

Cooperation Agreement

United Kingdom



Australia



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Cooperation Agreement between
Financial Conduct Authority ("FCA")

and

Australian Securities & Investments Commission ("ASIC")

Article 1 Definitions

For the purposes of this Cooperation Agreement, unless the context requires otherwise:

"Regulations" means any regulation or regulatory requirement applicable in the jurisdiction of an Authority.

"Authority" means the FCA or the ASIC or any successor thereto;

"Covered Benchmark" means a benchmark referred to by Article 1 of the Equivalence Decision;

"Covered Administrator" means the administrator of a Covered Benchmark;

"Books and Records" means documents, electronic media, books and records within the possession, custody or control of, and other information about, a Covered Administrator;

"Emergency Situation" means the occurrence of an event that could materially impair the financial or operational condition of a Covered Administrator, or an event of cessation of publication or material change of a Covered Benchmark;

"Governmental Entity" means:

- a) if the Requesting Authority is the ASIC, the Australian Department of the Treasury, the Reserve Bank of Australia, and the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority which have responsibilities and mandates in relation to the regulation of the Australian financial system and entities in the financial system, or any Minister assigned responsibility for ASIC or its functions;
- b) if the Requesting Authority is the FCA, HM Treasury or the Prudential Regulation Authority.

"Laws and Regulations" means, in relation to the FCA, Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2016 on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts or to measure the performance of investment funds and amending Directives 2008/48/EC and 2014/17/EU and Regulation (EU) No 596/2014, as amended by The Benchmarks (Amendment and Transitional Provision) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the Financial Services and

Markets Act 2000 (Benchmarks) Regulations 2018 and, in relation to the ASIC, any applicable laws and regulations in force in Australia.

"On-site Inspection" means any visit by the FCA to the premises of a Covered Administrator, including inspection of Books and Records, in connection with the Covered Administrator's administration of a Covered Benchmark;

"Person" includes a natural person, unincorporated association, partnership, trust investment company or corporation and may be a Covered Administrator;

"Requested Authority" means the Authority to whom a request is made under this Cooperation Agreement; and

"Requesting Authority" means the Authority making a request under this Cooperation Agreement.

Article 2 Introduction

1. On 29 July 2019, the European Commission adopted Commission Implementing Decision (EU) 2019/1274¹ (the "Equivalence Decision") under Article 30(3) of Regulation (EU) 2016/1101 of the European Parliament and of the Council² ("BMR") regarding Australia, determining that administrators of specific benchmarks in Australia comply with binding requirements which are equivalent to the requirements under BMR, and that the binding requirements are subject to effective supervision and enforcement on an on-going basis in Australia.
2. In the United Kingdom, the Equivalence Decision is "EU tertiary legislation" within the definition in section 3(2) of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 and forms part of "direct EU legislation" which will form part of UK domestic law post exit day under section 3 of the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018.
3. Following the adoption of the Equivalence Decision, after exit day the FCA must - under Article 30(4) of the BMR as amended by The Benchmarks (Amendment and Transitional Provision) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 - establish cooperation arrangements with Australia. The minimum content of the cooperation arrangements is defined in Article 30(4) of BMR, and further specified in Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/1644³.

Article 3 Purpose

The FCA and the ASIC have entered into this Cooperation Agreement whose purpose is two-fold, namely to:

- a) establish cooperation arrangements between the FCA and the ASIC which are operational, thereby ensuring the fulfilment of the condition set out in Article 30(1)(d) of BMR; and

¹ COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION (EU) 2019/1274 of 29 July 2019 on the equivalence of the legal and supervisory framework applicable to benchmarks in Australia in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 of the European Parliament and of the Council:

<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019D1274&from=EN>

² Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 8 June 2016 on indices used as benchmarks in financial instruments and financial contracts or to measure the performance of investment funds and amending Directives 2008/48/EC and 2014/171/EU and Regulation (EU) No 596/2014 (OJ L 171 29.6.2016. p. 1)

³ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) 2018/1644 of 13 July 2018 supplementing Regulation (EU) 2016/1011 of the European Parliament and of the Council with regard to regulatory technical standards determining the minimum content of cooperation arrangements with competent authorities of third countries whose legal framework and supervisory practices have been recognised as equivalent (OJ L 274 5.11.2018 P-33)

- b) provide the FCA and the ASIC with an appropriate mechanism for the exchange of information, including the mechanism for prompt notification to the FCA where the ASIC deems that an administrator authorised in Australia and covered by the Equivalence Decision is in breach of the conditions of its authorisation or other relevant national legislation in Australia; and with procedures concerning the coordination of supervisory activities, including on-site inspections.

Article 4 **General provisions**

1. Pursuant to the equivalence regime under BMR, the FCA does not have direct supervisory or enforcement powers over the Covered Administrators, with the exception of the obligation to withdraw the registration of administrators located in third countries where the conditions in Article 31 of BMR are met. The FCA therefore relies on the supervision and enforcement capabilities of the ASIC which supervises and enforces compliance with Australia's Laws and Regulations.
2. This Cooperation Agreement is a statement of intent to consult, cooperate and exchange information in connection with the FCA's prompt access, on an on-going basis, to all information requested by the FCA regarding the Covered Benchmarks. The cooperation and information-sharing arrangements under this Cooperation Agreement should be interpreted and implemented in a manner that is permitted by, and consistent with, the Laws and Regulations.
3. This Cooperation Agreement does not create any legally binding obligations, confer any rights or supersede any domestic laws. This Cooperation Agreement does not confer upon any Person the right or ability, directly or indirectly, to obtain, suppress or exclude any information or to challenge the execution of a request for assistance under this Cooperation Agreement.
4. This Cooperation Agreement is not intended to limit or condition the discretion of an Authority in any way in the discharge of its responsibilities or to prejudice or affect in any way the individual responsibilities, competencies or autonomy of any Authority. This Cooperation Agreement does not limit an Authority to taking solely those measures described herein in fulfilment of its responsibilities and mandates. In particular, this Cooperation Agreement does not affect any right of any Authority to communicate with or obtain information or documents from any Person subject to its jurisdiction that is established in the territory of the other Authority.
5. The Authorities should, within the framework of this Cooperation Agreement, provide each other with the fullest cooperation permissible under their Laws and Regulations in relation to all relevant information and supervisory activities regarding the Covered Benchmarks. Following notification, cooperation may be denied:
 - a. where the cooperation would require an Authority to act in a manner that would violate its Laws and Regulations;
 - b. where a request for assistance has not been made in accordance with the terms of this Cooperation Agreement; or
 - c. on the grounds of national public interest.
6. In case of denial, the Requested Authority will provide the reasons for not granting the assistance. Where the Requested Authority presents objective grounds by reasons of which the request cannot be fulfilled in part or in whole, the Authorities will consult with a view to reaching an understanding on the assistance to be provided.

7. The Authorities represent that as of the date upon which this Cooperation Agreement takes effect no domestic laws or regulations should prevent them from providing assistance to one another as contemplated in this Cooperation Agreement.
8. To facilitate communication and cooperation under this Cooperation Agreement, the Authorities hereby designate contact points the details of which are as set out in the Appendix. Any amendments to the details of contact points will be communicated without undue delay to the other Authority.

Article 5

Scope of cooperation

1. The Authorities intend to provide the fullest possible mutual assistance to one another within the terms of this Cooperation Agreement. This Cooperation Agreement operates subject to the domestic laws and regulations of each Authority and does not modify or supersede any laws or regulatory requirements in force in, or applying to, Australia or the United Kingdom. This Cooperation Agreement sets forth a statement of intent and accordingly does not create any enforceable rights, and is not legally binding. This Cooperation Agreement does not affect any arrangements under the existing 2002 Memorandum of Understanding between the two Authorities.
2. The Authorities recognise the importance of close communication concerning the Covered Benchmarks and intend to cooperate regarding:
 - a. general issues, including with respect to regulatory, supervisory or other developments concerning the Covered Benchmarks;
 - b. issues relevant to the operations, activities or services of the Covered Administrators, including information on the Laws and Regulations to which the Covered Administrators are subject;
 - c. information needed by the FCA with reference to the FCA Register of benchmark administrators and the FCA Register of third country benchmarks referred to in Article 36 of BMR (the "FCA Registers");
 - d. the coordination of supervisory activities including, where appropriate, On-site Inspections; and
 - e. any other areas of mutual interest.
3. Cooperation will be most useful in circumstances where issues of regulatory and supervisory concern may arise, including but not limited to:
 - a. the initial application for authorisation of Covered Benchmarks under the Laws and Regulations to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject;
 - b. the on-going monitoring, the review or the withdrawal of the authorisation of the Covered Benchmarks under the Laws and Regulations to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject;
 - c. any update of the information included in the FCA Registers;
 - d. any change to a Covered Administrator's activity or internal rules, policies and procedures that could affect the way in which the Covered Administrator complies with the Laws and Regulations to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject;
 - e. any change in the methodology or input data used for the calculation of a Covered Benchmark, or in the functioning of the oversight function overseeing the provision of a Covered Benchmark; and
 - f. regulatory or supervisory actions taken or approvals given by the ASIC in relation to a Covered Benchmark, including changes to the relevant obligations and requirements to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject under the Laws and Regulations administered by ASIC.
4. **Notification.** The Authorities will seek to inform each other as soon as practicable of:

- a. any known material event that could adversely impact the financial or operational stability of a Covered Administrator, including where the Covered Administrator is deemed to be in breach of the conditions of any license, authorisation or any Laws and Regulations to which it is subject;
 - b. enforcement or regulatory actions or sanctions, including the withdrawal, revocation, suspension or modification of any license, authorisation concerning or related to a Covered Administrator and which may have a material effect on the Covered Administrator;
 - c. any material change introduced in the relevant legal, regulatory or supervisory arrangements affecting the Covered Benchmarks;
 - d. any material change to the relevant Laws and Regulations to which the Benchmarks are subject;
 - e. in respect of notification by the ASIC to the FCA, all the information needed by the FCA to discharge its obligations concerning the FCA Registers. The ASIC should notify the FCA of such information within five working days following the date referred to in Article 11 of this Cooperation Agreement. For each update of the information referred to in paragraph 2(c) of this Article the ASIC should notify the FCA of the said update promptly. Where there is any change to the information needed by the FCA to discharge its obligations concerning the FCA Registers, the FCA should notify the ASIC of the said change promptly.
 - f. The information should be provided in writing and using a transmission procedure or electronic means that ensures that completeness, integrity and confidentiality of the information are maintained during the transmission.
 - g. The information to be provided by an Authority pursuant to this paragraph will refer to the Covered Benchmarks. The determination of what constitutes "material changes", "material event", "adversely impact" or "material effect" will be left to the reasonable discretion of the Authority providing the information.
5. **Exchange of Information.** Each Authority intends to provide the other Authority with assistance in endeavouring to obtain information not otherwise available to the Requesting Authority and, where needed, interpreting such information so as to enable the Requesting Authority to assess compliance with the Laws and Regulations to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject, provided that the Requested Authority is authorised to collect such information. Such requests will be made pursuant to Article 5 of this Cooperation Agreement and the Authorities anticipate that such requests will be made in a manner that is consistent with the goal of minimising administrative burdens. The information covered by this paragraph includes, without limitation:
- a. information that would assist the Requesting Authority in verifying that a Covered Benchmark complies with the relevant obligations and requirements of the Laws and Regulations of the Requesting Authority;
 - b. information that would assist the Requesting Authority in understanding changes to the relevant obligations and requirements to which the Covered Benchmarks are subject under the Laws and Regulations of the Requested Authority;
 - c. relevant regulatory and supervisory information and filings that a Covered Administrator is required to submit to the Requested Authority; and
 - d. regulatory and supervisory reports and assessments, or findings or information contained therein, prepared by an Authority in respect of a Covered Benchmark.

Article 6

Execution of requests for information

1. A request for information pursuant to Article 5(5) should be made in writing and using a transmission procedure or electronic means that ensure that completeness, integrity and confidentiality of the information are maintained during the transmission. Such request for information should be addressed to the relevant contact person identified in the Appendix. A request generally should specify at least the following:
 - a. the information sought by the Requesting Authority;

- b. a concise description of the matter that is the subject of the request and the purpose for which the information is sought, including the Laws and Regulations applicable to the subject of the request;
 - c. to whom, if anyone, including any Governmental Entity, onward disclosure of the information is likely to be necessary and the reason for such disclosure; and
 - d. the desired time period for reply and, where appropriate, the urgency thereof.
2. In Emergency Situations, the Authorities will endeavour to notify each other of the Emergency Situation and communicate information between each other as deemed appropriate in the particular circumstances, taking into account all relevant factors, including the status of efforts to address the Emergency Situation. During Emergency Situations, requests for information may be made in any form, including orally, provided such communication is confirmed in writing as promptly as possible following such notification.

Article 7

On-site Inspections

1. The FCA does not intend to conduct any On-site Inspection of the Covered administrator as part of its monitoring of the ongoing compliance of the Covered Benchmarks with the requirements under BMR since the Equivalence Decision determines that the legal and supervisory arrangements of the jurisdiction of Australia ensure that Covered Benchmarks comply with legally binding requirements which are equivalent to the requirements of BMR, and that the binding requirements are subject to effective supervision and enforcement in Australia on an ongoing basis.
2. Given that the FCA, in respect of Covered Benchmarks, relies on the supervision and enforcement capabilities of the ASIC, which supervises and enforces compliance with the relevant Laws and Regulations, On-site Inspections by FCA officers will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and subject to the prior agreement of the ASIC.
3. In such exceptional circumstances, the Authorities should discuss and reach an understanding on the terms regarding an On-site Inspection by FCA officers, in particular with regard to the respective roles and responsibilities of the Authorities. The FCA will act in accordance with the following procedure before conducting an On-site Inspection:
 - a. the FCA will submit to the ASIC an initial written request with respect to the On-site Inspection. The request will include the factual and legal background to, the objective of, and an estimated time frame for, the On-site Inspection. The ASIC will acknowledge the receipt of the initial written request in writing within 10 working days of receipt; and
 - b. when establishing the scope of any proposed On-site Inspection by FCA officers, the FCA will consider the supervisory activities of the ASIC given the FCA's reliance on the supervision and enforcement capabilities of the ASIC in respect of Covered Benchmarks and will consider any information that was made available or is capable of being made available by the ASIC.
4. In the event of an On-site Inspection, the ASIC will assist the FCA in reviewing, interpreting and analysing the contents of public and non-public Books and Records and obtaining information from directors and senior management of a Covered Administrator. The ASIC may, at its discretion, accompany or assist the visiting the FCA officers during the On-site Inspection.

Article 8

Data Protection

The Authorities acknowledge that the transfer of personal data will take place in accordance with the applicable data protection legislation in the jurisdictions of the Authorities.

Article 9

Permissible uses and storage of information

1. The Requesting Authority may use information obtained under this Cooperation Agreement for the purpose set out by that Authority in its request for the information or, if the information was provided other than by means of a request, solely for the purpose of enabling that Authority to exercise its regulatory and supervisory functions.
2. Before using information obtained under this Cooperation Agreement for any purpose other than that stated in Article 9(1), the Requesting Authority will obtain the prior written consent of the Requested Authority for the intended use. If consent is denied by the Requested Authority, the Authorities will consult to discuss the reasons for withholding approval of such use and the circumstances, if any, under which the intended use by the Requesting Authority might be allowed.
3. If an Authority ("Receiving Authority") receives, via a third party that is not a signatory to this this Cooperation Agreement, information originally provided by the other Authority ("Disclosing Authority") that is related to the Disclosing Authority's supervision and oversight of a Covered Benchmark and that the Receiving Authority is aware was obtained by the third party from the Disclosing Authority on a confidential basis, the Receiving Authority will use and treat the information in accordance with the terms of this Cooperation Agreement.
4. Each Authority will store the information obtained under this Cooperation Agreement securely on a medium that ensure that completeness, integrity and confidentiality of the information and that allows the storage of information to be accessible for future reference.
5. The restrictions in this Article do not apply to an Authority's use of information it obtains directly from a Covered Administrator.

Article 10

Confidentiality and onward sharing of information

1. Except as provided in paragraphs 2 and 3, or pursuant to a legally enforceable demand, each Authority will keep confidential information shared under this Cooperation Agreement, requests made under this Cooperation Agreement, the contents of such requests, and any other matters arising under this Cooperation Agreement. The terms of this Cooperation Agreement are not confidential.
2. As required by law or where legally permitted, it may become necessary for a Requesting Authority to share information obtained under this Cooperation Agreement with a Governmental Entity. In such circumstances and to the extent permitted by law:
 - a. the Requesting Authority intends to notify the Requested Authority; and
 - b. prior to the Requesting Authority sharing the information, the Requesting Authority will provide adequate assurances to the Requested Authority concerning the Governmental Entity's use and confidential treatment of the information, including, as necessary, assurances that:
 - i. the Governmental Entity has confirmed that it requires the information for the purpose enabling it to fulfil its responsibilities and mandates in relation to the regulation of the financial system and entities in the financial system; and
 - ii. the information will not be shared by the Governmental Entity with other parties without the Requesting Authority getting the prior written consent of the Requested Authority.

3. Except as provided in paragraph 2 or if disclosure is otherwise required by law, the Requesting Authority must obtain the prior consent of the Requested Authority before disclosing information received under this Cooperation Agreement to any non-signatory to this Cooperation Agreement. The Requested Authority will take into account the level of urgency of the request and respond in a timely manner. During an Emergency Situation, consent may be obtained in any form, including orally, provided such communication is confirmed in writing as promptly as possible. If consent is denied by the Requested Authority, the Requesting and Requested Authorities will consult to discuss the reasons for withholding approval of such disclosure and the circumstances, if any, under which the intended disclosure by the Requesting Authority might be allowed.
4. To the extent possible, the Requesting Authority should notify the Requested Authority of any legally enforceable demand for information that has been furnished under this Cooperation Agreement. When complying with the demand, the Requesting Authority intends to assert all appropriate legal exemptions or privileges with respect to such information as may be available.
5. The Authorities intend that the sharing or disclosure of information, including deliberative and consultative materials, pursuant to the terms of this Cooperation Agreement, will not constitute a waiver of privilege or confidentiality of such information.
6. The Authorities acknowledge that nothing in Article 10 prevents an Authority from disclosing information it receives directly from a Covered Administrator.

Article 11 Term

1. This Cooperation Agreement takes effect from the date of execution and will continue to have effect until terminated by either of the Authorities by the giving of at least 30 days' written notice of termination to the other Authority.
2. If an Authority gives such notice, the parties will consult concerning the disposition of any pending requests. If an agreement cannot be reached through consultation, cooperation will continue with respect to all requests for assistance that were made under the Cooperation Agreement before the expiration of the 30-day period until all requests are fulfilled or the Requesting Authority withdraws such request(s) for assistance.
3. Termination of this Cooperation Agreement does not affect obligations under the existing Memorandum of Understanding between the two Authorities.
4. In the event of termination of this Cooperation Agreement, information obtained under this Cooperation Agreement will continue to be treated in the manner described under Articles 8, 9 and 10.
5. If this Cooperation Agreement is terminated without being substituted in a reasonable timeframe by an equivalent arrangement, pursuant to Article 30 of BMR, the FCA will consider that the cooperation arrangements referred to in Article 30(4) of the BMR are not operational.

Article 12 Amendment

1. The Authorities intend to periodically review the functioning and effectiveness of cooperation arrangements between them.

2. This Cooperation Agreement may be amended if both Authorities agree in writing to do so.

Article 13
Successor authorities

Where the relevant functions of an Authority are transferred or assigned to another authority or authorities, the terms of the Cooperation Agreement will apply to the successor authority or authorities performing those relevant functions, such successor authority or authorities will become a signatory or signatories to this Cooperation Agreement without the need for any further amendment to this Cooperation Agreement and notice will be provided to the other Authority. This will not affect the right of any Authority to give written notice as provided in Article 11(1) that it no longer wishes to be a signatory to this Cooperation Agreement if it wishes to do so.

Executed by the Authorities:

For the ASIC



Karen Chester
Acting Chair

Date: 24/12/2020

For the FCA



Nausicaa Delfas
Executive Director for International

Date: 23/12/2020

Appendix: Authority-wide Contact Details

FCA: InternationalDept@fca.org.uk
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ASIC: Senior Manager, International
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