

# Annual Statement of Compliance with the Research Integrity Concordat for Financial Year 2022-2023

The Food Standard Agency's annual statement of compliance with the Research Integrity Concordat ('Concordat') describes the steps and actions taken by the FSA to meet the Concordat's principles.

## Implementation of the Principles of the Research Integrity Concordat

### Contacts and raising concerns

Any parties wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research conducted or commissioned by the FSA are invited to contact the FSA's named person for research integrity in the first instance.

#### Named FSA contact for Research Integrity

FSA Chief Scientific Advisor: Professor Robin May

Contact email address: [SERD@fsa.gov.uk](mailto:SERD@fsa.gov.uk)

## Introduction and Summary of Actions

The Food Standards Agency (FSA) is an independent government department working to protect public health and consumers' wider interest in relation to food in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The FSA's mission, set out in law, is to safeguard public health and protect the interests of consumers in relation to food. As a non-ministerial department, the FSA acts independently and transparently, led by science and evidence.

The FSA's fundamental mission in [the current five-year strategy \(2022-2027\)](#) is food you can trust. It has been recognised that the strategy to deliver this mission needs to reflect and anticipate change. Therefore, research commissioned by the FSA must be credible and based on sound evidence.

The FSA is committed to bringing integrity and openness to the research it conducts, or commissions, through the application of the principles of the [Research Integrity Concordat \('Concordat'\)](#). The Concordat provides a national framework for good research conduct and its governance.

This annual statement summarises the measures that are being taken to sustain and further enhance the integrity of the research conducted and/or commissioned by the FSA.

## Governance

The Government Chief Scientific Adviser (GCSA) and departmental Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) have signed up to the principles of the Concordat for all scientific research undertaken within and for their departments. The FSA CSA, Professor Robin May, is the senior member of staff responsible for overseeing research integrity in the FSA.

The Science, Evidence and Research Division (SERD), leads on establishing policies and embedding research integrity requirements into FSA policy.

## **Processes to support a culture of research integrity**

In 2022, the FSA published its new five year strategy that sets the direction and ambition - what the FSA will do and why. The strategy introduces a new third area of focus for the FSA for food to be healthier and more sustainable. The strategy also reaffirms the role of science and evidence in informing everything we do. Read further information about the [FSA's science and evidence work](#).

The FSA has a [framework for science governance](#) that sets out what we do to make sure we live up to our principles of being open, transparent and ensuring that our work is underpinned by the latest science and evidence.

## **Guidance for researchers, employers and commissioners of research**

In support of the implementation of the RIC principles, the FSA has produced additional supplementary guidance documents, currently under revision, for FSA project officers and those commissioning/undertaking research. The guidance will ensure that all the principles of the Concordat are included within the tender process for commissioned research. It is a live document which will be updated throughout the year as it develops. All changes/updates will be promoted on the intranet and cascaded to Project Officers through the appropriate channels.

## **Training and awareness raising**

The FSA has raised awareness of its work to meet the principles of the Concordat internally through communications on its intranet site and will look to offer teach-in sessions for all staff.

There is a dedicated webpage on the food.gov website for research integrity which contains the annual statements for each financial year, beginning with this statement, as well as the point of contact details for reporting research misconduct.

The FSA is committed to the Government Science and Engineering Profession (GSEP) Career Framework, which lists understanding and application of the Concordat amongst the technical skills.

FSA leads attended two teach-ins provided by GO-Science which will be shared and made available to all staff. The U.K. Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) also hosts training workshops on research integrity and related issues which will be promoted on the FSA intranet.

## **External engagement**

The FSA is a contributing member of the cross-government Concordat Working Group (CWG) which meets monthly to discuss the practical considerations of implementing the principles of the concordat in government. Officials from across government attended the CWG to discuss and address issues arising from applying the [Guidance to implement the Concordat to Support Research Integrity within Government](#) and to share approaches on areas of common interest.

The Government Office for Science convened the group, provided its secretariat, and communicated with UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories (RICS) on its behalf.

## Open science and research protocols

In line with the Government's Transparency Agenda, FSA data, where possible, is made freely available online in an accessible format. The mechanism for publishing underpinning data should allow the widest opportunity for its re-use. There will be some circumstances where release of data may need to be restricted or anonymised for reasons of commercial and/or personal sensitivities but these will only be used where no other option exists.

## Publication of research

The FSA is committed to being as open and as transparent as possible with publicly-funded research. To ensure public trust, the data from a research project should be made freely available by the researcher as fully and as promptly as possible. Those applying to undertake research for the FSA must explicitly state any reasons why it may not be possible to fully share research data during the tender process. The FSA's research reports are published on [the FSA website \(food.gov\)](https://www.food.gov).

## Research misconduct

The FSA has an internal process to handle misconduct at various levels including minor, serious and gross misconduct. There is an internal disciplinary policy to ensure employees behaviour meets the standards expected of them as detailed in [the Civil Service Code](#).

The FSA has published its [handing disclosures policy](#) which includes information on reporting suspected wrongdoing and the protection of whistle blowers.

The FSA produces an annual report for its Business Committee on freedom of information requests, external complaints and internal whistleblowing cases. [The 2022 annual report](#) can be found on the FSA website.

No instances of research misconduct have been reported during financial year 2022/23.

## Related information

[Implementing the Concordat to Support Research Integrity within government \(gov.uk\)](#)