

Concordats and Agreements Review

Frequently asked questions

What is a concordat?

A concordat can be defined as commitments, agreements, voluntary codes of practise and ambitions that aim to support particular areas or communities.

Who is the project lead?

The project was jointly commissioned by Universities UK (UUK), UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and Wellcome. Leads from each commissioning partner have formed a Project Board to provide advice and momentum.

What is the rationale behind this project?

Concordats and agreements are a significant part of the landscape of frameworks and good practices that contribute to research cultures and environments in which UK research takes place. These initiatives have grown organically, in response to challenges and opportunities, and cover a range of issues to support researchers and their activities. There is no assessment of their collective effect on the research cultures and environments in the UK, nor of any gaps in their remit. Phase 1 was an opportunity to gather, for the first time ever, insights on the collective effects of these initiatives and how they interact.

What is the project aims and objectives?

The aim of Phase 1 was to gather insights on the adoption of initiatives, their effects, and their relationships, to help identify where it can be made it easier and more rewarding for research teams and organisations to focus on doing high quality research and developing highly skilled and motivated research staff. We hope the research will help stakeholders improve the ways the initiatives affect research culture and environments. The project was not designed to measure the impact of specific initiatives, it was to look at the overall impact.

What are the key findings?

The key findings include:

- It is a complex landscape with limited homogeneous experience of both the concordats and agreements (from here on the 'initiatives'), as well as culture/environment, across institution types or roles
- It is difficult to evidence the direct impact of the initiatives on research culture as they have been embedded into organisations' strategies and processes.
- There is an explicit acknowledgement that they do have an impact/role to play - e.g., facilitating discussion on sensitive subjects, engaging senior leaders
- The impact of implementation comes as much from how the organisation's put into effect the initiatives as it does the initiative requirements themselves
- No obvious overlap between aims was found, but collectively they can create an administrative burden.
- There is a clear call from both initiative owners and implementers to explore potential alignments to help reduce the burden and coordinate reporting.

Which concordats did the project engage with?

The project is focused on initiatives that require research organisations to report on compliance, implementation etc. and/or that require research organisations to develop an action plan. The initiatives engaged in the project include:

- Concordat to Support Research Integrity
- Concordat on Open Research Data
- Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
- Technician Commitment
- Concordat on Openness on Animal Research
- Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research
- Concordat for the Advancement of Knowledge Exchange in Higher Education
- Guidance for Safeguarding in International Development Research
- San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)
- Leiden Manifesto on Research Metrics
- Athena Swan Charter
- Race Equality Charter.

Who participated in the research?

172 higher education institutions (HEIs) nationwide including GuildHE, Research institutes and public sector research establishments (PSRE) were invited to take part in the research. 80 institutions provided contacts and 1,085 were invited to take part in the survey, of these 510 participated. See Table 1 for details.

Table one: Research participants

Participants	Number of interviews
HEIs – England	334
HEIs – non-England	81
GuildHE	1
PSRE	6
Research institutes	88
Total	510

How was the report produced?

Basis Social, a research and insight consultancy were commissioned to produce the CAR report after a competitive tender.

What was the timeline for the project?

The fieldwork for Phase 1 took place between July to September 2021; the final report provides a snapshot of the research landscape in summer 2021.

Some of the data on this report is inaccurate.

This report was conducted in summer 2021 and we recognise that some initiatives may have made progress since then. We have included a disclaimer on the publication statement noting the report is a snapshot of summer 2021.

Is there already an identified outcome for this project?

No. The initiative owners and the research and innovation community will be able to shape and influence the outcome as part of Phase 2.

How did you ensure that the project is done to a high standard and reflects the diversity of the sector?

The project convened a [challenge group](#) to advise the project. The group includes researchers from different parts of the system and at different career stages, research managers and professional services staff, and experienced analysts.

How does this align with the UK Government's People and Culture Strategy?

This complements the [UK Government's People and Culture Strategy](#) which called for 'a review of existing concordats and accreditations to ensure that they drive positive change while minimising bureaucracy'.

How does this align with the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy?

This will complement the work of the [Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy](#) who wants to examine how 'concordats within UK higher education could be streamlined and made less burdensome' and have already committed to taking this work into account during the next stage of their work.

What are the next steps?

The Phase 2 tender is being developed in parallel and it will be published via UUK asap once sign-off is received from all commissioning partners. Phase 2 will convene the initiative owners and key stakeholders across the R&I sector to co-create a way forward collectively. We anticipate Phase 2 will start in March 2022, and finish in September/October 2022.

