

Introduction

- This submission forms the response of the [UK Research Integrity Office](#) (UKRIO) to the consultation on [the draft strategy](#) of the UK Committee on Research Integrity (UKCORI), which took place via an online survey.
- This document omits our charity's responses to questions 1-9 of that survey (respondent's details). In addition, UKRIO did not submit a response to survey questions 10 and 17, but instead gave narrative responses in subsequent questions. Our response to question 19, which requested general comments on the draft strategy, is reproduced in the **Executive Summary**, below.

Executive Summary

- The UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft strategy of the UK Committee on Research Integrity (UKCORI).
- A national committee on research integrity was recommended by the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee in [its 2018 report into research integrity](#). That report also strongly endorsed the work of UKRIO and recommended that we should advise on the creation of the new body. Following our involvement in the evolution of UKCORI, we are pleased to have this further opportunity to give our input into its activities.
- Longstanding challenges to the integrity of UK research have been identified and discussed for many years, ranging from high profile cases of research misconduct to problematic incentives in the research system. While these challenges are not limited to the UK, there is no room for complacency and UKRIO welcomes the establishment of new organisations and initiatives such as UKCORI.
- UKRIO was created in 2006 to provide independent and expert support to help enhance good research practice and improve the culture and systems of UK research. We welcome the opportunity to work with UKCORI, as we do with many other organisations, collaborating to enhance the quality and ethical standards of research and to strengthen systems and culture.
- We also welcome UKCORI's commitment to work collaboratively, given the number of organisations and initiatives already working in this space. Through avoiding duplication of effort, research integrity organisations can work collectively to achieve improved outcomes for the research community and thereby safeguard public trust in research.

- Our two organisations are already collaborating and we look forward to working with UKCORI further once its strategy is agreed.

Responses to survey questions

10. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the below statements [on the draft strategic plan]

- UKRIO did not submit a response to this question, but instead gave a narrative answer in our response to question 11, below.

11. What, if anything, is missing from the strategic plan that would be beneficial or useful for you and/or your organisation?

- As noted in previous and very productive discussions with UKCORI, the strategic plan contains broad objectives that could be pursued in a wide variety of ways. We feel it would be helpful if the planned delivery mechanisms could be articulated in more detail. This would give clarity to the research community and allow better assessment of opportunities for partnership working. It would also highlight areas of potential overlap, in line with UKCORI's welcome commitment to avoid duplication of effort.

12. What do you think the committee should prioritise during its first three years?

- Drawing on the considerable discussions and explorations of UK research integrity that have taken place in recent years, we feel there are two areas which it would be very helpful for UKCORI to prioritise.
- **One:** As noted by successive explorations of research integrity by Parliament and other bodies, there is a lack of true UK-wide data on a number of key elements of research integrity. In particular, multiple Parliamentary enquiries have noted there is no clear picture on the frequency of cases of research misconduct in the UK; what data exists is fragmentary and primarily relates to the higher education sector. While addressing research misconduct is only one facet of research integrity, it is an important element and the UK can be described as having less clear data on this issue compared to some countries. UKCORI could make an important contribution to national discussions and initiatives on research integrity by collating and disseminating high-level summary information on the frequency

of research misconduct in the UK, across higher education, the NHS, private sector and third sector.

- **Two:** Historically most research integrity and related initiatives have focused on researchers and research organisations, or on publishers (the latter type often led by the publishers themselves). Research funders make a vital contribution to systems and policies for research integrity, but researchers and research organisations have long called for greater coordination and harmonisation between funders, particularly regarding setting of required standards and related reporting/ data collection. UKCORI could play a major role in convening discussions among funders and driving change in this part of the research community, building on the excellent work already being undertaken by many funders.

13. Please add any further comments about the effectiveness of the strategic plan

- UKRIO welcomes the establishment of UKCORI and our view is that its draft strategic plan contains a great deal that is of value. Its effectiveness will depend greatly on effective collaboration with other organisations, given the many initiatives already taking place in the research integrity landscape. We and other organisations look forward to exploring the practicalities of how UKCORI will work in collaboration, ensuring best value for the UK research community and avoidance of duplication of effort.

14. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the below statements [on UKCORI's definition of research integrity]

- Given that a UK definition of research integrity has been in existence since 2012 and has been operationalised through contractual obligations and other means for c. ten years, UKRIO *disagreed* with the statements set out in question 14. This view is explained in our response to Question 16.

15. Are there any sectors, job roles, or disciplines in the UK research sector that would not identify with the committee's articulation of research integrity, and why?

- A national articulation of research integrity already exists and has been operationalised in a variety of ways for many years. Creation of a new national

articulation of research integrity would cause confusion. Please see our response to question 16, below.

16. Please add any further comments about the definition of research integrity

- We note that the UK already has a national definition of research integrity, set out in [The Concordat to Support Research Integrity](#) (2019). This definition, like the Concordat itself, has been in place since 2012, has been tested with the research community (through consultations on draft versions of the Concordat and other means) and evolved accordingly, and is widely accepted by many in the research community. The Concordat definition also draws on accepted international standards, such as [The Singapore Statement on Research Integrity](#) (2010) and [The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity](#) (2017).
- Adoption/ promotion of national definition of research integrity different from that in the Concordat would be counterproductive and lead to confusion within the research community. This would also seem to be at odds with UKCORI's commitment to "work with Universities UK (UUK) to operationalise the Concordat to Support Research Integrity" ([UKCORI Terms of Reference](#), 2022).
- We note that this is about more than semantics/ articulation of good research practice. The definition of research integrity set out in the Concordat has been operationalised since the publication of the first edition in 2012. Compliance with the Concordat is a contractual obligation when receiving funds from major research funders, including the progenitor body of UKCORI, UK Research and innovation. This has been the case since 2012 and is a contractual obligation promoted as vital to ensure public trust in research. Accordingly we feel it is sensible that research integrity organisations align themselves with the definitions of the Concordat.
- We also note that this would be taking place at a time when there are greater moves towards harmonisation in the research sector, for example the Concordats & Agreements Review and the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy.
- This harmonisation is also taking place in the research integrity community; for example, UKRIO has moved from its 2008 definition of misconduct in research to adopt that used in the 2019 edition of *The Concordat to Support Research Integrity*, a definition created by the Research Integrity Concordat Signatories Group working with UKRIO and others.

17. Please indicate to what extent you agree with the below statements [on the pillars of research integrity]

- UKRIO did not submit a response to this question, but instead gave a narrative answer in our response to question 18, below.

18. Please add any further comments about the pillars of research integrity

- The pillars listed in the strategy contain much that is of value but also have considerable potential to overlap with activities being undertaken by other bodies – for example, UKRIO’s work on research misconduct and research culture; the UK Reproducibility Network’s work on reproducibility and systems for research; the Association of Research Managers and Administrators’ work on Trusted Research; the Research on Research Institute; and the Future Research Assessment Programme. Where such overlap exists, UKCORI could play a very helpful role in promoting and supporting existing initiatives.
- Consultation and collaboration with existing bodies working in this space would be welcome as UKCORI moves to operationalise its strategy, ensuring avoidance of duplication of effort, best use of public funds and improved delivery of research integrity initiatives.

19. If you have any further comments you wish to make about the strategic plan, please add them here

- For our response to this question, please see the Executive Summary on page one.

About the UK Research Integrity Office

- [The UK Research Integrity Office](#) (UKRIO) is the UK’s most experienced research integrity organisation. A registered charity, we were created in response to longstanding and growing concerns about the reliability of research. Since 2006, we have provided independent and expert support to help enhance good research practice, address mistakes, questionable practices and fraud, and improve the culture and systems of UK research. [UKRIO’s vision](#) is that through our activities, the research community is supported to produce work of the highest integrity, quality and efficacy.
- For further information about this submission, please contact info@ukrio.org.