

Science Council Terms of Reference

Authors: Science Council

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Aim of the Council

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) Science Council is a Departmental Expert Committee which provides independent scientific support, advice and challenge to the FSA.

The Science Council's purpose is to ensure that the FSA identifies, sources, integrates, and uses the best scientific evidence and expertise from all relevant disciplines to inform and evaluate its work.

Science Council members are drawn from a wide range of disciplines, ensuring the Council brings the broad strategic perspective and expertise needed to support the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser in assuring and challenging the evidence the FSA uses in its development and delivery of policies.

Objectives of the Council

The Council's advice focuses on how the FSA can source and deploy scientific evidence and advice to deliver its current strategic priorities, to understand new developments, risks, and opportunities, and to identify and develop new ways to deliver excellence in the future.

The objectives of the Science Council are to:

- Provide advice and constructive challenge on how the FSA identifies, gathers, and uses scientific evidence and advice to support the FSA Chief Scientific Adviser in assuring and challenging the evidence the FSA uses in its development and delivery of policies. This includes combining evidence from different disciplines, engaging with other Scientific Advisory Committees, and supporting the FSA to access wider networks of expertise.
- Advise the FSA and provide assurance about sources of evidence and advice, to help address the FSA's big issues, now and in the future.

- Advise the FSA on how it should address scientific issues of strategic importance or that are not covered by an existing Scientific Advisory Committee.
- Inform FSA of, and support FSA to address, current and emerging threats, challenges, and opportunities.
- Advise on any other matters relating to the FSA's approach to science as required by the FSA.

In formulating its advice, the Council will normally generate its own content and intellectual input and generate and convene informed discussion and analysis on strategic issues.

Authority

- The Science Council is an advisory body which makes recommendations to the FSA Chief Scientific Advisor on the FSA's use of science.
- The Science Council Chair also provides an annual update of the Council's activity to the FSA Board.

Membership

The Council forms a core group which consists of (at full membership) ten to twelve [members](#), including one Chair. The Science Council is also able to identify and draw in wider expertise across relevant disciplines, where the requirement for additional expertise is identified.

Members are recruited by open competition for their ability to think strategically, work across disciplines, and understand how science can be used to influence and test policy and to achieve concrete impacts to benefit society.

The normal duration of appointment for a Science Council member is 1 term of 3 years. Members may be re-appointed for additional terms or existing terms extended where necessary with the agreement of the FSA Chair. Members and Chairs will not serve longer than 10 years in any one post.

Appointments to the Council are made subject to adherence to the guidance, terms and conditions set out in the Council's Code of Practice, including those with regard to: The Seven Principles of Public Life; Remuneration of committee fees and expenses; and declaration and conflicts of interests. If a member is found guilty of grave misconduct or non-performance of duties their appointment

may be terminated without notice.

Meeting Arrangements

Members will meet multiple times per year with regular plenary meetings and shorter project meetings as required to manage specific portfolio items.

- As part of its work programme the Science Council will hold one open plenary meeting a year. Typically, this meeting will discuss the work of the Council over the previous year as well as a themed discussion on a topic of relevance to the remit of the FSA. Open meetings can be attended by the public. All public open plenary meeting agendas, papers, minutes, and reports are published.
- In addition, there are up to four closed plenary meetings per year to discuss and progress the Science Council work programme.
- A plenary meeting requires a quorum to be present for any decisions to be agreed by the whole Council.
- A quorum is considered to be half of the total number of the appointed members including the Chair, plus one (rounded up to the nearest whole number). If the membership falls below 5 members a quorum will be full attendance by all appointed members.

Reporting

- Science Council delivers its work through several channels.
- It provides high-level, expert strategic insight, challenge, and advice to the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser and to the FSA Board on the FSA's use of science to deliver FSA objectives.
- The Chair reports on the Council's activities to the FSA Board annually.
- The Chair has the right of direct access to the FSA's Chief Scientific Adviser and Chief Executive, and to FSA Board members (via the FSA's Chair), at all times.
- Members also have the right of access to the Chief Scientific Adviser, the Chief Executive and Board on any matter which they believe raises important issues relating to their duties as a member.

Independence and Transparency

The Science Council is an independent Scientific Advisory Committee which operates to the highest standards of openness and transparency. It will work in accordance with guidelines by the FSA and relevant guidance and rules established across Government for the operation of Scientific Advisory Committees. These include:

- The cross-Government Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC), which includes the Principles of Scientific Advice to Government; [Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils: CoPSAC 2021 - GOV.UK](#)
- The FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) [Good Practice Guidelines | Science advisory committees \(food.gov.uk\)](#)

The FSA Chief Executive and the Council Chair and members will maintain regular communications between meetings, including through virtual meetings (as required).

Resources and Budget

The Science Council does not hold or manage its own budget. The costs of the Science Council are paid for from a budget held and managed by the FSA and all spend requires signoff by an appropriate FSA official.

- The Science Council is supported by a Secretariat provided by the Food Standards Agency.
- The Secretariat is led by a secretary who is responsible for the work of the Secretariat and a lead Secretariat who manages overall workflow.
- The annual budget for the Science Council is approved by the FSA Investment Board.

Reviews

Science Council performance will be measured by several methods.

- The Council publishes an annual report which sets out its work during the previous financial year, its budgetary spend and its performance against the FSA's Good Practice Guidelines for Scientific Advisory Committees.
- Performance reviews of individual members of the Science Council (including the Chair) and secretariat will be carried out annually. In addition to regular

contact between meetings, the Council Chair and FSA Chief Scientific Adviser will meet for a feedback discussion each year to review the work of the Council against its remit, as well as to discuss the relationship between the Council and the wider FSA.

- The Council Chair will meet the FSA Chair at least twice a year to discuss the work of the Council.

The work of the Science Council will be periodically assessed by an independent review (typically every 3-4 years).