system.

## Initial operations phase

During the period between the pre-operational phase and full operations, there will be tasks to make the final transition to using OSCAR instead of Volume A. This means preparing the WMO community to fully adopt OSCAR for the management of observation systems metadata. The deliverables include:

### Continued capacity development workshops

1. There will be the continuation of dedicated workshops for OSCAR in the regions.
2. Online seminars or webcasts of 2hr training courses
3. Addition of OSCAR to other ETR training courses held during this period, in an opportunistic fashion.

### WMO internal training and familiarization

WMO staff will be trained in the capabilities of OSCAR to avoid duplication of effort.

1. Lunch-time forum for OSCAR
2. Other opportunistic OSCAR training for WMO staff

### Development of Phase II of OSCAR

There will be further improvements to OSCAR based upon user feedback and the original OSCAR development plans. As such, there are changes to the system during this period. The deliverables during this period include:

1. Adaptive maintenance of the OSCAR requirements, which includes modifying the system based upon a change management process.
2. Definition of the relationship between OSCAR/Space and OSCAR/Surface.
3. The development of OSCAR/Analysis for the more powerful analytical tools.

### Budgetary support for OSCAR operations and development

Long term support for OSCAR will need to be coordinated during this initial operations phase. The deliverables include ensuring:

1. Funding for OSCAR/Space operations and support
2. Funding for further training workshops

# Tasks & Activities

See Annex I – Project Plan in Excel format (source: <https://app.smartsheet.com/b/home?lx=XdOnvy6FmP3rN3sx515t-Q>)

# Communications strategy

As shown in the activities table, the communications strategy revolves around educating the Members about OSCAR, its usage, its benefits, and its timetable for transition.

There are two main newsletters used by the PO to communicate with the members about events of interest, the WIGOS newsletter and the the WWW Operational Information Service (OIS) newsletter. The switch from Volume A and its format to OSCAR and its new data fields will be communicated in both.

As per WMO policy, requests for Focal Points require a formal letter to the Members’ Permanent Representatives. This letter, which will be sent approximately 2 month before the date of operationalization, will announce the transition from Volume A to OSCAR, request an OSCAR focal point based upon the provided terms of references, and ask each member to evaluate OSCAR in a timely manner to decide on their individual transition date within the 2 year transition period, which would determine how long the member intends to use the legacy Volume A formats.

Other communication methods are planned, including updates to the WIGOS website, forums at the secretariat to educate staff at WMO about OSCAR, and new training modules to be made available online.

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# Participants and Responsibilities

IPET-WIFI subgroup on OSCAR development (chair: Simon Gilbert) (Oversees OSCAR development)

WIGOS Project Office staff: (implementation of WIGOS)

Lars Peter Riishojgaard - Project Owner

Timo Proescholdt - Project Manager for transition plan, deputy Project Manager OSCAR

Luis Nunes - Project Team Member

Igor Zahumensky- Project Team Member

Shanna Pitter - Project Team Member

OSCAR development team includes: (development of OSCAR)

Etienne Charpentier - Project Manager OSCAR

Timo Proescholdt - Project Manager for transition plan, deputy Project Manager OSCAR

Jörg Klausen - Project Manager OSCAR - MeteoSwiss

Jürg Mannes – MeteoSwiss

Lucia Cappelletti - MeteoSwiss

# Risks

This plan is written after some of the activities described therein have commenced

Non-adherence to the plan, due to ad-hoc decision making

Tracking progress and dependencies can be difficult, as there are dependencies but at the same time tasks are expected to be developed iteratively.

1. WMO Publication No. 9, Volume A [↑](#footnote-ref-1)