Oversight Group for the Concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice

Terms of Reference

1. Background

The concordat for the Environmental Sustainability of Research and Innovation Practice ('the concordat') is aimed at organisations across the entire UK Research and Innovation (R&I) sector. It seeks agreement to take action now and consistently into the future to reduce and eliminate our own environmental impacts and emissions and achieve a shared sector-wide ambition to transition to sustainable practices. It is intended to help us reduce the environmental impact of research practice and reach net zero as a sector.

2. Purpose of the Group

The purpose of the Oversight Group is to

2.1. Assess if the concordat is meeting its aims, for the UK R&I sector to:

2.1.1. Show visible and credible leadership for environmental sustainability at all levels.

2.1.2. Transition to working in more environmentally sustainable ways, including the adoption of new ways of working, to achieve climate conscious, low carbon approaches to how R&I is practiced.

2.1.3. Work towards the provision of net-zero or near net-zero carbon building and equipment infrastructure being used for R&I activities.

2.1.4. Be supporting and promoting robust environmentally sustainable decisions made in resourcing R&I projects.

2.1.5. Be supporting and promoting a shift to the greater use of reusable products (and reducing the use of fossil fuel-based products) by those carrying out R&I.

2.2. Use evidence from sector landscape report and subsequent reports indicating the impact the concordat is having, and other evidence that may be available, to advise the UK R&I community on actions that could be taken to ensure these aims are met.

2.3. Agree and review Terms of Reference for this group on a regular basis

3. Meetings

This group will meet no more than twice a year at times agreed in advance by members. The landscape report is expected in autumn 2025 and a meeting will be required in a timely manner following circulation to the group and prior to publication.

Meetings may be held in person, virtually or hybrid, as long as everyone taking part can see and hear, and be seen and heard by, the other participants. Meetings will not be recorded. Attendance by two thirds of group members is required to form a quorum.

4. Membership

4.1. Membership will be limited to a maximum number of 14 representatives (including the Chair/co-Chairs and/or deputy chair) and will include at least 2 members from each of the following organisation types: Higher Education Institutes (HEIs), research organisations and funders of research and innovation. Membership should also include at least 1 member to represent Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and at least 1 member to represent Research Technicians.

4.2. Membership is on a voluntary, unpaid basis.

4.3. Members will be working at a leadership level within their organisation.

4.4. In contributing to discussions at meetings, members should not only represent their organisation's view but also the perspective of their part of the sector.

4.5. The use of deputies to attend meetings in place of members is not permitted.

4.6. Should a member of the group step down, a representative offering a similar sector perspective will be sought.

4.7. Members will be appointed for a minimum of 2 years. Membership will be mutually reviewed every 18 months.

4.8. At least one of the first Chair/co-Chairs will be a representative from the original Concordat Approvals Board. Nominations will initially be co-ordinated collectively by UKRI, Wellcome and EAUC.

4.9. The group may operate with either a Chair supported by a deputy chair, or with two co-Chairs, in accordance with the agreed chair structure.

4.10. Where a deputy chair is appointed, should agree (on a standby basis – who can step up should the chair be unavailable at short notice of an arranged meeting).

4.11. Where a co-Chair model is used, there is no requirement to appoint a deputy chair.

4.12. The Chair/co-Chairs and/or deputy chair will be appointed for 2 years.

4.13. Members will agree the procedure for choosing and appointing subsequent Chairs/co-Chairs or deputies before the tenure of the first Chair/co-Chairs expires. This Terms of Reference document will then be updated to reflect this.

4.14. Members will review the effectiveness of the Group every 2 years.

5. Governance

To ensure the ownership of the concordat remains with the sector and governance is transparent, the oversight group's membership and purpose will be published on the webpage that hosts the concordat. A summary of the decisions taken, and actions agreed at group meetings will also be published there.

6. Meeting support

6.1. EAUC will provide support to the meetings of the group by setting meetings and circulating appropriate papers.

6.2. Wellcome and UKRI will jointly help co-ordinate running the oversight group and will capture a summary of decisions taken, and actions agreed. These will not be verbatim minutes.

6.3. Meeting papers, decisions and actions will be made available to all group members by EAUC using a secure cloud-based file share. Where practicable, meeting papers will be circulated at least five working days before the meeting.

6.4. EAUC support is limited to this group only and is provided under contract with the Wellcome Trust, with contract management input also provided from UKRI.