

# Concordats and Agreements Review Challenge Group

## Terms of Reference

May 2021

### Background

There is momentum behind a range of initiatives<sup>1</sup> to improve the culture and environment in which UK research takes place. The initiatives have grown organically, in response to particular challenges and opportunities, and addressing different stakeholders. Some are international statements of principles, others such as sector concordats are UK-specific, though often drawing from international statements. They have rather diverse and fragmented approaches to engagement and oversight, different levels of maturity, overlapping scope, and sometimes limited attention to monitoring their take-up, impact or burden. There is also no assessment of their collective effect on the research culture(s) and environment(s) in the UK, nor of any gaps.

Universities UK, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the Wellcome Trust are jointly conducting a project to review the evidence that will help stakeholders improve the ways these initiatives affect research culture and environment. The project will not evaluate the initiatives themselves. The project will run from May to October 2021. Further details on the project are in the invitation to tender document:



ITTConcordats.pdf

The project will be undertaken by a consultancy. Universities UK, UKRI and the Wellcome Trust have jointly formed a project board to own the project.

### Aim of the Challenge Group

The Challenge Group will provide high level steer and challenge to the project at a small number of key points through its life. In particular, it will:

- i. Receive briefs from the project about progress, plans and outputs.
- ii. Advise the consultants on the key elements of the work. This includes challenge and input on:
  - The review of extant literature and evidence, data and analysis
  - The suggested methodology for data collection and analysis
  - The reports/outputs produced by the consultant as the project progresses
  - Final reports/outputs by the consultant
- iii. Advise on how best the conduct of the work, and the project outputs, are sensitive to the perspectives of different stakeholders and audiences.
- iv. Recommend to the project board where the membership of the challenge group might be supplemented with visiting experts where required
- v. Consider the evidence put forward in the final report and its potential implications for future efforts to improve research culture (eg UK Government People and Culture Strategy) and reduce bureaucracy (eg UK Government Bureaucracy Review) in the research system
- vi. Advise the project board on the release and dissemination of the final report to research and policy leaders and the wider research community across the sector, including on how best to enable inclusive and constructive engagement with the project findings.

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<sup>1</sup> Examples include:

- Concordats in the areas of research integrity, public engagement, knowledge exchange, animal research, career development, open research data
- Other agreements and statements such as: the technician commitment, race equality charter, UKCDR safeguarding guidance, Athena Swan, and DORA and the Leiden Manifesto on research assessment and metrics.

## Operation

The Group will be chaired by Frances Downey, Head of Research and Innovation Culture at UKRI, on behalf of the project board. It will meet three times (including once in person toward the end of the project). The group may also work by correspondence where possible.

UKRI will provide the secretariat.