

Other areas on which the sponsoring organisations may engage SACs include the organisation's science plan and evidence strategy, science funding and the Spending Review, identifying Areas of Research Interest and/or ensuring research ethics and integrity.

2.3. Communication and relationship with the sponsoring organisations

The 'Principles of Scientific Advice to Government' (see Annex A) set out the 'rules of engagement' between government and those providing independent scientific advice. Openness of communication and engagement is expected of both the sponsoring organisations and the SAC. Members of both parties also have responsibility for the maintenance of good working relations, sharing information on request and seeking clarification when necessary.

A SAC will normally report formally through the Chair to the sponsoring organisations. While it is possible that there might be other reporting mechanisms, it is vital that the governance is clear and supports the purpose for which the SAC has been set up by ensuring there is a clear customer for the SAC's advice.

The SAC should be clear on its routine and emergency reporting lines, whether this is direct to Ministers, the departmental CSA, another departmental official or a public body official.

Some SACs may be required to report jointly to more than one organisation, including to departments in the devolved administrations. In some cases, there may also be an additional reporting line to the sponsoring body through the secretariat. Where this is the case, members of the SAC should be made aware of this.

The Chair, or other nominated spokesperson for the SAC, should ensure that current SAC activity and any plans or information of relevance is reported to the sponsoring organisations. The Chair should have a nominated contact for routine engagement (normally the secretariat lead).

Announcements by the sponsoring organisations on subjects relating to the SAC's advice should not be made without clearance from the Chair and members. This is also reflected in the 'Principles for Scientific Advice to Government', under Transparency and Openness (Annex A).

2.4. Operating within the wider science system

2.4.1. General

Given the interconnected and complex nature of many of the topics on which SACs advise, they should operate as an interactive component of the wider science system within which they are based. A successful SAC will be one that collaborates widely to deliver advice that takes account of the wider science system and is integrated and coordinated with other parts of it. This requires SACs to build appropriate connections with the other components of the science system within their sponsoring organisations, and to develop and/or maintain relationships with stakeholders beyond their immediate network.