

Review of FSA Social Science: Annex 3B

Peer review of the FSA's Self Assessment

GSR Code's Standards for Products

| GSR Code's Standards for Products | Self Assessment rating by FSA Social Science Team | Peer Reviewer's Ratings | Peer Reviewer's comments |
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| Rigour and impartiality - project design, quality assurance of outputs | A/G | A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> project specs and proposals are well reviewed internally. External reviewing and QA is undertaken on a case-by-case basis, as is acknowledged in the self-assessment. A more consistent approach to external QA is required. the ACSS is an independent expert committee of the Food Standards Agency and provides peer review of outputs. The claim a) "the new ACSS QA gateway process may bring this up to a green", and b) the new UCL Quality Assurance Toolkit is a further opportunity to embed good practice for quality assurance. the evidence presented notes that "engaging colleagues in exploratory/experimental work" and "accessing good research suppliers at pace and within government procurement processes" is a challenge. the rating of amber/green is appropriate for this standard. |
| Relevance: Short/long term balance Departmental business planning Strategic level sign-off Impact assessed | A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> there is indeed a good balance between short term (operational) and longer term (strategic) research and analysis. The FSA horizon scanning work by the social science team in 2020 and 2021 is rightly claimed as a case in point. future policy needs are not always anticipated in published research outputs. External contractors can hardly (or rarely) be held responsible for doing this. The FSA social science team links well with policy customers to establish the relevance of its research to current and future policy issues. documentation of these four indicators is good and valid. The evidence presented to support the self-assessment notes that "turning dissemination into measurable impact" is another challenge for the social science team, Suggest links to the National Diet and Nutrition survey. a rating of amber/green is appropriate for this standard. |

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| Accessibility - published, format | A/G | A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • publication of social science research outputs is timely, readable and informative. Presentational format is generally good. Summary data are presented well in published outputs. The evidence provided in support of this standard is considerable. • more detailed information about methodology is often, but not always, provided in a separate 'Technical Report'. This should be common practice. • a rating of amber/green would be more appropriate for this standard. |
| <p>Legal and ethical</p> <p>Ensuring good practice in the commissioning, management and conduct of government</p> <p>Procurement</p> <p>Data Security</p> | A/G | A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the social science team follows guidance on commissioning, managing and conducting research well, including attention to GSR ethical guidelines. • procurement procedures have been identified as a challenge for some contractors. Through good working relationships with procurement colleagues the social science team manages this well. There is room for improvement in the research procurement arrangements, but these are beyond the control of the social science team. • external impartial expertise is used for 'high value tenders', the threshold for which is unclear. • data security is handled well and in accordance with civil service requirements. • data sharing is generally good and readily available. A consistent approach to publishing technical reports would enhance this standard. • a rating of amber/green is appropriate for this standard |

GSR Code's Standards for People

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| <p>Performing role with integrity</p> <p>Make best use of available resources/achieve value for money</p> <p>knowledge management</p> <p>Open, fair and honest</p> | <p>A/G</p> | <p>A/G</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the social science team certainly meets the GSR criteria for a green rating for being open, fair and honest and considering the added value of a project before undertaking new research. identifying existing and emerging research is undertaken by the team using literature reviews and rapid evidence assessments. There is some room for improvement in terms of using up-to-date methods of evidence synthesis such as systematic reviews and evidence gaps maps. Sharing of information gained gathering existing evidence is generally good. knowledge management also requires good storage, file management and retrieval of evidence. The team has worked to improve this in recent months. a rating of amber/green is appropriate for this standard. |
| <p>Appropriately skilled and continuously developed:</p> <p>Recruitment and induction</p> <p>Continuing Professional Development</p> <p>Career and talent management</p> <p>Balance and use of skills</p> | <p>A/G</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A/G | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all indications are that the SR team are recruited and promoted in line with GSR protocols. recruitment of researchers from the external research and evaluation community has enhanced the experience and expertise of the SR team. there is some imbalance of grades in the current structure of the SR team (six PROs, six SROs, 3 ROs). That said, there is evidence of routine research tasks being undertaken by PROs and SROs. Future recruitment might focus on adding more ROs. most GSR members are given the opportunity to undertake a balance of research and analysis skills. Some technical skills might require development. staff receive opportunities for continuing professional development in line with GSR guidelines. Procurement requirements sometimes limit the choice of CPD opportunities, but otherwise talent management is good. a rating of amber/green would be more appropriate for this standard.. |
| <p>Outward facing:</p> <p>External research community</p> <p>Other government analysts</p> <p>Policy/delivery community</p> | <p>G</p> | <p>G</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the self assessment's reporting of the SR team's links with the external research community. other government analysts and policy delivery colleagues is fair and accurate. This was confirmed in the interviews with the SR team and with internal and external stakeholders. a rating of green is appropriate for the standard. |