

Annual Statement of Compliance with the Research Integrity Concordat for Financial Year 2023-2024

The Food Standard Agency's (FSA) 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 Adviser: Professor Robin May

Contact email address: SERD@food.gov.uk

Introduction and Summary of Actions

The [Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) provides a national framework for good research conduct and its governance to ensure that government, businesses, international partners, and the public can continue to have confidence in UK research and its world-leading researchers.

This statement of compliance describes how the FSA is meeting the Concordat's principles.

The 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. To deliver this mission the FSA recognises the need 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](#).

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

The Science, Evidence and Research Division 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 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

FSA's science is undertaken in line with all relevant standards, guidance and functional standards for government professions. The FSA quality management processes supports the implementation of these standards and guidance.

Published professional codes of practice that researchers are expected to comply with include:

- Replacement, Reduction and Refinement (3Rs), a framework for humane animal research
- the [Government Analysis Functional Standard](#), which sets out expectations for the planning and undertaking of analysis to support well-informed decision making
- the [UK Statistics Authority's Code of Practice for Official Statistics](#), if a project produces official statistics
- [HM Treasury's Green Book](#) (GOV.UK website), which sets out guidance on how policies, programmes and (capital) projects should be appraised
- [Government Social Research \(GSR\) code](#), [GSR ethics assurance guidance](#) and [GSR publication guidance](#)
- the [Magenta Book](#) (GOV.UK website) and supplementary guidance on [Policy Impact Evaluation](#) for policy evaluation and analysis, with supplementary guidance [Quality in Qualitative Evaluation: A Framework for assessing research evidence](#)
- the [Aqua Book: guidance on producing quality analysis for government](#) (GOV.UK website) for analysis and analytical models

In addition, the FSA has produced additional supplementary guidance documents for FSA project officers and those commissioning/undertaking research.

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 teach-in sessions for staff.

There is a dedicated webpage on the food.gov website for research integrity which contains the annual statements for each financial year, 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.

The FSA continues to engage on cross government activities to improve awareness and understanding of the Concordat and its implementation and seeks to further collaboration with the U.K. Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) to see what additional training is available for staff.

External engagement?

The FSA continues to engage with all relevant cross-government groups aimed at improving the quality of the science used to support decision making such as the Government Office for Science, including the Science Capability Hub.

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).

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 [handling 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 2023 report can be found on the FSA website](#).

No instances of research misconduct have been reported during financial year 2023/24.

Related information

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