Advisory Committee Structure
Terms of Reference

Role and Purpose

The role of the advisory committees is to provide advice to the Office and Council in support of the development of strategy, policy and activity. This will include the identification of future priorities and opportunities to be pursued under each Delivery Plan, and the development of clear plans of action to address priorities, integrating activity across research, data, skills and partnerships. In so doing, the committees will advise on the underpinning evidence required to inform these proposals and subsequent decisions of Council.

Committee members will also play a role in supporting the delivery of the ESRC’s strategy and the Office’s day-to-day business through undertaking key roles including Chair of the Grants Delivery Group, chairing commissioning panels, membership of groups on specific priorities or areas of policy, and interacting with the underpinning governance structures which support our major investments.

Terms of Reference

Identifying evidence requirements, and drawing on existing evidence as appropriate, the advisory committees will:

- **advise on strategic direction** – the development and delivery of strategic direction and the activity that supports this in the areas for which they have responsibility
- **advise on priority areas and topics** – the development of new priority areas, the recommended actions or interventions to be taken to address priorities, and when to cease or reduce investment in existing areas
- **advise on policy** – supporting the Office and Council through recommendations on current policy and policy development in all areas of activity.

The advisory committees will also:

- **advise Council on funding decisions above £10 million** – in the areas of business for which they have responsibility
- **advise Council and the Office on key appointments** – including, but not limited to the appointment and use of Co-ordinators, Directors of strategic initiatives and investments, strategic short term appointments and on membership of short term, ad hoc groups (including commissioning panels)
- **guide the delivery of day-to-day business** – including, but not limited to taking on roles such as chairing groups (for example Grants Delivery Group, commissioning panels or groups that oversee activity in priority areas), and overseeing and/or participating in activity such as Doctoral Training Partnership visits as appropriate.
The advisory committees will work in a fully integrated way to facilitate delivery of the commitments set out in the ESRC Strategic Plan 2015, and in future Strategic Plans.

**Research Committee**

Within this overarching framework, the Research Committee has specific lead responsibility for advising Council and the Office on:

- encouraging ambitious and innovative social science
- supporting research that exploits the UK’s excellent data resources
- playing a brokering role in identifying priorities for social science research that will deliver useful evidence for decision-makers in policy and practice
- addressing ESRC priorities through selected competitions and through partnership working with a range of organisations in the UK and internationally
- ensuring a portfolio of investment that includes ‘curiosity-driven’ or ‘fundamental’ research, applied, synthetic, methodological, and interdisciplinary research.

The Research Committee also has responsibility for monitoring our responsive mode schemes.

**Capability Committee**

The Capability Committee has specific lead responsibility for advising Council and the Office on:

- playing a leadership role in supporting a robust data infrastructure for social science
- fully exploiting the benefits of our data infrastructure through new partnerships and funding opportunities – both UK and internationally focused
- working in partnership with Research Organisations and others to ensure our portfolio of resources and methodological investment remains sustainable, relevant and innovative
- exploring opportunities – in the UK and internationally – to harness new forms of data and to link existing data in new ways
- supporting the development of highly capable and innovative researchers for a wide range of careers
- expanding support for early career researchers through existing funding routes
- developing capability for social science leadership
- supporting the development of analytical capabilities required to maximise the existing data infrastructure
- enabling postgraduate students and early career researchers to forge links and networks internationally.

The Capability Committee also has responsibility for monitoring our Doctoral Training Network.
Membership Template

Each advisory committee should have around 13 members, with a Chair who is a member of Council and a Vice-Chair (to be appointed by Council). The actual number of members may vary according to the needs of time.

The membership should include academic members from a range of social science disciplines and user members from the private and public sectors, and civil society. There should be a good balance in terms of gender, age, regional and national representation, expertise and experience. At least one member should have international experience or be based outside the UK and at least two should have evaluation expertise.

Cycle of Meetings

The Committees will meet three times per year, in March, July and November, with the July meeting normally providing an opportunity for the committees to meet jointly.