

3. Executive Summary

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The FSA set out to develop a ‘good science’ Quality Assurance Toolkit (QAT) to support its members to produce, assess and procure high-quality research. The FSA QAT was developed between February and August 2022 through a process of co-creation. A series of focus groups were held with FSA staff in March 2022. This was followed by a scoping review of internal and external guidance to help populate the QAT. The QAT was iteratively developed through multiple rounds of feedback from the Advisory Committee for Social Science and piloting on several study protocols, research reports, and tender specifications between April and July 2022.

The resulting QAT consists of a ‘Guidance’ section, three ‘Checklists’ and three ‘Case studies’. The ‘Guidance’ section has three parts: Part 1 contains guidance for producing, assessing, and procuring research. Part 2 contains guidance for research management and dissemination. Part 3 contains additional guidance for procuring research. Separate ‘Checklists’ have been provided and should be selected according to the relevant use case. Checklist 1 should be used for producing research. Checklist 2 should be used for assessing research reports written by third parties. Checklists 3 and 4 should be used for procuring research. The Checklists can be used to transparently document how well the different Guidance aspects have been addressed in a research protocol, research report, or

tender specification. Finally, three 'Case studies' have been provided, which contain moderate-to-high-quality research reports across the most common social science research methods within the FSA (for example, focus groups, surveys and behavioural intervention trials).

For each project, the relevant Checklist should be completed by the project officer and checked by a team leader prior to sign-off. This supports the reliability of the Checklist application, with discrepancies resolved through discussion between the two expert evaluators. A copy of the Checklist should be stored alongside the project materials for transparency.