Concordats and Agreement Review

Daniel Wake, Policy Manager, Universities UK
Shomari Lewis Wilson, Senior Manager, Research Culture & Communities
Tripti Rana Magar, Senior Strategy Advisor, UKRI
Hilary Noone, Research & Innovation Culture Lead, UKRI
Dr Hamish McAlpine, Principal Consultant, HE and Government sector, Oxentia Ltd

10 November 2022
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction and background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>CAR Phase 1 method and insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phase 1 insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>CAR Phase 2 method and ambition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Phase 2 early insights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Summary and close</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Background

There is momentum behind a range of important initiatives to improve the culture and environment 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.
Starting rationale

These initiatives have diverse approaches to engagement and oversight, different levels of maturity, varying scope/focus, and inconsistent monitoring of take-up, impact, or administrative requirements.

• There was also no assessment of their collective effect on the research cultures and environments in the UK, nor of any gaps in their remit.

• This was an opportunity to gather insights on the effects of these initiatives and how they interact.

Image: Concordat and Agreement Review Figure 3: Timeline Source: Phase 1 report
Wider alignments
Commissioning partners

Universities UK

UK Research and Innovation

Wellcome
## Method and ambition of the CAR Phase 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aim</th>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Consultants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 1 was an opportunity to gain insights on the effects of these initiatives and how they interact.</td>
<td>The study was not designed to measure the impact of specific initiatives, it was to look at the overall impact these initiatives have had in shaping research cultures and environments across the UK.</td>
<td>Basis Social, a research and insight consultancy were commissioned to undertake the Phase 1 work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Method and ambition of the CAR Phase 1 continued

Timeline

The fieldwork for Phase 1 took place between July to September 2021

Engagements

• External Challenge group
• Senior leaders from UUK, Wellcome and UKRI
• UKRI Internal Group
• Initiative Owners
• Independent Review of Bureaucracy team

Final Report

The report published in March 2022 provides the first ever snapshot of this *initiative landscape and the insights outlined are part of larger conversations.

The report purposely does not draw conclusions or recommendations.

*as at Summer 2021
CAR Phase 1 insights

1. It’s a complex landscape with limited homogeneous experience of both the concordats and agreements across institution types or roles. This means different institutions and people experience the concordats in different ways.

2. It’s difficult to evidence the direct impact of the initiatives on research culture as they have been embedded into organisations’ strategies and processes. Because of the diversity within the initiatives and how they were implemented, pinpointing their direct impact on research culture is difficult.

3. The report explicitly acknowledges that the initiatives do have an impact and role to play. For example, facilitating discussion on sensitive subjects and engaging senior leaders.

4. The impact of the initiatives comes as much from how organisations put them into effect as it does the initiative requirements themselves. The organic development of the initiatives as a collective is matched with equally organic implementation across organisations.

5. No obvious overlap between aims was found, but collectively they can create administrative burden. Tracking both initiative and institutional progress for each initiative can also be administratively challenging.

6. There’s a clear call from both initiative owners and implementers to explore potential alignments to help reduce burden and coordinate reporting.
Concordats and Agreements
Review – Phase 2
Phase 2 brings together the initiative owners and the research and innovation community to look for potential future alignments to increase influence, capacity, and efficiency across the landscape.
Phase 2 brings together the initiative owners and the research and innovation community to look for potential future alignments to increase influence, capacity and efficiency across the landscape.

The project started on July 2022 and is expected to finish November 2022 with aspirations to publishing the outputs early 2023.

Consultants, Oxentia, have been jointly commissioned to undertake Phase 2 work.
Phase 2 Engagements

To help shape and contextualise the report's findings, the Project Board* engaged through various 121’s, meetings and workshops with:

- **External Advisory Group**
- Senior Leaders from UUK, Wellcome and UKRI
- UKRI Internal advisory group of colleagues with links to the initiatives
- Initiative Owners
- Independent Review of Bureaucracy team

*Fortnightly meetings between the Project Board/Consultants

**The group is comprised from the research and innovation community, approached by the initiative owners, the project board and the collective desire to have representation from the devolved nations
Research Concordats & Agreements review - Phase II

Approach and direction of travel

Dr Hamish McAlpine, Principal Consultant, HE and Government, Oxentia Ltd.
Who we are

Oxentia are a specialist innovation consultancy. In the HE sector, we offer strategy support, training and innovation management, helping our clients develop their research & innovation strategies and activities.

Collectively, our project team has a deep understanding of the UK’s R&I landscape, design of institutional systems and frameworks, and effecting cultural change in the HE sector.

The National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) was created to effect a cultural change in the approach to supporting public engagement. They have developed a host of tools to assist the research community.

Sarah Allison
Senior Consultant, Oxentia Ltd

Hamish McAlpine
Principal Consultant, Oxentia Ltd

Britta Wyatt
Managing Consultant, Oxentia Ltd

Paul Manners
Associate Professor in Public Engagement, UWE
Director, NCCPE

Anne Bodington
Professor (emeritus) of Design innovation and Strategic Advisor to this project
Aims and approach

• A **design-led approach**, engaging ‘users’ and initiative owners via a series of workshops

• Dual aims – building on Phase I findings to explore potential to:
  • Reduce *unnecessary* burden and bureaucracy
  • Strengthen the *link to research culture*, increasing the impact and visibility of the various concordats and initiatives

• The user group was intended to represent a **diverse set of ‘users’**:  
  • Research managers responsible for implementing concordats
  • Other roles – e.g. HR, finance, senior management
  • Various levels of seniority
  • Various institutional sizes, specialisms and locations
  • Academic/researcher perspective
Workshop: User group iterates proposed solution prototype

Background research and interviews with initiative owners

Workshop: Initiative owners iterate proposed solution

Workshop: Initiative owners and users come together to refine solution and plan next steps

Methods Bank
Explore, Shape, Build

Engagement
Connecting the dots and building relationships between different citizens, stakeholders and partners.

Leadership
Creating the conditions that allow innovation, including culture change, skills and mindset.

Design Principles
1. Be People Centred
2. Communicate (Visually & Inclusively)
3. Collaborate & Co-Creat
4. Iterate, Iterate, Iterate

Source: Design Council
Findings

• **Interviews with initiative owners**
  • A strong appetite for change
  • Concern about dilution of the impact of individual concordats
  • Recognition that the concordats/initiatives in scope are diverse in their purposes and scope, and sit in a complex landscape

• **Workshop I (users) and II (initiative owners):**
  • High level of ambition and commitment to improve culture & environment via a more ‘culture-centric’ model
  • Scope for greater alignment, but concern about the detail (& whether change itself will create more work)
  • Hard to define ‘good research culture’ (but important to do so).
  • Importance of considering interfaces with others instruments (e.g. REF, other reporting mechanisms etc.)
Key considerations and next steps

• **Considerations**
  - Interface with existing instruments – particularly REF environment/FRAP
  - Research culture & environment and its relationship to **wider institutional culture**
  - Differing **nature and scope** of the concordats/initiatives, e.g.,
    - A wide variety of topics addressed
    - not solely research-focussed (e.g. technicians commitment and role of technicians in teaching, or the KE Concordat)
    - Some global in nature

• **Next steps**
  - 3rd workshop to continue to refine the ‘solution blueprint’
  - Exploring potential for greater alignment of both inputs (e.g. data) and outputs (e.g. reporting requirements).
  - Aiming for a concrete action plan, with owners and timescales
Summary

To explore potential alignments to help reduce workload and coordinate reporting, while also complementing the work of the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy:

▪ Building on the first ever mapping of initiatives and the call from the community to find alignments for greater efficiency and capacity

▪ Represent an important and significant step forward for sector-wide collaboration and understanding on an important aspect of research culture in the UK.

▪ Outputs will be co-designed, co-developed and co-owned by the community
Thank you

Contact us:
daniel.wake@universitiesuk.ac.uk
s.lewis-wilson@wellcome.org
tripti.ranamagar@ukri.org
hilary.noone@ukri.org