

Working Group 5 Terms of Reference

Version 2 (major update, published January 2020)

Replaces:

- Version 1 (published November 2019)

Background

The FSA is reviewing its strategy on food hypersensitivity, to ensure it has access to the best available science and evidence and to support the delivery of appropriate and effective actions to ensure food safety and consumer choice. The FSA has an established policy team and science-led research programme on food allergy and intolerance.

The FSA Board has set the direction for the Executive to develop “a comprehensive strategic framework [for food hypersensitivity] for discussion with the Board in autumn 2019. This will include a review of the evidence base and the development of appropriate outcome measures through which to judge progress.” [In May 2019](#), the Science Council was asked by the Board to:

- Consider and advise on future research priorities and direction in respect to food hypersensitivity.
- Conduct a review of the science and evidence base for addressing food hypersensitivity, and the part the FSA and others should play in enhancing knowledge.

The remit of the Science Council is to work with the FSA to:

- Help to ensure that science has impact through advising on how the FSA can deploy the best evidence and advice to identify key issues and to support the FSA’s decision making now, and in the future.
- Help the FSA to identify and access wider, external expertise and evidence relevant to FSA’s objectives.

- Advise the FSA on how it should address issues of strategic importance to the FSA that are not covered by an existing Scientific Advisory Committee, or which relate to general principles.
- Provide advice and challenge on how the FSA identifies, gathers and uses scientific evidence and advice.

At the [Science Council Meeting on 27th June 2019](#), the Council agreed that it is within their remit to support FSA activity on food hypersensitivity and proposed that they should form a new 'Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity' (WG5), chaired by Dr Paul Turner. Dr Turner has existing involvement in the FSA's work on food hypersensitivity (his interests and how they will be managed are set out in the Annex to these ToR).

Approach

The Working Group will oversee a programme of work to evaluate the Research Programme commission by FSA in food hypersensitivity – historically, the current programme and in the future – as outlined below.

- Provide oversight and assurance of an internal FSA review into the previous and existing FSA research programme for food hypersensitivity (WG5.1)
 - As part of its activities in 2017/18, the Science Council recommended the FSA “develop a framework to be used for assurance of FSA’s access and use of science”. This is in development by the Science, Evidence and Research Directorate (SERD).
 - The Science Council is able to support SERD in providing scientific oversight and assurance of a review into the existing FSA research programme for food hypersensitivity and how this has informed FSA policy.
- Research prioritisation and existing evidence
 - The Science Council will support FSA in undertaking a Research Priority Setting exercise involving all relevant stakeholders to identify current priorities for research to support FSA in providing safe food for all consumers, including consumers with food hypersensitivity. (WG5.2)
 - This will identify the current and short-term research priorities for FSA, for which FSA will then undertake a comprehensive and systematic review of the literature to evaluate the current evidence base relating to these priority areas. (WG5.4)
 - The Science Council is able to support SERD in providing scientific oversight and assurance of this process.

- A pilot to evaluate best practice across different areas of FSA research interest, in terms of how science influences policy/decision making (WG5.3)
 - This would seek to evaluate areas of best practice across different FSA teams in terms of how scientific peer-review is accessed and used, and subsequently informs both policy and future research. We will look to develop recommendations to assist the lateral transfer of best practice across the FSA, without getting directly involved in operational activities.
 - In the first instance, this would include structured interviews and case study presentations from FSA staff working in the Allergy & Intolerance area, which can then feed into the internal review mentioned above. However, depending on progress, this could then be expanded to include different FSA teams that undertake significant research programmes (e.g. Microbiological and Chemical Risk Assessment Teams) to evaluate existing processes.
 - Specific lines of enquiry will include:
 - How does FSA use external evidence, including peer-review and external experts?
 - How does FSA survey the research landscape within a specific area (with focus on non-FSA commissioned activities) and identify other potential partners / the need to commission its own research?
 - How can internal communications within FSA about research programmes be optimised for maximum impact and efficiency?
- Horizon scanning of the food hypersensitivity environment to inform future FSA research and policy direction (WG5.5)
 - The Science Council Working Group on Horizon Scanning (WG3) [reported its recommendations](#) on what the FSA should do to improve its horizon scanning and its understanding of global food systems risks (and opportunities). The FSA is at this time responding [these recommendations](#).
 - It is proposed that Working Group 5 can oversee a horizon scanning exercise delivered by SERD, supported by the FSA's Allergy & Intolerance Team and the FSA's independent Advisory Committee for Social Science (ACSS), with the aim to deliver a report on the food hypersensitivity environment and potential novel emerging risks and opportunities, to inform FSA's strategy and resilience.
 - The activity will seek to identify areas that will affect consumers with food hypersensitivity such as new industry/consumer trends might result in different patterns of consumption or different uses e.g.

changing influence of high protein supplements or food banks.

Membership

Steering Group

The WG5 steering group will be led by Paul Turner, with contributions from other members of the Science Council.

Secretariat

- Alisha Barfield
- Chun-Han Chan

FSA Input

- Guy Poppy
- Michelle Patel
- Ross Yarham

FSA Inputs

Procurement and finance input to commissioning of the any preparatory work needed to provide support materials for the planned workshops. The Science Council will co-opt external experts as needed to assist with the delivery of this project. Funding can be drawn from the Strategic Evidence Fund for this preparatory work

Other inputs as required by the WG, but likely to include:

- Draw on leads/contacts in other government departments (including Go-Science and Defra network) and additional expertise from the FSA register of specialists.
- As a first and ongoing task - considering what other inputs the Working Group needs in terms of expertise/insight/commentary as well as of written material.

SAC Inputs

We envisage working with the Advisory Committee on Social Science (ACSS) to consider the social aspect of future horizons in food hypersensitivity (WG5.5).

Outputs

Science Council will review the interim reports generated by FSA/Subcontractor in each task, before compiling a final report to the FSA Board summarising the project and its recommendations in time for January 2021. This will include: Council advice on FSA best practice to improve its overall capability to maximise its use of science in delivering policy.

Annex 1: Science Council Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity Chair's Declared Interests

As a Clinical Senior Lecturer and Clinician Scientist in Paediatric Allergy & Immunology at Imperial College London, the Chair of the proposed Science Council Working Group on Food Hypersensitivity, Dr Paul Turner, has a record of research and advisory interaction with the FSA in relation to food hypersensitivity.

In line with the FSA's approach to managing the interests of its [external scientific advisers](#), Dr Turner has provided further details of his current and past (up to 5 years previous) research and advisory interactions with the FSA. A full record of Dr Turner's most recently published Register of Interests is available under [his member profile page](#).

Dr Turner's declared interests are not considered prohibitive to his Working Group involvement by the Executive, and will continue to be managed in an open and transparent fashion, throughout the course of the Working Group's activity, with mitigating adjustments made as deemed necessary.

- Research bid - Using NHS data to monitor trends in severe, food-induced allergic reactions (FS101222). Open tender call on using NHS data for monitoring trends in allergic reactions to which Imperial College London placed a successful bid. Dr Turner is the project lead, directly contributing an estimated 6.5% of total staff effort. The FSA and Imperial College London are currently finalising particulars and contracts, and the project will likely start Sept/Oct 2019, aiming to complete Dec 2021.
- 2012-2017 MRC fellowship (TRACE) (FS241037). Part of the study team working on the TRACE study. Dr Turner was not funded directly by the project but via an MRC Fellowship to use samples collected from TRACE

study participants, to better understand mechanisms of anaphylaxis. Dr Turner was involved in the supervision of a PhD student at the London site. His role included protocol input, trial management and clinical supervision of day to day work in undertaking food challenges with patients.

- 2015-2017 External Advisor to the Committee on Toxicity. Dr Turner provided advice to COT with respect to the systematic review into food hypersensitivity commissioned by the FSA at that time.
- 2014-2015 Appraiser/peer reviewer. Previous agreement with Dr Turner to provide services as an appraiser/peer reviewer for Apr 2014 to Sept 2015. This amounted to one meeting with Darren Holland of the FSA and significant e-mail correspondence.