Chapter 1

General
1.1 Application and purpose

1.1.1 FIT applies to:

1. an SMCR firm;

2. an applicant for Part 4A permission that will be an SMCR firm if the application succeeds;

3. [deleted]

4. an approved person performing an FCA controlled function;

5. a candidate for an FCA controlled function;

6. a certification employee performing an FCA certification function;

7. a person whom an SMCR firm is proposing to certify to perform an FCA certification function; and

8. a board director as set out in FIT 1.1.2G(1)(e).

1.1.2 The purpose of FIT is to set out and describe the criteria that:

1. an SMCR firm should consider when:

   (a) assessing the fitness and propriety of a candidate whom the firm is proposing to put forward for approval as an FCA-approved SMF manager;

   (b) assessing the continuing fitness and propriety of a person approved to perform the function of an FCA-approved SMF manager, including for formulating an opinion about whether there are any grounds on which the regulator could withdraw the approval given to that individual to perform that function under section 63(2A) of the Act;

   (c) assessing the fitness and propriety of a person whom the firm is proposing to certify to perform an FCA certification function;

   (d) assessing the continuing fitness and propriety of a person whom the firm has certified to perform an FCA certification function; and

   (e) (in the case an FCA-authorised person that is not a limited scope SMCR firm) assessing the fitness of a non-SMF board director
subject to competence requirements under the competent employees rule, any onshored regulation or any other requirement of the regulatory system.

(2) the FCA will consider when assessing the fitness and propriety of a candidate for a controlled function, including a designated senior management function (see generally ▪ SUP 10A and ▪ SUP 10C on approved persons), and may consider when assessing the continuing fitness and propriety of approved persons.

1.1.3  [deleted]

1.1.4  [deleted]
1.2 Introduction

1.2.1 Under section 60A(1) of the Act, before a firm may make an application for the FCA’s approval of a controlled function the firm must be satisfied that the person for whom the application is made is a fit and proper person to perform that function.

1.2.1A Under section 63F of the Act, a firm may issue a certificate to a person to perform a certification function only if it is satisfied that the person is a fit and proper person to perform that function.

1.2.1B Under sections 60A and 63F of the Act, in assessing whether a person is a fit and proper person to perform an FCA designated senior management function or an FCA certification function, a firm must have particular regard to whether that person:

   (1) has obtained a qualification; or

   (2) has undergone, or is undergoing, training; or

   (3) possesses a level of competence; or

   (4) has the personal characteristics;

required by general rules made by the FCA.

1.2.1C The key general rules relating to the criteria listed in 1.2.1BG include:

   (1) in the case of very senior employees, SYSC 4.2 (persons who effectively direct the business) and SYSC 4.3A.3R (management body);

   (2) for personnel of firms generally, the competent employees rule;

   (3) in relation to retail activities, TC 2.1.1R, TC 2.1.5BR and TC 2.1.12R (employees’ competence); and

   (4) for those who are employees of insurance firms, SYSC 3.1.6R.
Under section 63(1) of the Act (Withdrawal of approval), the FCA may withdraw an approval under section 59 given by the FCA or the PRA in relation to the performance by a person of a function if it considers that the person is not a fit and proper person to perform the function.

The Act does not prescribe the matters which the FCA should take into account when determining fitness and propriety. However, section 61(2) states that the FCA may have regard (among other things) to whether the candidate or approved person:

1. has obtained a qualification; or
2. has undergone, or is undergoing, training; or
3. possesses a level of competence; or
4. has the personal characteristics;

required by general rules made by the FCA.

Where the application relates to a function within a Solvency II firm and is for an FCA controlled function which is also a Solvency II Directive 'key function' as defined in the PRA Rulebook: Glossary, then the FCA will also have regard to the assessment made by the firm as required in article 273 of the Solvency II Regulation (EU) 2015/35 of 10 October 2014; Rules 2.1 and 2.2 of the PRA Rulebook: Solvency II Firms: Insurance - Fitness and Propriety, and other factors, as set out in EIOPA Guidelines on system of governance dated 28 January 2015 (see Guideline 16).

For as long as the standstill direction referred to in SYSC 27.6.1G, SUP 10A.1.7R and SUP 10C.1.4R is in force, the guidance in FIT 1.2.4AG and FIT 1.2.4AG in the version of the FCA Handbook that was in force immediately before IP completion day is still relevant.
1.3 Assessing fitness and propriety

1.3.1 The FCA will have regard to a number of factors when assessing the fitness and propriety of a person to perform a particular controlled function, as more particularly described in FIT 2 (Main assessment criteria).

1.3.1A The FCA would expect firms that are required to assess the fitness and propriety of staff being assessed under FIT to have regard to substantially the same factors as those outlined in FIT 2.

1.3.1B In the FCA’s view, the most important considerations will be the person’s:

- honesty, integrity and reputation;
- competence and capability; and
- financial soundness.

1.3.2 In assessing fitness and propriety, the FCA will also take account of the activities of the firm for which the controlled function is or is to be performed, the permission held by that firm and the markets within which it operates.

1.3.2A A firm assessing the fitness and propriety of staff being assessed under FIT should consider:

1. the nature, scale and complexity of its business, the nature and range of financial services and activities undertaken in the course of that business; and
2. whether the candidate or person has the knowledge, skills and experience to perform the specific role that the candidate or person is intended to perform.

1.3.2B A firm is reminded that, in assessing a candidate for a position within the management body of the firm, SYSC 4.3A.3R(3) requires the firm to ensure that the management body, as a collective, possesses adequate knowledge, skills and experience to understand the firm’s activities.

1.3.3 The criteria listed in FIT 2.1 to FIT 2.3 are guidance and will be applied in general terms when the FCA is determining a person’s fitness and propriety.
It would be impossible to produce a definitive list of all the matters which would be relevant to a particular determination. A firm assessing the fitness and propriety of staff being assessed under FIT should be guided by substantially the same criteria in FIT 2.1 to FIT 2.3 (to the extent applicable to the firm), recognising that this is not intended to be a definitive list of matters to be considered.

1.3.4 If a matter comes to the FCA’s attention which suggests that the person might not be fit and proper, the FCA will take into account how relevant and how important it is. In the same way, if a matter comes to the attention of a firm which suggests that any staff being assessed under FIT might not be fit and proper, the firm should take into account how relevant and how important that matter is.

1.3.4A A firm assessing the continuing fitness and propriety of an approved person is required to notify the FCA under section 63(2A) of the Act if it forms the opinion that there are grounds on which the FCA could withdraw its approval (see SUP 10C.14.24R). In discharging its obligation to notify the FCA, a firm should take into account how relevant and how important the matter is that comes to its attention which suggests an approved person might not be fit and proper before determining that a notification should be made.

1.3.4AA In relation to a firm assessing continuing fitness and propriety of an approved person under section 63(2A) of the Act during a temporary absence, see the guidance at SUP 10C.14.5GG.

1.3.4B A firm assessing the continuing fitness and propriety of staff being assessed under FIT should assess the role that the individual is actually performing at the time the assessment is done. For this purpose, the assessor(s) should be provided with an up-to-date job description for that individual in advance of the assessment.

1.3.5 During the application process for a controlled function, the FCA may discuss the assessment of the candidate’s fitness and propriety informally with the firm making the application and may retain any notes of those discussions.