UKCORI UK Committee on Research Integrity

Summary of the UK Committee on Research Integrity's consultation on its draft strategic plan

Between November 2022 and January 2023, the UK Committee on Research Integrity conducted a consultation on the committee's draft strategic plan.

This document summarises key areas raised by those who took part in the consultation and describes the committee's responses and refinements made. The draft strategic plan was shared publicly through UK Research and Innovation's online engagement hub and directly with key stakeholders.

The committee held workshops, meetings, and invited online submissions. The online hub comprised a questionnaire of open-ended and closed-ended questions about the tone, accessibility, and content of the draft plan.

There were 37 responses to the online questionnaire, 2 letter submissions, 2 workshops held with 28 attendees, and 14 discussions with key stakeholders. The committee is grateful to everyone who provided their input in the consultation, which has made the strategic plan stronger.

The strategic plan launched on **23 February 2023** and will be revised on an annual basis. We have developed an outline of our 2023 activities in response to the feedback received.

Key areas raised by those who submitted to the consultation

1. Generally, the definition of research integrity was understood and thought to be appropriate. However, it was apparent in the written comments that it needed to be clearer that the definition and 5 principles were drawn from the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
   We have made some additions to the wording that introduces the 5 principles of research integrity. The changes make it clearer that work is structured with principles contained within the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

2. There were some suggestions for changes in words used to ensure full reach across the entire research system.
We have made some changes throughout the document. These include addition of 'findings' and 'outcomes' to 'results' and removal of some terms that relate solely to higher education contexts. We found it helpful to learn that some of the wording was not always immediately clear to all fields of research. We have not been able to change the wording where we directly quote the 5 principles from the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

3. The brevity and tone of the draft strategic plan was appreciated, although there was appetite for more detail in places as well as information about how the strategic plan would be implemented and what the outcomes would be.
An overview of our 2023 activities has been developed to sit alongside the strategic plan. This indicates work that has already started and for which project plans exist, these will be published separately. Some areas of work are in development and the outcomes and success measures will be developed in their early stages, often in collaboration with other groups across the sector who may need to identify actions that they will take and the success measures that they deem to be most appropriate. We will update the website as the work develops and success measures are set.

4. There was desire for greater specification of what success will look like and how the plan will be implemented, including operational detail. There was interest in what success will look like for the UK research as well as for the work of the committee.
We have changed the language to make it clear that the committee's role includes to build and drive even higher levels of integrity. Changes include addition of some words about the role of the committee in the preamble, in the vision and addition of link to the committee's Terms of Reference.

5. Some responses to the online consultation suggested that the evidence about how to support research integrity is already clear.
The committee's view is that although evidence may be well developed in relation to some fields or disciplines, this evidence is not consistent across all areas of UK research and more work is needed including to make evidence clear and to identify evidence gaps.

6. There was a desire for greater clarity about the committee's role in relation to misconduct so that it was clear that the committee was not an investigative body. Two respondents to the online consultation said that the Science and Technology Committee Report of 2018 recommended that government ask UKRI to establish a committee that could assume this role.

   The UK Committee on Research Integrity recognises the importance of considering how cases of misconduct can be better managed. Through its misconduct project the committee will seek to understand the best approach to dealing with issues of intentional misconduct. The workstream will look at UK data and international best practice to shape proposals relating to future approaches to misconduct in the UK.

   When UKRI agreed to host the committee for 3 years, it did so with the proviso that the UK Committee on Research Integrity would not take on an investigatory role related to independent verification of whether a research organisation had followed appropriate processes to investigate misconduct.

7. There was a desire for more clarity about the role of the committee as a leader and convener set within a background of a complex, active and engaged landscape.

   The preamble has been updated to recognise the complexity of the research landscape and the presence of active groups and bodies supporting research integrity across the UK. We have added phrasing about the committee's role in driving ever higher levels of integrity. Work to describe the landscape of integrity more fully, including pressures and enablers, will be conducted as part of the committee's work. Detail of how the committee will build on current activities across the sector will be provided in project plans.

8. The pillars and the visual representation were generally well liked, although some questioned whether the linear nature of the visual demonstrated the relationship between the pillars sufficiently. Some suggested that the pillars 'define the evidence base' and 'build new directions' were the most interesting, and some suggested that 'build new directions' could be given greater prominence.

The visual has been updated to demonstrate more clearly that the pillars coalesce.

9. **The cross-cutting areas ('listen and learn', 'convene') were generally well liked, although there was a desire for more detail about how these would take place and suggestion that there should be clear mention of the public.**
We have added brief reasons for the 2 cross-cutting areas and have added that listening includes listening to members of the public and that the work to convene existing groups serves to mobilise existing expertise and energy into further action. The overview of our 2023 activities and individual project plans will contain more detail about how these areas will be put into practice.

10. **There was a desire for more detail and clarity in places, more mention of people and culture, as well as acknowledgement that high standards of research integrity are not always met.**
We have edited the strategic plan to enhance clarity while maintaining brevity so that it remains accessible and usable. We have checked that the detail of work about questionable research practices and misconduct is clear. We have also added wording that acknowledges the need to drive and build ever higher research integrity. More details, including success measures, will be provided in future project plans.

11. **There were a number of suggestions in relation to some specific areas, including requests for greater attention to international collaborations, information about availability of training, and more attention to the complexity already within integrity.**
The committee was pleased to receive detailed input into the consultation. We have added more information about the committee's international engagement, which is work already underway. We have noted all of the diverse and helpful comments as areas of potential focus and need. Although we have not addressed all of the detailed suggestions into the revised strategic plan, all comments received will help to shape our work moving forward.