



Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy

Review of The Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees and Councils - response form

The consultation is available at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/review-of-the-code-of-practice-for-scientific-advisory-committees-and-councils

The closing date for responses is 8 October 2021 at 23:45

Please email completed forms to: COPSAC2021@go-science.gov.uk

Please be aware that we do not intend to publish all responses to this consultation.

Information provided in response to this consultation, however including personal information, may be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes. Please see the consultation document for further information.

If you want information, including personal data, that you provide to be treated as confidential, please explain to us below why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we shall take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the department.

I want my response to be treated as confidential Y/N

Comments:

Questions

Name: Caroline Murray

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Organisation (if applicable): Scottish Science Advisory Council (SSAC)

Please select the box from the list of options that best describes you as a respondent.

	Respondent type
Y/N	Member of the scientific advisory community within government
Y	Member of the wider scientific community
Y/N	Stakeholder with an interest in Open Science
Y/N	Member of the science communication community (e.g. press officers from universities, scientific institutions)
Y/N	Other (please describe)

Questions

Is the revised CoPSAC sufficient in guiding councils and committees on ensuring:

- A) *independence (chapter 6, section 6.1 and references throughout)*
- B) *transparency, including publications; and (chapter 6, sections 6.2,6.3, 6.6 and references throughout)*
- C) *diversity and inclusion? (chapter 2, sections 2.2, 2.4 and references throughout)*

A Yes No (please comment) Not sure (please comment)

Comments:

SSAC reply: It is useful in the guidance that the two aspects of independence are included, reflecting the importance of the independence of the SAC as a body, but also independence (or impartiality) of the individual members. For the SAC, it is clear that the joint role, of setting its own agenda as well as responding to requests from the sponsoring department is extremely valuable.

B Yes No (please comment) Not sure (please comment)

Comments:

SSAC reply: Two issues are covered here: the openness of meetings and the accessibility to all advice/reports.

Meetings: SSAC is committed to Open Science principles and engagement with citizens but is not convinced that opening all meetings to the public achieves the aims of Open Science. It is therefore uncomfortable with the statement “SACs should aim to hold open meetings where possible”. We feel that while SACs should be encouraged to hold open meetings, it should be clearer that each SAC should feel confident in making its own decision on how to engage the public, depending on its particular context.

Advice and reports: The minutes of SSAC meetings are published on our website and all advice and reports are published unless the Commissioning department and SSAC agree that open publication is inadvisable. It agrees that *generic* reasons for non-disclosure should be declared. *(Note that since not all Departments in the Scottish Government have SACs, SSAC provides advice beyond simply its Sponsoring Department)*

C Yes No (please comment) Not sure (please comment)

Comments:

SSAC reply: The guidelines are very detailed and cover what we consider to be the essential components to encourage diversity and inclusion, as well as good practice for communication and engagement with the ecosystem in which the SAC is set. SSAC is committed to such principles.

The role of additional experts, being invited to contribute to specific pieces of SAC work as well as sharing information across different scientific advisory bodies, SSAC considers very valuable. Building links with the wider scientific (including social science and health) communities is considered essential. Communications with ministers, CSA and other departmental civil servants has a very important role to play in ensuring that science advice is considered widely. We also support the need to have a wide diversity of knowledge and expertise within the SAC, since many (if not all issues) are multi-faceted.

The support offered to the SAC is essential, both in terms of staff and also additional resources where required. Any public advisory process necessarily operates within some resourcing constraint, and must focus on the most effective advisory process with the resources available.

We agree that a periodic review is an important activity and allows the SAC to adopt best practices, modify ToR as required and also consider its membership. *(Note that the current ToR and membership of the SSAC is as a result of a review <https://www.scottishscience.org.uk/ssac-review-2015> which included consideration of the role of CSAs on the SAC.)*

Do you have any other comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole?

Please use this space for any general comments that you may have, comments on the layout of this consultation would also be welcomed.

Thank you for taking the time to let us have your views. We do not intend to acknowledge receipt of individual responses unless you tick the box below.

Please acknowledge this reply Y

At BEIS we carry out our research on many different topics and consultations. As your views are valuable to us, would it be okay if we were to contact you again from time to time either for research or to send through consultation documents?

Y