

Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group: Terms of Reference

1. Background and context

- 1.1. The Concordat to Support Research Integrity ('the Concordat') is a national framework for good research conduct and its governance which asks employers of researchers, funders, and individual researchers to commit to ensuring their work is underpinned by high standards of integrity.
- 1.2. The Concordat was first published in 2012 to address a need for greater openness and transparency, and to ensure adherence to consistently high standards across the research community; it was updated in 2019 following a report by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee on research integrity. A refreshed version of the Concordat was published in March 2025. The review ensured the Concordat remains fit for the future and continues to safeguard research integrity.

2. Purpose

- 2.1. The Research Integrity Concordat Signatories (RICS) Group's purpose is to maintain and support high integrity in all research environments and across all disciplines through acting as stewards and custodians of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- 2.2. While the RICS Group role is to champion the Concordat to embed integrity across the whole research system, ultimately research integrity is the responsibility of everyone in the research sector.

3. Hosting

- 3.1. The RICS Group and Concordat are hosted by a RICS Group member or invited third party, as agreed by the group. Hosting involves the provision of chairing and secretariat support for the RICS Group; and a single point of contact for the sector.
- 3.2. The current host is the UK Committee on Research Integrity. This will be reviewed periodically, at intervals agreed between the host and RICS Group.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. The RICS Group work together to promote and support:
 - high integrity in all aspects of research
 - research being conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and professional frameworks, obligations and standards
 - a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and based on good governance, best practice, and support for the development of researchers
 - the use of transparent, timely, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research misconduct when they arise

- strengthening the integrity of research and reviewing progress regularly and openly
- collaboration with other groups and parties to strengthen the implementation of the Concordat.

4.2. Specific commitments are to:

- periodically review/revise the Concordat to Support Research Integrity
- periodically review/revise the annual statement reporting template

5. Membership

5.1. **RICS Group membership:**

5.2. The membership of the RICS Group will comprise up to two representatives from each RICS Group organisation.

5.3. Current Group membership includes:

- a. Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland
- b. Medr (Commission for Tertiary Education and Research)
- c. National Institute of Health and Care Research
- d. Scottish Funding Council
- e. UK Research and Innovation
- f. Universities UK
- g. Wellcome
- h. The British Academy
- i. Cancer Research UK
- j. GuildHE Research

5.4. To ensure active engagement and mutual benefit, it is expected that RICS members will attend meetings and contribute to the work of the group. They are expected to demonstrate how they have integrated the Concordat into their organisation's policies or practices.

5.5. The terms of reference will be reviewed biennially to ensure it remains relevant, inclusive, and sustainable.

6. RICS Group roles

6.1. **Chair/Co-chair:** for the duration of these terms of reference, the co-chairs are drawn from the host organisation. Their role is to:

- lead and promote the work of the RICS Group

- facilitate and moderate discussion (currently, they do not have voting rights for decision making)
- hold representatives to account
- work to resolve any disputes

6.2. **RICS Group representatives:** the organisations who are members of the RICS Group will recommend representatives to sit on the RICS Group. The representatives will liaise between RICS and their own organisations and networks to lead the work on RICS' key objectives. The representatives will be subject to the internal organisational processes of their organisation. They should be people who have an appropriate level of expertise and authority; and the capacity to be able to represent their organisation within the group.

6.3. **Observers:** observers are representatives of organisations that the RICS Group identifies as relevant to the group's work and are invited to observe meetings at the RICS group discretion, sharing information for transparency and openness about decisions made by the group. This may be on a one-off or longer-term basis. If longer-term, the duration will be specified and may be amended at the discretion of the RICS Group. During meetings, observers may contribute to the discussion, but do not have any voting rights for decision making.

6.4. **Guests:** guests may be invited to meetings or specific agenda items where they may be able to add expertise or input into a meeting or topic area. They do not have any voting rights for decision making.

6.5. All those involved with the group should:

- uphold the seven principles of public life: selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership
- act in line with their organisation's policies and codes of conduct at all times
- declare any actual, perceived, or potential conflicts of interest (as per point 7.8.) and act in line with their organisation's conflicts of interest policy
- not use any information gained for commercial or other gain
- actively promote equality, diversity, and inclusion

7. Meetings and attendance

7.1. The RICS Group will meet a minimum of four times in a year. Ad hoc meetings may be convened at the discretion of the chair(s).

Quoracy

7.2. The quorum for a RICS Group meeting is that at least two thirds of the steering group organisations are represented, alongside a chair or appointed deputy. Representation can be either virtual or in-person.

7.3. If a meeting is not quorate, its proceedings will not have any effect, and the meeting will be rescheduled. The chair(s) can recommend that decisions are taken in writing outside of a meeting if appropriate.

RICS Group secretariat

7.4. The RICS Group will be supported by a secretariat provided by the host. The secretariat role is to:

1. arrange, plan and facilitate meetings
2. share information appropriately
3. ensure accurate record keeping, including minute taking

Record keeping

7.5. The host will provide a working area for the RICS Group to access and share information. All information will be treated in line with the appropriate data and information security policies.

7.6. Meetings will be minuted. Draft meeting minutes will be shared in advance of the next meeting and approved by the RICS Group at that meeting.

7.7. To reflect the commitment to accountability and transparency, a meeting summary may be published on the internet.

Managing conflicts

7.8. Nominated RICS Group representatives of member organisations are:

- responsible for ensuring that they are aware of and comply with the expectations around declarations of interest and emerging conflicts
- required to acknowledge their ongoing responsibility to manage and declare relevant interests and conflicts on behalf of themselves and their organisation
- expected to declare any interests or conflicts as they arise, either in meeting papers or during discussions
- asked to uphold the principles of the Concordat when undertaking duties for the RICS Group.

7.9. At each meeting, the chair (with support from the secretariat) will remind representatives of their responsibility to raise any declarations of interest or emerging conflicts.

Review of the terms of reference

7.10. This interim document will be reviewed by the RICS Group no later than 31st December 2026.