Review of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2024–2025: Summary of consultation and changes made

Background

This report summarises the five-year review of The Concordat to Support Research Integrity ('the Concordat'), carried out in 2024-2025 by the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories (RICS) Group.

The Concordat provides a vital national framework and reference document for practice and governance of research integrity in the UK. Current signatories of the Concordat include research funders and representative bodies. In UK government, departmental Chief Scientific Advisors are also committed to the Concordat's principles. Internationally, other countries and regions with mature research systems have research integrity frameworks that are equally prominent, well-regarded, and with which the Concordat is in alignment.

This summary document accompanies the revised Concordat, released in April 2025. Organisations producing annual statements as part of their commitment to the Concordat should use the content of the revised 2025 Concordat by, or from, April 2026. Users of the Concordat will find that the basic structure and requirements of the Concordat are unchanged, remaining as five commitments with five principles, as laid out in Commitment 1.

The RICS Group are grateful to everyone who took part in the consultation and to all those involved in production of previous versions of the Concordat. Input into the consultation demonstrated that the Concordat is important to UK research, that it outlines actions that help to maintain research integrity, and will continue to drive even higher standards.

The aims of the 2024-2025 review
The first Concordat to Support Research Integrity for the UK was produced in 2012. It was revised in 2019, and the 2019 revision included a commitment to review the Concordat five years from then. The 2024-2025 review meets that commitment.

To ensure that the Concordat meets the needs of those who make use of it and is fit for the foreseeable future, the review was carried out so that:

1. the Concordat remains relevant in light of recent developments in research nationally and internationally, including technological advances
2. the Concordat remains appropriately aligned with international frameworks for research governance to support research carried out in international contexts
3. the Concordat is as useful and practical as possible

Review process
The review was carried out on behalf of the UK research sector by a RICS review group. The RICS group invited the co-chairs of the UK Committee on Research Integrity to chair the review group and bring the outcomes back to the full group.

In 2024 the RICS group designed and ran a stakeholder consultation. The consultation was open to all interested stakeholders and comprised an online consultation survey (open from 30 May - 22 July 2024) followed by two workshops (in-person on 26 September 2024 and online on 11 October 2024). At the workshops, stakeholders were shown summaries of responses to the survey and built on these to provide further suggestions. Throughout the process, the review group met regularly to analyse and interpret the consultation responses, and to compare the Concordat with international frameworks. On the basis of this, the review group developed a redrafted Concordat for input from the wider RICS Group in December 2024. This was followed by approval through individual RICS members' processes before launch in April 2025.

Details of the consultation survey method and summary findings are provided in Appendix 1.

Detail of the consultation workshops is provided in Appendix 2.

Summary of consultation responses and changes made to the Concordat

This section summarises **views received** through the survey and workshops and explains **changes made** to the Concordat based on these, or describes reasons why changes have not been made.

Views received	RICS group response
Views about the Concordat as a whole	
Most respondents to the survey thought that the Concordat was either 'very important' or 'important' to the research sector (see Appendix 1). This view carried through in the workshops at which participants said that the Concordat provides a national framework. The Concordat was seen as so important that it needed to be able to make even greater impact across the sector, to drive change.	We have revised the introduction to the Concordat so that the value and importance of integrity are emphasised and to clarify the role of integrity for trust in UK research.
Stakeholders asked for increased brevity and clarity where possible.	Much of the revision carried out has been to achieve a more concise and clear document. For example, the titles of the commitments have been amended to improve clarity and to reflect the refreshed content (the material set out below uses the revised titles); and the responsibilities for Commitments 1 and 2 have also been combined to reduce repetition.
Requests were made to check consistency and clarity of terminology, and to provide definitions where needed.	We have checked and amended terminology. A set of definitions has been provided.
As the Concordat is important to the sector, respondents to the survey and workshop participants questioned whether responsibilities were set out with sufficient clarity. This was seen as important because the Concordat sets standards and expectations, including for individual organisations' policies.	The revised Concordat includes responsibilities set out in each commitment as well as a full table/s of responsibilities provided as an Annex. Responsibilities are laid out by group: researchers, employers and funders. The aim of the table is to give readers accessible information about who is expected to act in what circumstance.

Some stakeholders suggested that the Concordat could acknowledge, and provide links to, organisations, legislation and current international frameworks and guidance.	We considered this at length and decided that where international frameworks were unlikely to change then these would be good to refer to and these are included in the introduction. To future-proof the Concordat as a foundational document and to maintain brevity, links to other information would be best provided in other ways, and that the RICS group could explore how best to do so.
In the survey, some stakeholders suggested that there could be explicit mention of 'Trusted Research' (the UK phrase for protection of intellectual property, sensitive research, people and infrastructure from theft, manipulation, and exploitation).	We thought this was an important suggestion. To ensure general applicability of the Concordat there is now enhanced reference to international research.
In the survey and workshops, some stakeholders suggested that reference to health and safety in research could be considered.	We acknowledge the importance of health and safety in all aspects of research practice. Although the principle 'Care and Respect' reasonably includes health and safety, we decided that requirements relating to health and safety are handled more appropriately and comprehensively in other specific frameworks and guidance.
Some stakeholders suggested that Artificial Intelligence (AI) should be referred to in the Concordat in several places.	We looked at AI through the lens of the Concordat principles and agreed that the principles remain applicable to the current environment. Rather than making explicit reference to AI, the revised Concordat refers to 'emerging technology' to include further future developments.
Stakeholders asked that all members of the research community are adequately reflected and could recognise themselves in the Concordat.	The Concordat now states that the principles and expectations are relevant to other parts of the sector, such as government bodies and publishers, alongside the clear expectations set out for the research community, employers and funders of research.
Stakeholders suggested that there could be greater resources provided with the Concordat, such as case studies and signposting to organisations.	We agree that more resources would be a valuable addition to material that might accompany the Concordat in the future. Although beyond the scope of the Concordat review, this suggestion can be considered by the RICS group.
Stakeholders in the survey and workshop provided opinions about governance of research integrity in the UK. Responses highlighted a desire for ongoing work and effort as well as positive views about the Concordat and its benefits.	We can draw on these views to inform strategy development and future plans.

Views about Commitment 1:
Maintaining the highest standards of research integrity – the principles

Commitment 1 included the five elements of research integrity, stakeholders in the survey and workshops saw these as foundational and important. They noted that they were defined as elements although widely referred to as 'principles.'	We have redrafted to add clarity and precision to the principles (named as such), and to ensure that they relate to all fields of research.
In the survey and workshop stakeholders indicated that it was important that the Concordat took a balanced approach to errors.	The principle of transparency and open communication has been expanded so that it is clear that acknowledgement of errors committed in good faith and honest mistakes are seen as productive parts of research.
The principle of care and respect could be expanded to reflect wider moves towards respect for others working within research environments.	The principle of care and respect has been expanded to include colleagues and collaborators.

Views about Commitment 2:
Maintaining the highest standards of research integrity – expectations and compliance

Stakeholders in the survey and workshops suggested that this commitment could include more reference to data management as expectations in research.	We have added explicit reference to data management in the commitment.
Survey respondents suggested rephrasing this commitment to balance responsibilities and expectations, and to include signposting to regulatory frameworks.	The wording has been checked to ensure that responsibilities of researchers, employers, and funders are clearly set out, that researchers should consider ethical matters on an ongoing basis, and to mention regulation.

Views about Commitment 3: Embedding a culture of research integrity

Commitment 3 was thought to be in need of greater clarity, particularly in the descriptions of research cultures and environments.	We have revised the commitment to define and describe research culture more clearly.
Stakeholders in the workshops and surveys suggested that there could be greater emphasis on responsibilities, including for continual improvement.	The roles of researchers, employers, and research funders have been more clearly defined as responsibilities that they hold.

Views about Commitment 4: Questionable research practice and potential research misconduct. Previously 'Dealing with allegations of research misconduct'

Stakeholders suggested that the section on research misconduct was overly punitive in tone, only covered intentional research misconduct, and did not pay sufficient regard to questionable research practices that would not fall under the definition of research misconduct.	We have redrafted the commitment so that it addresses a range of issues in addition to research misconduct. The content has been edited so that learning and support is emphasised.
Stakeholders suggested that this commitment was overly long compared with other commitments, and over-emphasised research misconduct in the Concordat as a whole.	This commitment has been shortened, and the definition of research misconduct is now within an annex.
Stakeholders made suggestions about wording to ensure that this commitment was inclusive of all fields of research.	This commitment has been edited and checked for language that relates to all fields of research.
Stakeholders suggested this commitment should be put in the context of research culture.	This now refers to 'Commitment 3: Embedding a culture of research integrity' to provide context. Further additions were considered to be duplicative.
Stakeholders suggested that AI and social media should be specifically mentioned.	AI has been addressed in the overall responses above. The approach described for AI is also intended to cover social media.

Stakeholders considered that the barrier to reporting remains high and reporting mechanisms should be more clearly documented.	The wording relating to organisational processes has been simplified. The broadening of this commitment to include questionable research practices, the use of less punitive language, and the new title for this commitment also addresses this observation.
Stakeholders stated that there need to be better linkages between Human Resources and Research Offices.	The Concordat is not intended to mandate how organisations implement the recommendations. This should be taken forward by each organisation as appropriate to their own internal operational processes.

Views about Commitment 5: Accountability and continuous improvement in research integrity. Previously 'A commitment to strengthening research integrity'

Stakeholders suggested a need to move away from a focus on reporting towards greater emphasis on accountability and continuous improvement.	We have redrafted this commitment to focus on accountability and upholding good research practice as a collective endeavour.
Stakeholders in the survey and workshop suggested a need for greater clarity about the purpose of annual statements and the role of continuous improvement and learning.	The purpose of annual statements has been made clearer with emphasis placed on continual improvement, sharing of good practice and progress, and demonstrating the health of UK research integrity landscape.
Stakeholders suggested the detailed requirements for annual statements could be taken out as already covered in annual statement templates.	Employers are still expected to publish, on their organisation's website, an annual statement (including summary table of number and types of allegations reported to the organisation and investigations undertaken). Organisations are encouraged, but not required to, use the Concordat annual statement template.
Stakeholders suggested that there was a need for Commitment 5 to have parity in importance with other commitments.	Repetition with material in other commitments has been removed and emphasis placed on expectations and visible accountability.
Some stakeholders asked for more precision relating to expectations of employers and funders, including periodic review of policies.	Responsibilities about publishing contacts responsible for research integrity have been moved from Commitment 3. We have retained 'periodic' review expectations to enable organisations to carry out their review in keeping with their needs, resources and processes.

Views about length and format

Survey respondents highlighted a desire for accessibility, including plainer language.	We have revised the content to reduce repetition and to enhance clarity.
Survey respondents indicated a preference for a downloadable PDF.	The revised Concordat will be made available as a PDF.
Survey respondents and workshop participants suggested that infographics and tabular displays would be beneficial.	The revised Concordat will include an infographic setting out the five principles. Responsibilities will be set out in a single table as an Annex, in addition to being included in each commitment.

Appendix 1: Consultation survey method and summary findings

The consultation survey was open for responses between 30 May 2024 and 22 July 2024. Invitations to complete the consultation were disseminated by RICS group members, including through Universities UK acting as Concordat host at that time.

The survey contained 29 questions over 8 sections, with a mix of Likert-style and free text response options. The survey was structured by commitment as laid out in the 2019 Concordat, with opening questions about the overall importance of the Concordat and a closing section about format and wider matters. Free text response options had an allowed maximum of 600 characters including spaces per response. The full question set is provided in Annex 1.

The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) engagement hub[1] hosted the consultation survey on behalf of the RICS group. The hub is powered by Citizen Space[2] and is designed to facilitate public engagement and collaboration between researchers, stakeholders, and the public, promoting open dialogue and feedback on research initiatives. The consultation was open to anyone with an interest in responding.

There were 92 responses received via the UKRI engagement hub and 4 responses received by email shortly after the closing date. Of the 96 respondents, two also emailed in further comments. Of the 96, one response was removed from the analysis as the content of the long-form answers did not relate to the questions or the Concordat, leaving a usable number of responses of 95.

Of the 95 responses, 43 were on behalf of organisations and 52 were provided in a personal capacity. Organisational responses were received from those working in Higher Education Institutions, Independent Research Organisations, and charities. Responses were from all four nations of the UK, roughly in proportion with the number of research organisations in each nation (Figure 3).

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[1] The UKRI engagement hub - https://engagementhub.ukri.org/

[2] Citizen Space help articles - https://help.delib.net/collection/1-citizen-space

Types of organisation that provided responses (as an organisation)

- Higher Education Institution
- Independent research organisation
- Joint response
- Arms length Body
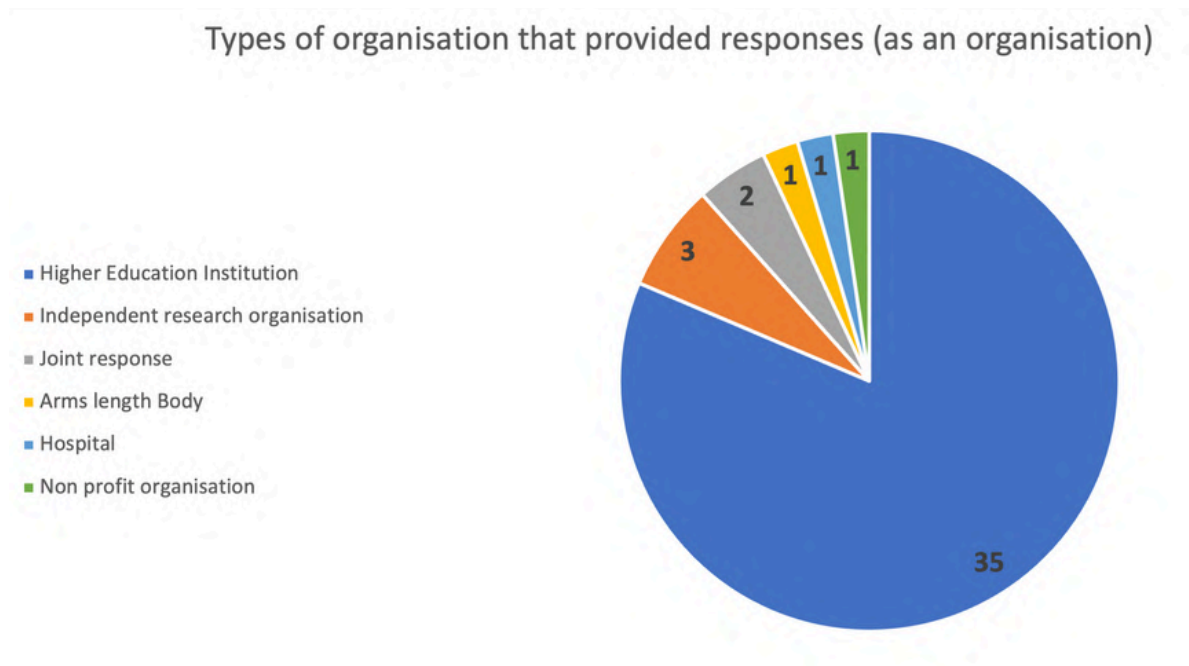- Hospital
- Non profit organisation

Figure 1: A pie chart showing the distribution of organisation types that submitted an organisational response to the survey.

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of the Concordat and each Commitment. In summary:

- 91% responded that the Concordat was either 'very important' or 'important' to the research sector
- 97% responded that Commitment 1 was either 'very important' or 'important' to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK
- 94% responded that Commitment 2 was either 'very important' or 'important' to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK
- 96% responded that Commitment 3 was either 'very important' or 'important' to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK
- 94% responded that Commitment 4 was either 'very important' or 'important' to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK
- 92% responded Commitment 5 was either 'very important' or 'important' to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK
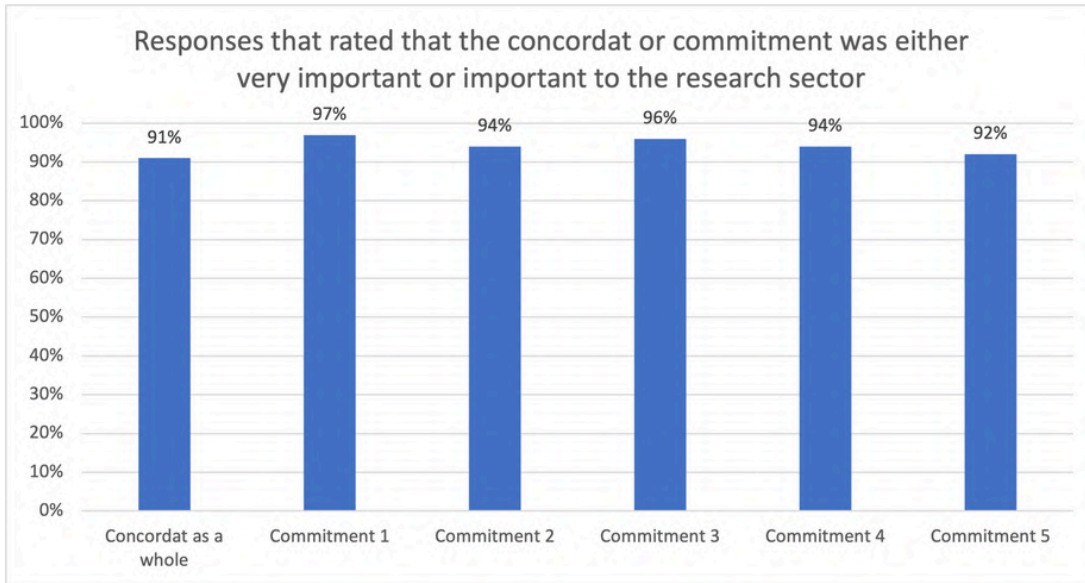
Figure 2: This bar chart illustrates the percentage of responses that rated different sections of the Concordat as either 'important' or 'very important'.

A final section asked for opinions about length and format: 54% thought that the length of the 2019 Concordat was 'about right', and 37% through that it was either a 'little long' or 'too long'. Respondents were asked to reflect on changes to the format of the Concordat that would 'help to make it as useful as possible'. Responses favoured a downloadable pdf version, plain language, infographics and accessibility standards (Figure 4).
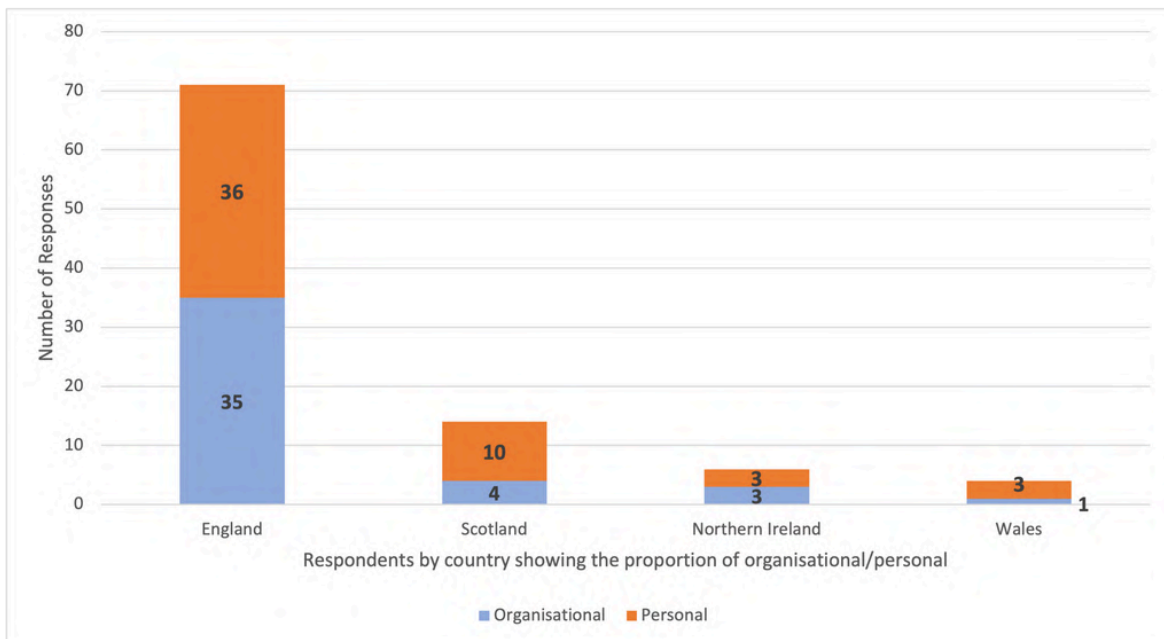

Figure 3: A split-bar chart showing the split by frequency of organisational and personal response across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
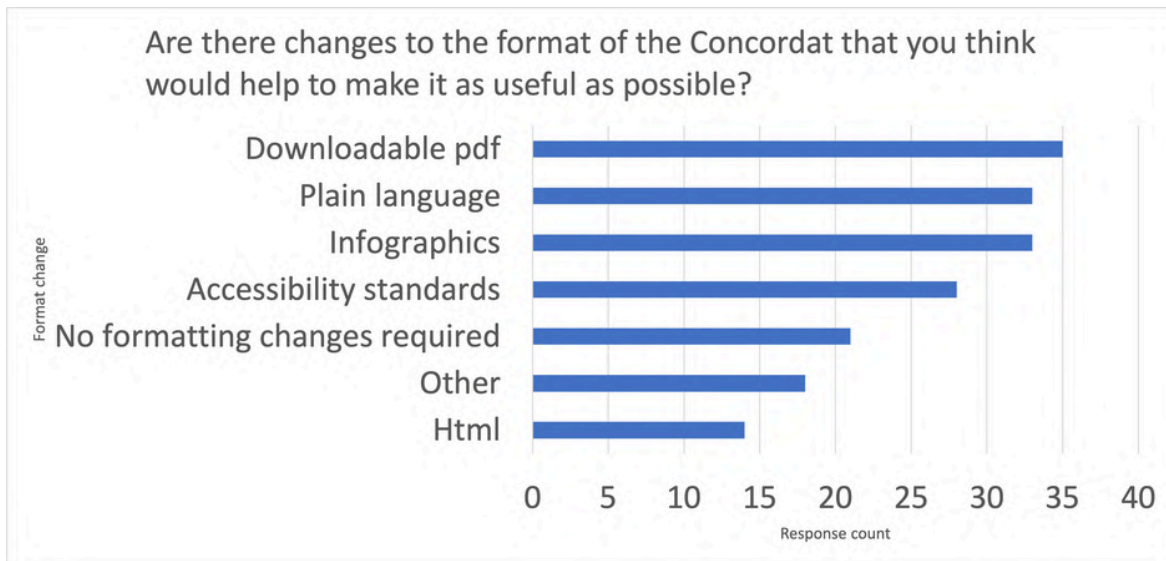
Figure 4: This bar chart represents the response counts for various options regarding formatting preferences.

Appendix 2: Workshops

Following the online consultation, two workshops took place. An in-person workshop with 19 participants was conducted in central London on 26 September 2024. This was followed by an online workshop via Zoom on 11 October 2024, with 43 people in attendance. In-person and virtual workshops covered the same overall content to ensure that material was addressed equitably between the sessions. The virtual workshop was shorter overall in length to account for the more tiring nature of online formats.

Workshop participants were shown summaries of responses to the survey and worked together to build on the summaries to provide further suggestions. Participants had the opportunity to comment on each of the commitments, framing their contributions as what they would like to be kept, improved, included, or to be move/removed.

Workshop participants also took part in discussion about sector changes since 2019, the content and use of annual statements, and the evolution of the Concordat.

In discussion about sector changes since 2019, a broad range of issues were discussed, including the impact of social media and tools such as generative artificial intelligence (or other emergent disruptive technologies) on both research integrity and research misconduct activity. Additionally, there was discussion about the balance and relationship between open research and trusted research. The reach of the Concordat was addressed, which included its reach to publishers, third sector organisations, and NHS trusts. Regarding care and respect, there was focus on whether the language of the Concordat was relevant to individuals beyond those identified as 'researchers.' Additionally, there was a discussion of need for greater clarity on who the principle of care and respect applied to, such as those involved in partnerships and other collaborations.

On content and use of annual statements, the discussion addressed how statements could balance detail and brevity through the use of executive summaries to provide brief overviews, accompanied by detailed sections for those who wish to delve deeper. Addressing sensitive topics requires safe environments, so provision of anonymous case studies in annual statements was thought to share lessons learned whilst protecting identities and encouraging reflection. The use of narratives and case studies was thought to make data engaging and showcase an organisation's personality.

In discussions about the potential evolution of the Concordat there was a focus on awareness raising and interest in shifting focus to the principles, which felt more engaging and relevant. It was thought that it was valuable to embed the principles in the work of researchers and stakeholders. It was felt that governance should be focussed on the purpose of the Concordat; and organisations encouraged to engage via funding terms and assurance returns, including annual statements. The possibility of harmonised, free training or certification was also raised.

Annex 1: Question list

The survey was run on the UKRI Engagement Hub, which is powered by Citizen Space. The survey was open for submissions between 30 May 2024 and 22 July 2024. There were 92 responses received via the engagement hub and four late responses that were received via email. One response was removed from the analysis as the content of the long form answers were not relevant to the questions or the Concordat. Of these 96 responses, two also emailed in further comments.

The survey contained 29 questions over 8 sections, which were a mixture of multiple choice and free text. The longer form answers were capped to 600 characters (including spaces).

Introduction
1. What is your name?
2. What is your email address?
3. What is your organisation?
4. Which UK country do you consider yourself most closely affiliated with?
5. Is your submission in a personal capacity or on behalf of your organisation?
6. What is your job title?
7. What is your job role?
8. How important do you think the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity is to the research sector?
9. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so

Commitment 1
1. How important is Commitment 1 to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK?
2. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so
3. Please suggest any changes to Commitment 1 that you think would help to maintain research integrity in the UK (e.g. any additions, deletions, rephrasing, clarifications?)

Commitment 2
1. How important is Commitment 2 to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK?
2. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so
3. Please suggest any changes to Commitment 2 that you think would help to maintain research integrity in the UK (e.g. any additions, deletions, rephrasing, clarifications?)

Commitment 3
1. How important is Commitment 3 to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK?
2. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so
3. Please suggest any changes to Commitment 3 that you think would help to maintain research integrity in the UK (e.g. any additions, deletions, rephrasing, clarifications?)

Commitment 4
1. How important is Commitment 4 to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK?
2. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so
3. Please suggest any changes to Commitment 4 that you think would help to maintain research integrity in the UK (e.g. the definition of misconduct or any other additions, deletions, rephrasing, clarifications?)

Commitment 5
1. How important is it Commitment 5 to the maintenance of research integrity in the UK?
2. Please explain your answer if you wish to do so
3. Please suggest any changes to Commitment 5 that you think would help to maintain research integrity in the UK (e.g. any additions, deletions, rephrasing, clarifications?)

The Concordat as a whole
1. What do you think of the length of the current Concordat?
2. Are there changes to the format of the Concordat that you think would help to make it as useful as possible?
3. The Concordat was last reviewed in 2019. Are there any changes to research or research governance that you think should now be included in the Concordat to make it as useful as possible?
4. Do you have any further comments about the content or governance of the UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity?
5. Would you be happy for your contact details to be shared with a member of the signatories group about potential further consultation involvement?

Contact us:

Research Integrity Concordat Signatories (RICS) Group

riconcordat@ukcori.org

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The Concordat to Support Research Integrity is hosted on behalf of the UK research community by the UK Committee on Research Integrity

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