

**CODE OF PRACTICE FOR  
MEMBERS OF THE SCOTTISH SCIENCE ADVISORY COUNCIL**

**October 2015**

# Scottish Science Advisory Committee Code of Practice

## INTRODUCTION

The SSAC is not a formal public advisory body, and there are no legal requirements in connection with the way it conducts its business. However it is important that the SSAC abides by a self-imposed Code of Practice, so that the Scottish Government can be confident of the impartiality, quality and usefulness of its advice. The SSAC therefore needs to conduct its business transparently and with high integrity. The following code therefore has been adapted closely from that used by formal public advisory bodies.

The SSAC aims to operate in a manner that is consistent with the guidance contained within the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees<sup>1</sup>. This document is aimed at committees, their chairs, members and secretariats and provides a framework for scientific advisory committees to operate within. It addresses all aspects of a scientific advisory committee's work including its role and remit, responsibilities of members, chairs and secretariats, working practices, publication of documents and public consultation. The Code ensures that high levels of openness and transparency are maintained throughout the vast network of relationships between Scientific Advisory Committees and Government.

## PUBLIC SERVICE VALUES

1. The members of the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC) must at all times:
  - observe the highest standards of **impartiality, integrity and objectivity** in relation to the advice they provide to, and in their interactions with, this committee;
  - be **accountable** to The Scottish Government for its activities and for the standard of advice it provides; and
  - operate in an **open** and **transparent** manner at all times.

## STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE

2. All SSAC members must:
  - follow the Seven Principles of Public Life set out by the Council on Standards in Public Life (Annex A);
  - comply with this Code, and ensure they understand their duties, rights and responsibilities, and that they are familiar with the function and role of this body and any relevant policy statements;
  - not misuse information gained in the course of their service on the SSAC for personal gain or for political purpose, nor seek to use the opportunity of SSAC service to promote their private interests or those of connected persons, firms, businesses or other organisations; and
  - inform the Chair of SSAC if they intend to accept a prominent position in any political party. When engaging in other activities, council members should be conscious of their position on SSAC and exercise proper discretion.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/278498/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/278498/11-1382-code-of-practice-scientific-advisory-committees.pdf)

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### ROLE OF SSAC MEMBERS

3. Members of the SSAC have collective responsibility for the operation of this Council. They must:
  - engage fully in collective consideration of the issues, taking account of the full range of relevant factors, including those issues raised by The Scottish Government;
  - agree Council Reports; and
  - respond promptly to requests for information and to complaints, if necessary with reference to officials in The Scottish Government.
4. Formal communications between the SSAC and The Scottish Government will generally be through the Chair, except where the SSAC has agreed that an individual member should act on its behalf.
5. In exceptional circumstances individual SSAC members can be removed from the SSAC by the Chair if they fail to comply with the membership terms and conditions issued at the time of appointment, or if they fail to perform the duties required of them as laid out in this Code of Practice.

### THE ROLE OF THE SSAC CHAIR

#### General duties

6. To chair meetings of the Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC).
7. To represent the views of the SSAC to The Scottish Government and to provide strategic scientific advice to the Scottish Government.
8. To assist the Scottish Government in representing a range of Scottish science interests externally.
9. To champion science in Scotland more generally.

#### Specific Objectives

10. Contribute to the process of appointing Council members to SSAC, and in consultation with the SSAC Secretariat ensure that all members are well briefed on the role of the council and receive any training appropriate to their needs.
11. In consultation with the SSAC members, define and agree a work programme for the SSAC.
12. Ensure that the SSAC meets at appropriate intervals, and that the minutes of meetings and any reports to Ministers accurately record the decisions taken and, where appropriate, the views of individual Council members.
13. Meet with Ministers to discuss the work of SSAC, which is to:
  - Provide scientific advice to inform Scottish Government policy and priorities;

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- Provide advice on developments in science and technology and implications for science policy; and
  - Develop advice based on a medium to long term, horizon-scanning, strategic view to identify and harness future opportunities and mitigate future threats.
15. Represent the views of the SSAC to the general public and the media and represent the SSAC at meetings, events and functions where appropriate.
16. The Specific roles of the SSAC Chair are outlined in Annex B. It is anticipated that these roles be reviewed on a regular basis.

### HANDLING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

17. The purpose of these provisions is to avoid any danger of SSAC members being influenced, or appearing to be influenced, by their private interests in the exercise of their SSAC duties.
18. All SSAC members should therefore declare any personal or business interests which may, or may be *perceived* (by a reasonable member of the public) to influence their judgement. This should include, as a minimum, personal direct and indirect financial interests, and should normally also include, such interests of close family members and of people living in the same household<sup>2</sup>. The register of interests will be updated regularly and be openly available on the SSAC web site.
19. A declaration of any interest should also be made at any SSAC meeting if it relates specifically to a particular issue under consideration, for recording in the minutes.
20. SSAC members should not participate in the discussion or determination of matters in which they have an interest, and should normally withdraw from the meeting if:
- their interest is direct and financial; or
  - their interest is covered in specific guidance issued by the SSAC which requires them not to participate and/or to withdraw from the meeting.

*This document will be kept under continuous review in the light of experience and future developments. It will also be reviewed at the end of each calendar year by the secretariat. Copies will be made available to third parties as a matter of course on request.*

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<sup>2</sup> Indirect financial interests arise from connections with bodies which have a direct pecuniary interest or from being a business partner of, or being employed by, a person with such an interest. Non-financial interests include those arising from membership of clubs and other organisation. Close family members include personal partners, parents, children (adult and minor), brothers, sisters and the personal partners of any of these.

**THE SEVEN PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE**

**Selflessness**

Holders of public office should take decisions solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

**Integrity**

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence them in the performance of their official duties.

**Objectivity**

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

**Accountability**

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

**Openness**

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

**Honesty**

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interests.

**Leadership**

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

**The Role of the SSAC Chair**

- Chairs meetings of SSAC
- Consults with SSAC members to propose SSAC business
- Acts as the SSAC's formal point of contact with the Scottish Government's CSA
- Manages SSAC business between meetings with the CSA and Secretariat
- Delivers the SSAC advice and recommendations to the CSA and Scottish Government Ministers and Government officials
- Takes a key role in the development of the SSAC's work programme.