Working Group

Working Group 1 Terms of Reference

Science Council Working Group 1 on Capability and Assurance Terms of Reference

Background

In June 2017, the Science Council was asked by Heather Hancock to answer the following question:

What: To advise the Board on how it can get confident that we have access to the right science capability and capacity and we are using it to the best of our ability.

Why: Heather Hancock noted that the FSA wants to reinvigorate science at the heart of the organisation and ensure access to the best capability and capacity and have a good framework for this. The FSA wants advice on the smartest and most efficient way to get the right science, considering the balance of in-house and external expertise, ensuring appropriate independence and impartiality, and achieving value for money.

Approach

A working group has been established to address the question, working in two phases. The first phase will focus on how FSA identifies and accesses the science it needs, and the second at how this is then used to inform FSA policies and decisions.

Each phase will consider the capabilities which FSA needs to support these outcomes:

- Internal science, including internal expertise, governance and being an intelligent customer
- External science including how we make use of external science capabilities and resources and relationships
- Expert advice

The working group will focus on a number of priority areas where FSA see gaps and opportunities to improve, and where the Council is best placed to help address these.

The Working Group should carry out the following activities, as a minimum:

- Looking at what the FSA currently does, considering any gaps or opportunities to improve and how they might be addressed
- Identifying specific areas to be considered in more detail
- Providing recommendations for the Board, to improve its confidence that “the FSA has access to the right science capability and capacity and we are using it to the best of our ability”

Timing

- Heather Hancock’s original request was for advice within 6 months. The phased approach offers preliminary advice within this timescale but it became apparent very quickly that the request is complex and the overall task will take longer than six
- months.
- The first Working Group meeting, on Phase 1, takes place in September 2017 and will be followed by work by correspondence.
- This will result in recommendations on Phase 1 that will be presented to the Science Council’s second meeting on 13th December 2017.
- Recommendations on Phase 2 will be developed through a second WG meeting

Membership:

Working Group members

- Sandy Thomas
- Patrick Wolfe
- Laura Green (Chair)
- Paul Turner
- Sarah O'Brien

Secretariat

- Jane Ince

- Patrick Miller
- Emma Lamb
- Ruth Kennedy
- Rachel Mumford

FSA input

- Guy Poppy

Outputs

- Council outputs include a short executive summary with clear recommendations

ANNEX A – Initial ideas on issues and aspects the WG may wish to consider

Phase 1 – Identifying and accessing the science FSA needs

Ensuring that the FSA is asking the right questions, gathering the right evidence in the best way, and has the internal expertise and intelligent customer capability for this.

We need to address:

- Identifying needs
    - identifying and defining needs and uses for science, ensuring relevance
    - in new areas for FSA, define evidence needs successfully, such as new priority areas e.g. data sciences,
- Accessing science (new and existing) and new ideas and relationships with external science:
    - accessing science, ensuring the best evidence is coming into the organisation
    - getting the right type of evidence
    - setting scope and boundaries around questions
    - getting novel ideas and engaging with new researchers, including developing the Strategic Evidence Fund programme
    - utilising existing data, e.g. in surveillance and Regulating our Future

    - ensuring we are using robust, modern methods in Official Controls
    - having the right external relationships and leveraging for funding/capability
    - recruiting for Scientific Advisory Committees
- Internal capabilities to address our needs:
    - having the necessary capability (expert and intelligent customer) in staff who are the right staff and supported sufficiently
    - improve retention of staff and avoid loss of expertise in key areas
- Processes required:
    - supporting external relationships
    - oversight of Scientific Advisory Committees as a group and improvements to processes to implement Triennial Review recommendations
    - internal processes of approval and balance in core, strategic and investment spending (this involves assessing internal/external spend and prioritisation of questions)
    - practices in commissioning, managing, peer review
    - ensuring there is a means of assessing the delivery and use of the evidence and ensure all parties are clear on the quality expected
    - having plans for the evaluation built into the project plan from the start and meetings between customer and delivery of assurance
    - content of science processes including reliability of data, confidence and uncertainty in decision making and heat map of threats

Phase 2 – Using science

Ensuring that evidence coming in is used effectively, properly and transparently by the FSA in developing options and in decision-making at executive and Board level.

This is about using the evidence in the right way so will focus more on processes to ensure and check we are doing this, and the expert and intelligent customer capabilities needed to
support this. This includes:

- Making sure the evidence is being used effectively
- Making sure we act on the evidence in the right way – the most appropriate response
- Ensuring the evaluation is completed
- Addressing processes around delivery with respect to quality, relevance and impact

- Addressing processes and communications around reviewing evidence
- Assurance of how science is used e.g. addressing processes to produce Board papers etc
- Ensuring all science and evidence in board papers is robust and has been checked with the relevant scientific experts
- Profile of science
- Making sure sufficient evidence from this is visible to the Board