

Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK Annual Report 2021

A. J. Williams & H. Hobson

DECEMBER 2021



Contents

Executive summary	2
ntroduction	10
About this report	16
PART 1: PROGRESS IN OPENNESS ON ANIMAL RESEARCH IN THE UK	18
Commitment 1	19
Commitment 2	29
Commitment 3	35
PART 2: OPENNESS CASE STUDIES	38
University of Cambridge	40
The University of Reading	42
The University of Bath	44
Newcastle University	46
PART 3: CONCORDAT ADMINISTRATION	48
Appendix	52

Foreword

It is always a pleasure to be involved with projects and programmes that create the change they were established to make, and the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK is certainly one of those. It is now nine years since the plan to develop a Concordat was first announced and seven since it was officially launched. The structure and content of the Concordat was developed over eighteen months of dialogue and consultations with those who use animals in their research, those who support it and members of the public. The result was a publicly accountable pledge to be more open about animal work and to ensure that key ideas about the values, harms and benefits of animal research are accessible and in the public domain, a pledge that has now been signed by more than 122 organisations in the UK.

This report is the account of a research sector that has grown and changed over the past seven years. It is clear that there is still dynamism within the research community and a commitment to making openness work. Progress is still being made, even in difficult circumstances, and while the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are being felt, they are not as great as they might have been.

As the whole world focussed on the coronavirus, public communication on other matters slowed, but did not stop completely. Understandably, many outreach and engagement activities were cut back, and it may be some time before we see them again.

Yet we have still seen progress, as organisations have used the time to improve their websites, experiment with social media and develop internal communications programmes. Almost half of signatories now place substantial amounts of information on their websites, and we know that those websites are accessed by the public, with some ranking highly on Google. The tricky issue of talking about the harms to animals in ways that are meaningful and honest is being tackled by signatories, and clear, public-facing information about animal research, created by those who carry out and fund it, is now more accessible than ever before.

While the past year has undoubtedly been a difficult one for the Concordat, it is still incredibly satisfying to see the change that has been affected by this agreement, and by the similar initiatives it has inspired around the world. As we move out of lockdown, and hope we can begin to put the pandemic behind us, we can be proud of everything we have achieved so far, and welcome the new opportunites for open engagement that lie ahead.

Geoff Watts

Chair of the Steering Group Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

Executive summary

About this report

The information reported here is compiled from a survey that is sent annually to signatories in May each year. The report fulfils the fourth commitment of the Concordat and its completion is required for compliance with the commitments. This year's report is based on survey data from 122 organisations, which is 100% of organisations that had been Concordat signatories for one year, and so were required to report on their progress as of May 2020. The information is self-reported through the survey and no formal audit or checks are made to verify the information provided, with the exception of information pertaining to organisations' websites, which are reviewed by Understanding Animal Research.

The annual survey asks signatories to share actions they have taken towards meeting the four Concordat commitments over the previous year, and so provides a snapshot of the sector's progress towards greater openness on its use of animals in research. During 2021 working practices have been severely disrupted in all sectors, and Concordat signatories have advised that they may be less able to identify activities carried out in the past year. In some cases these have been postponed or cancelled, but in others the administrative staff required to collate data to share in this report have been unavailable. In 2019 – 2020 we anticipated that some activities carried out would be reported the following year due to the pandemic, but in the year 2020/2021 we have seen far greater restrictions on public and community events than expected. Although this year's report is anomalous, we have begun to see an increase in communications activity, with many organisations taking bolder steps into online communications and social media than we had seen previously.

As in previous years, this report includes case studies that illustrate the innovation and impact of the changes made by Concordat signatory institutions.





The Concordat on Openness

The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK was launched in May 2014. Developed by the life-sciences sector over 18 months, it brings organisations involved in the use of animals for scientific research together to support openness with the public.

Concordat signatories sign up to four commitments:

- 1. We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research
- 2. We will enhance our communications with the media and public
- 3. We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research
- 4. We will report annually on our experiences and share practices

Following a review of the Concordat in 2017, signatories have noted the following impacts of the Concordat on the life-sciences research sector:

- Better public access to information about animals in research, directly from those who
 do the research
- A greater understanding and appreciation of the role of animal care staff, both in and outside the sector
- Increased profile of animal facilities within their establishments, leading to greater investment and better animal welfare
- Better access to see inside animal facilities (for those interested in this work)
- Fewer reactive communications on the use of animals in research, due to more information proactively placed in the public domain

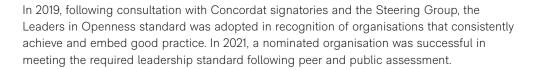
We hope that the culture change initiated by the Concordat will lead to gradually widening impacts as information about the rationale for animal research becomes increasingly accessible and understood. During the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 and 2021, the need for high-quality public information about biomedical research, including research on animals, has been greater than at other times, and improved access to this information has, perhaps, been more impactful for people beyond the life-sciences sector.

During 2021 we have seen widespread and vocal opposition to biomedical science across the world, linked in part to COVID-19. Activism and direct-action movements have grown in strength and have developed sophisticated misinformation campaigns not only about COVID-19, but also about the ways that research is carried out more generally. Despite openness, organisations are seeing increasing protests from organised groups.

During 2021 UKRI and the Wellcome Trust carried out an independent review of all the research concordats, to identify learning, areas of commonality and outcomes from this approach. The outcomes of this report and areas of learning are still being finalised at the date of publication of this report.

Key areas that have proved challenging for signatories of the Concordat, and where a need for additional support has been noted, are:

- Accurate communication of harms done to animals in research remains a difficult topic for the research community, and although some organisations take steps to provide balanced information, others could provide more.
- While many organisations comply with the Concordat, only a few are leading and others should be encouraged to see the value in taking bolder steps.
- Non-academic organisations can find it challenging to work with the media to explain their research to public audiences, and many establishments need more support to work with the press.
- The role played by non-research organisations within the Concordat should be clarified and steps taken to ensure that the administrative processes provide for and are appropriate to them.

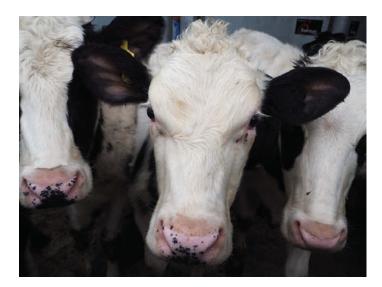


Once presented, Leader in Openness status is held by an organisation for three years, after which they must reapply. All organisations that apply to become Leaders in Openness are provided with feedback from the assessment that provides specific guidance to improve openness practices.

Leader in Openness 2021 – 2024 was awarded to University of Reading

Concordat signatories in 2021

The majority of Concordat signatories are organisations that carry out research on animals. In 2021, 122 signatories to the Concordat on Openness qualified to complete the annual return, of which 75 are research organisations and 47 do not carry out their own research, but fund or otherwise directly support researchers. These supporting organisations include research charities, trade bodies and learned societies.





Progress towards Concordat commitments

Concordat signatories are required to be clear about how, when and why they use animals in research, and the Concordat signatories have substantially increased the amount and the depth of information about animal research in the public domain. In the past, images from inside research facilities were a rarity, but now signatory organisations increasingly use video, virtual tours and case studies to show what life is like for their animals.

As in 2020, this year has been overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2020, many signatories saw their animal facilities restricted, activities shut down and communications teams furloughed. Most expected a swift return to normal in 2021 which has been slow to arrive, and in May, when the information for this report was due, the UK was still in lockdown due to the COVID-19 virus. These changes have affected both research and communications, and although the life-sciences sector has adapted to the new situation, this environment has inevitably restricted resources and changed the landscape of research.

Despite these restrictions, there has been progress in online engagement.

While all Concordat signatories are required to provide a public-facing policy statement to show clearly why they support the use of animals in research, the number of organisations which provide more extensive information increases every year. The websites of 77% (58) of research organisation signatories now share the numbers and species of animals that are used in their research, following major website updates for three signatories. Charities are increasingly open about the research they fund with ten signatory charities providing information about the proportion of funded research that relates to animal work. This number has grown since the Concordat was launched and helps their supporters to make more informed choices about the work they fund and to recognise the applicability of animals to biomedical research. Commercial organisations have additional limitations around information sharing that do not apply to publicly funded research and are often unable to share information about, for example, the numbers of animals they use in a year. However, these organisations often excel in their application of the 3Rs to research, and invest heavily in animal welfare practices. Despite restrictions, commercial signatories to the Concordat have developed ways to provide more accessible information to the public by, for example, presenting information about the types of species used and the proportion of studies they are used for on their websites.

In previous years signatories have seen staff attitudes and fear of activism as significant barriers to openness despite the lack of violent activism around animal research in the UK. One impact of the pandemic has been to increase the perceived relevance of biomedical and health research for the public, and this year, as in 2020, signatories have not reported that researchers are reluctant or fearful about engaging with the public. This may be due to changing attitudes, or that there have been fewer public events to draw attention to these issues. 2021 has, however, seen an increase in activism and campaigns to stop animal research, and there are likely to be more challenges to the sector from this direction over the coming year.

When the Concordat was launched, partnership working was a key concern for signatories, and this concern is recognised in the reporting process. For the majority of signatories there are no issues around working in partnership with others. Within the academic sector many organisations find that their partners are, themselves, signatories to the Concordat on Openness. Signatories in government and charity sectors report that partnerships have provided them with opportunities to explain the importance of openness on animal research and to highlight their position. Commercial organisations and research funders who work across broad, and often international, partnerships find it more challenging to balance their commitments to the Concordat with sensitivity towards the expectations and working policies of their partners. Some commercial organisations are also restricted



by confidentiality agreements. These organisations have found formal policies, processes and guidance documents helpful in communicating their Concordat commitments to partners, allowing them to be sensitive to the needs of both parties while encouraging openness when possible.

Providing balanced information that shows the harms as well as the benefits of animal research is an important aspect of the Concordat that ensures its credibility. The non-signatory animal welfare stakeholders of the Concordat have provided excellent support in this regard, ensuring that the sector remains mindful of overstating benefits and underreporting harms. The research sector is proud of the work that it does and seeks to show good practice, high welfare standards and excellent research. However, our work with the public has consistently shown that measured communications that are mindful of the animals' experience reassure people that the research is being carried out with care and encourage trust in the sector. Increasingly, Concordat signatories are showing the reality of animals undergoing procedures, such as mice with tumours and animals with headposts, moving away from down-playing the less palatable aspects of research that had been common in communications about animal research. As images, videos and virtual tours from inside animal facilities continue to provide more balanced information to the public, organisations should feel increasingly encouraged to show the details and realities of their research.

Providing the media with access to better quality information about the use of animals in research has been an aim of the Concordat since its outset, and signatories are encouraged to develop policies to outline how they provide information to the media. This year, 19 signatories reported that they had a formal media policy in place, while a further 61 followed informal procedures. Fifty-three signatories reported that they had provided staff with training to help them talk to the media about work involving animals.

Concordat signatories are recommended to follow good publication standards, such as the ARRIVE guidelines or equivalent. These guidelines are endorsed and actively supported by 78 signatories (including research organisations, learned societies with publications, and funders) and 34 organisations also actively use the PREPARE guidelines to underpin ARRIVE. A further 26 research organisations have now developed practices for ensuring that the guidelines are followed by researchers. Several commercial organisations employ their own standards based on ARRIVE, and these are required for all published work.



Management of the Concordat

Understanding Animal Research (UAR) actively manages the Concordat and asks for feedback from signatories on the support they have been given over the year.

Most (95%) Concordat signatories agreed or somewhat agreed that they understand the Concordat commitments and the support available to help fulfil them, and 97% of signatories saw the Concordat as an important step forward for biomedical research. Only 11 signatories felt the Concordat would not lead to real changes in their organisations.

Most (81%) signatories found the Concordat communications helpful. The newsletter and stand-alone website were seen as particularly useful, providing clear examples that others could follow. Several organisations now felt that an additional visit or onsite presentation would be helpful to better inform new staff about the Concordat and how it works.





Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK

Commitment 1 We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research Commitment 2 We will enhance our communications with the media and the public

Commitment 3 We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research

2014

2015

2016

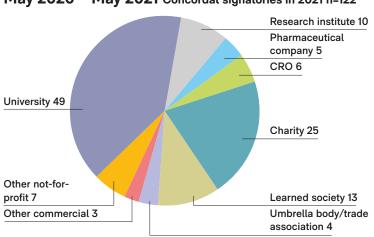
2017

2018

2019

2020

May 2020 - May 2021 Concordat signatories in 2021 n=122



Organisations that carry out research

Organisations that provide support for animal research

14 Leaders in Openness

2019 - 2022 / 2020 - 2023 / 2021 - 2024

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

UNIVERSITY OF READING

Engaging with the media

Signatories discussed animal research in a media release

Signatories made comments to the media about animal research

Signatories provided media access to animal facilities

Engaging with the public

Signatories engaged with schools about animal research

Signatories engaged with the local community about animal research

Signatories provided visitors from outside their organisation access to animal facilities



Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK launched in 2014



TRANSPARENCY AGREEMENTS IN:

Spain launched in 2016 Portugal launched in 2018 Belgium launched in 2019 France launched in 2021 Germany launched in 2021 New Zealand launched in 2021 Netherlands launched in 2021

Engaging with non-research staff

Signatories give talks and presentations about the use of animals in research

Signatories offer opportunities for nonresearch staff to visit animal facilities

Signatories explicitly mention animal research during the recruitment and induction process

Signatories produce internal newsletters and publications that mention animal research

Signatories provide staff with training to engage confidently with the public on the issues around animal research

Communicating animal research online

Signatories mentioned animal research on social media

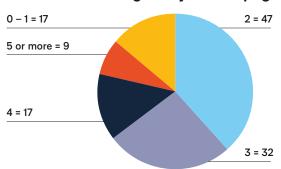
Signatories have images of animal facilities, research animals, or animals undergoing procedures on their website

Signatories provide details on the number and species of animals used on their website

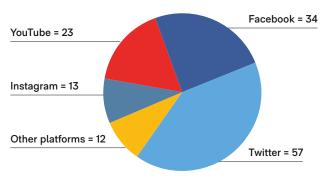
Signatories provide details on actual severity of animal procedures on their website

Signatories have video footage of animal facilities, research animals, or animals undergoing procedures on their website

Clicks to reach animal research position statement from signatory's homepage



Signatories using social media to talk about animal research



Introduction

The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK is a voluntary code of practice which sits alongside legislation, providing a structured framework and guidance for the research sector to develop more transparent communications about its use of animals in research. It was the first agreement of its type, and has subsequently given rise to similar agreements and practices in seven countries, while several other countries have similar agreements in development.

This report covers the seventh year of activity by signatories towards meeting its four commitments, following the Concordat's launch in May 2014:

- We will be clear about when, how and why we use animals in research
- We will enhance our communications with the media and public
- We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research
- We will report annually on our experiences and share practices

These commitments and supporting guidance were developed by the UK life-sciences sector over an 18-month period and were directly informed by a deliberative public process ². The four commitments are still considered by the signatories and the Steering Group to be appropriate and have remained the same throughout the lifetime of the Concordat, however guidance and practices around the Concordat have been continually updated to reflect changing circumstances and practices.

To be eligible to sign the Concordat, organisations must either employ staff or support members who carry out animal research, or directly support organisations that use animals in research, for example through funding. As well as academic and commercial research organisations, Concordat signatories include learned societies, research funding bodies and others who are concerned with the accessibility of public-domain information about their animal research.

The Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK is actively managed by UAR, and overseen by an independent Steering Group who meet once a year to discuss the Annual Report and any necessary changes to the Concordat. Signatories commit to upholding the four commitments and to ensuring that details of their rationale for using animals in research are in the public domain for anyone to access.

Concordat aims

- 1. Support confidence and trust in the life-sciences sector
- 2. Build open dialogue with the public on the reality of the use of animals in research
- 3. Foster greater openness and practical steps that will bring about transparency on the use of animals in research

¹ www.eara.eu/transparency-agreements

² concordatopenness.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/openness-in-animal-r.pdf



Concordat objectives (2017 - 2020)

- 1. Improve public access to information about what happens to research animals and why
- 2. Raise the expectation of openness and transparency around the use of animals in research for research organisations, their funders and supporters
- 3. Recognise and champion best practice in openness
- 4. Provide better quality and more accurate information to the media
- 5. Alert the research community to the risks of secrecy, and provide support for greater transparency, highlighting its benefits for science, animal welfare and communications
- 6. Gain buy-in for greater openness within practitioners and stakeholders in the animal research sector, from both the top-down and the bottom-up

Culture change supported by the Concordat to date

In 2018 the Concordat was assessed for impacts, and although it was too early to fully determine changes, signatories felt, alongside other initiatives, the Concordat had led to impacts on:

- Public access to information about animals in research directly from those who do the research
- A greater understanding and appreciation for the role of animal care staff, both in and outside the sector
- Increased profile of animal facilities within their establishments, leading to greater investment and better animal welfare
- Better access to see inside animal facilities (for those interested in this work)
- Fewer reactive communications on the use of animals in research, due to more information proactively available in the public domain

Signatories agreed many impacts had not, so far, gone beyond the life-sciences sector itself.

Minimum compliance requirements

To meet the minimum requirements of the Concordat, all signatory organisations must provide a copy of their logo to be displayed on the Concordat website, along with a policy statement outlining their position regarding the use of animals in scientific research. This statement should be unique to the organisation, based on their organisation structure, research interests and values. It should reflect the ethical position of the organisation regarding the use of animals. If they support or fund, rather than carry out, research on animals, their statement should transparently tell readers why this is the case. The statement should be easily accessible on the organisation website, and clearly linked to from the Concordat on Openness website.

Signatories are required to provide an annual report on progress and activities undertaken towards openness, and an annual survey is undertaken to support reporting. This report is created from the aggregate of data collected through the annual survey.

Signatories are also expected to make a commitment to improving internal structures and communications around their use of animals in research. The form of these structural changes will depend on the organisation, but all are expected to commit to a new approach to open communications that will form the basis of their future practices.

Further support and Leaders in Openness

Past reports have highlighted key areas for improvement that have proved challenging to signatories and where additional support in taking practical steps towards the Concordat commitments is needed.

In particular, Concordat signatories find it difficult to:

- Provide clear and accurate information around harms done to animals
- Take bold steps to provide open information in the face of potential disapproval
- Work with the media to reach public audiences (this particularly applies to non-academic organisations)
- Identify a clear role for non-research organisations in moving the Concordat and openness forward

Introduced in 2019, the Leader in Openness standard supports and extends the Concordat, providing clearer direction and aims for sector leaders and change-makers around openness on animal research. It highlights best-practice examples of organisations that have taken bold steps and identified ways to meet commitments and stretch goals around openness. These organisations are actively embedding change, and will ultimately lead to greater impacts around the ways that animal research is communicated.

Leaders in Openness are expected to address the challenges above and the longer list of good practice recommendations given below.

Because Concordat signatories come from very different organisations across the life-sciences sector, not all signatories will be able to achieve all of the listed recommendations. Concordat organisations are encouraged and supported to find ways that they can achieve more open practices, while remaining mindful of the limitations of their business and organisation structure.

Change during 2020 and 2021

The past two years have been challenging for all organisations, and no business has operated as usual. Some animal facilities have been stretched to capacity to meet an intense workload, while others have been reduced to a minimum operation. The charity and education sectors have taken significant financial impacts, and for others, such as the learned societies and trade bodies that rely on creating networks and forming collaborations, much of the impact is still to come.

During the past year two signatories have ceased operations in the UK and are no longer part of the Concordat. However, over the same period two new signatories have created their own public statements and signed up to the commitments.

As a result of changes to working practices during 2020, especially reduced administrative capacity in many organisations, the disruption to activities that began in 2020 will have a significant bearing on this report. Signatories are reporting on a period from April 2020 to April 2021, when many organisations were dealing with unusual circumstances. It will come as little surprise that some openness-related activities, particularly around outreach, have decreased during this period.



Good-practice recommendations for signatory organisations, compiled from previous reports on the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK



Good practice about how, when and why animals are used in research

- Follow UAR/RSPCA guidance to provide more balanced information, acknowledging harms as well as benefits of animal research, including commenting critically on models that they use
- Develop communication resources to move sector-based discussions that review, critique and evaluate protocols using animals into the public domain
- ARRIVE Guidelines (or equivalent standard) are actively endorsed, and supported by an audit process that checks compliance
- Actively support information sharing between animal facility and communications staff through processes and organisational structures (such as communications representatives on AWERB)
- Ensure non-technical summaries of research projects clearly communicate their objectives, harms, benefits and 3Rs considerations to lay audiences, making these, or other research summaries available through the organisation's website



Openness with staff, students, members and supporters

- Mention animal research during staff recruitment, ideally at interviews for all staff
- Include an animal facility tour in the induction process for new staff
- Offer an animal facility tour to existing non-research staff ³
- Provide seminars or publications on the ethics of using animals in research to students or members (where applicable)
- Hold AWERB sessions that are open to all staff
- Include a student representative position on the AWERB or ethics committee
- Offer work experience in the animal facility
- Recognise individuals who have made outstanding contributions to openness through internal awards



Partnerships and working with others

- Ensure recipients of grants, prizes or funding are made aware of their funders' commitments under the Concordat and the importance of openness about the use of animals in research
- Have a partnership or collaboration policy which outlines commitments and expectations under the Concordat when working with non-signatories

³ Possibly via other organisations (such as UAR)





Providing accessible information to the public

- Enquiries from the public about animal research are provided with direct responses wherever possible, with supporting resources available to answer common questions
- Reception and other frontline staff are trained to respond to enquiries about animal research
- Make a substantial amount of material about how, when and why animals are used in (their) scientific research openly available through their organisation's website
- Share the species and numbers (or proportions) of any animals used in their research
- Grant-awarding organisations share the proportion and value of grants awarded that fund animal research
- Encourage staff (including researchers where applicable) to undertake training for speaking with public audiences or media about the use of animals in research



Communicating through the media

- Where animals have been used in research, any media communications mention the species used
- Partnership agreements include expectations of how animal research should be communicated to the media (even where clients are a step removed)
- Have an access procedure for press looking to visit animal facilities
- Actively engage with (local or national) media requests to join panels or participate in interviews about animal research
- Provide media training for key spokespeople, supporting them to engage with the media on their organisation's use of animals in research



Supporting engagement with the use of animals in research

- Produce guidelines to support researchers and others in planning public engagement events around animal research
- Participate in Open Labs or other programmes to allow interested members of the public to see inside animal facilities, including remote or virtual tours
- Participate in science festivals or other public engagement events
- Hold family or community days that staff can participate in and talk about their animal work

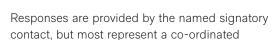
About this report

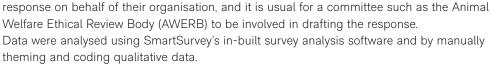
The first part of this report summarises the returns provided by Concordat signatories under the fourth commitment of the Concordat on Openness. It shows the activities and approaches undertaken, and provides a picture of how communications have progressed under the Concordat and where there is still some distance to go.

The second part of this report provides a series of case studies to illustrate how leading Concordat signatories have met good-practice recommendations and created excellent transparent communications around their use of animals in research.

Data collection methodology

This report is based on data collected from signatories through an electronic survey. The survey was distributed in April 2021 and was completed by the signatories. Survey questions remained similar to previous years in order to show trends. Research and non-research organisations answered separate sets of survey questions, to support respondents in completing the survey.





In most cases the views and activities described in this report were volunteered by signatories, and have not been externally assessed or audited. The exceptions to this are around points of compliance such as the structure of webpages and the placement of policy statements on institutional websites, which are checked and verified by UAR.

Organisations were not asked to provide responses to every question, and throughout this report respondent numbers are provided as absolute values, reflecting the changing number of total respondents for each question. As in previous reports, the names of organisations have been removed to allow organisations to report their experiences freely. Where organisations are quoted the type of organisation (charity, university, commercial, etc) is indicated to provide context.



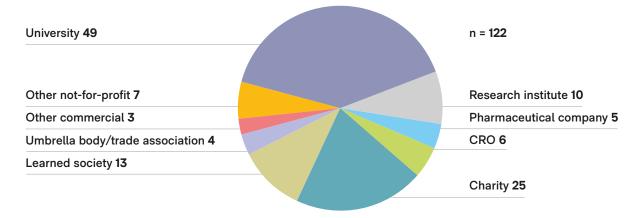


Concordat signatories in 2021

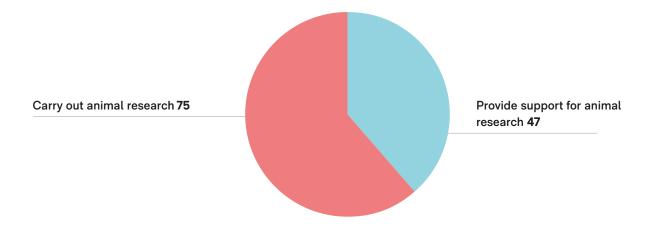
In May 2021 there were 122 Signatories of the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK who met the requirements to complete the annual return, reporting on their progress.

The total number of Concordat signatories in May 2021 was 126, but following the formation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the UK Research Councils (MRC, BBSRC, EPSRC and NERC), who remain separate signatories to the Concordat on Openness now submit only a single annual return between them. Additionally, one organisation signed up to the Concordat during the 2020 – 2021 period, and was not required to complete a return to cover this initial period.

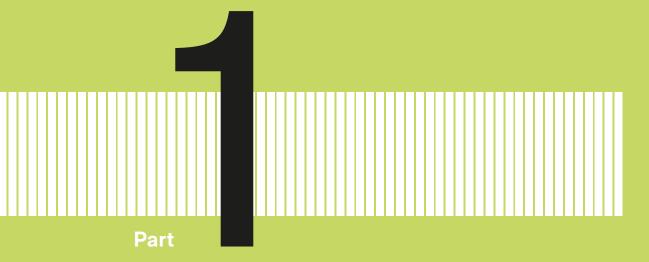
Completion and return of the survey are conditions of the Concordat on Openness, and data was returned by all eligible 122 organisations in 2021.



Only organisations that undertake research on animals, commission or fund research on animals, or whose members or staff carry out research on animals, are eligible to sign the Concordat on Openness. This research is usually carried out in the UK.



Universities that use animals in their academic research make up over one third of signatories (40%). The majority (61%) of signatories have facilities that carry out research on animals, while organisations which commission or support such research make up the remaining (39%) signatories.



Progress in openness on animal research in the UK April 2020 - April 2021



Commitment 1

We will be clear about how, when and why we use animals in research

"Openness around our use of animals begins at the interview stage. At interview, every candidate applying for a job is advised that the Institute's scientific research involves the use of animals and the reasons behind this is explained. This is standard practice for all job roles regardless of whether the role is directly related or involved in animal work or not." – RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Despite the enormous change to all aspects of life during 2020 and 2021, the availability of public information about animal research has remained high. While public interest in health and scientific research has declined as the pandemic has continued, there is still awareness of the need for animals in research. The pandemic has led to face-to-face events and visits being cancelled and many research signatories stopped their facility tours over the period. However, openness and engagement work has continued behind the scenes, with many concordat signatories developing their websites, using virtual tours and taking advantage of online platforms to enhance their communications. An increasing number of research charities have signed the Concordat, bringing clarity to the public about the nature of the medical research they fund.

Since the launch of the Concordat in 2014, there has been a substantial increase in the availability of public information about the use of animals in research. Almost three quarters (74%) of research organisations that are signed up to the Concordat now share information about the numbers and types of animals used in their own research on their organisational websites, while over a third (40%) share details of the severity of the procedures they carry out. Neither figure was available from any UK organisation prior to the launch of the Concordat on Openness. Every year more organisations are completing websites that share substantial amounts of information, including images and 360° tours, with each one representing a huge achievement for the teams involved. As engagement activity has tended to move online during 2020 and 2021, many organisations have made substantial changes to their animal research websites, making still more information publicly available.

As seen in previous years, commercial organisations can be limited in the information that they can share publicly, but many now share examples of their commonly used species and provide case studies to illustrate their animal work. Some commercial research organisations are very large employers, and by pushing their communication boundaries internally are still able to reach a large number of people.

Although some organisations remain wary, facility tours (in person or virtually) and face-to-face engagement activities are becoming more common, particularly for the larger facilities. These tours have proved to be much more than public engagement, as they have provided opportunities throughout the pandemic for visitors, job applicants and welfare staff to gain insights into the facility without crossing barriers. They are excellent learning tools and a number of organisations now use these tours in work experience and teaching programmes. Signatories are now increasingly willing to share information with a range of audiences on social media, with Twitter being the most popular platform, used by almost half of signatories (47%).

Far more of the organisations that use animals in research now share information about animal research in the public domain through documents that were previously considered internal only such as the minutes of AWERB meetings, annual reports and non-technical summaries of research (in addition to those required by the Home Office for regulation and licensing purposes). Many organisations also share information about their facilities, animal care and projects on YouTube. While the intended audiences for these may vary from the general public to the life-sciences sector, the availability of information is growing every year, allowing people to be better informed.

The primary barriers to openness that concern signatories remain their competing priorities, and available resources, including resources to handle enquires, and overall resources to deal with animal work in challenging times. Some researchers are still reluctant to be named in communications that provide details of their animal use, and fundraising or marketing teams can see open discussion of animals as a risk that is better avoided.

A small number of organisations have recently been targeted by aggressive campaigns, which have been challenging for their staff and have led to increased caution when it comes to open-forum discussions. However, communications in 2021 are very different to those pre-Concordat, and despite some extensive and challenging protests, there has been no harm to individuals.

1.1 Harms and benefits

"Although the benefits of research involving the use of animals are often easy to describe, usually in terms of benefiting human health, and some attempt can be made at describing the limitations of animal models, it is often difficult to mention harms in positive news items about scientific discoveries. The focus of the information provided may be such that it is not appropriate to list harms." – RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Providing transparent information about the balance of harms to the animals and benefits to research is central to the Concordat on Openness. It is important that openness includes information about the experience of the animals, acknowledging that, no matter how well they are cared for, they will experience harms in the process of scientific research.

Openness means providing information that allows people to make up their own minds about the ethics of some trickier topics around animal research. It means accepting that research is carried out in the interests of society with a public mandate, and that people can expect access to sufficient information to make a fair judgement. Determining the right tone and balance of information can be difficult for organisations, which rightly aim to champion research that they are proud of. Added to which, communications teams may, themselves, be uneasy about the idea of animal research and feel uncomfortable discussing it.





For some communications teams animal research, especially with respect to harms or other ethically complicated aspects, can seem like a bad-news story that must be mitigated or down-played. Many signatories are concerned about providing any information that might show their research or institution in a negative light, preferring to mention only the positive aspects of their research, while others feel that mentioning harms may open the door for their work to be misrepresented or taken out of context.

As a minimum, concordat signatories should discuss their approach to the 3Rs on their websites, illustrating key aspects of their internal conversations about animal welfare. Organisations that fund, commission or support research should

have statements or websites that reflect the internal discussions of their ethics committees about the acceptability of different types of research, and the circumstances under which different protocols are permitted. They are encouraged to discuss the 3Rs and highlight the experience of the animals through case studies.

Increasingly, research organisations provide indicators of severity of procedures on their public-facing websites (30 organisations do this), and show images of animals that have clearly been harmed undergoing a procedure, such as mice with visible tumours (nine organisations do this).

A high proportion of research organisations (34) include summaries of the research undertaken on their websites, and organisations have suggested that they will expect a greater emphasis on the harm-benefit analysis in those articles as they are reviewed in the future, giving visitors a better idea of the ethics involved and the experience of the animals in each project.

Time and again the public have told us the importance of having clear information about the animals' experience that gives them a picture of what the research entails. Encouragingly, most are extremely surprised at the quality and amount of information available to enable them to make up their own minds.

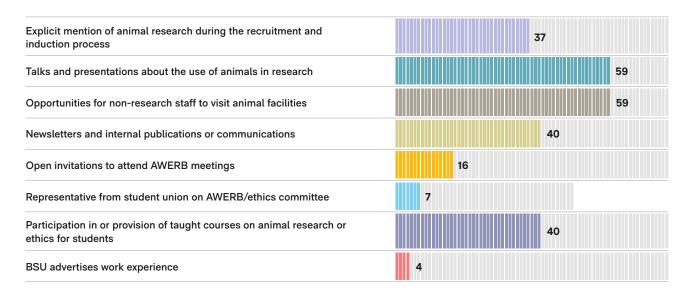
For commercial organisations, who are bound by extensive regulations around competition, intellectual property and commercial sensitivities, in addition to their marketing-focused external communications, public discussion of harms and benefits is limited. However, the contribution of these organisations to research-sector discussions on mitigating harms, improving experimental design and supporting better animal care is significant. Internal and sector-facing communications about animal use, even within very large organisations, can be frank, honest and accessible, leading the way with initiatives such as open ethics committees that anyone can attend and pushing global standards of animal care.

For the past three years, Leaders in Openness has allowed greater focus on this area of the Concordat due to the express consideration of communication of harms in the audit undertaken by applicants. Consequently, greater consideration is given to the treatment of harms in the case studies in part two of this report.

1.2 Staff awareness

"We had arranged a short talk on animal research and a tour of the facilities for all SU Officers in 2019 and this was repeated in 2020. Clearly this had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Nevertheless [...] the student debating society arranged an external debate." – UNIVERSITY

Do you make your use of animal research clear to researchers, staff or students, beyond those who work directly with animals, through any of the following (select all that apply)? n=75

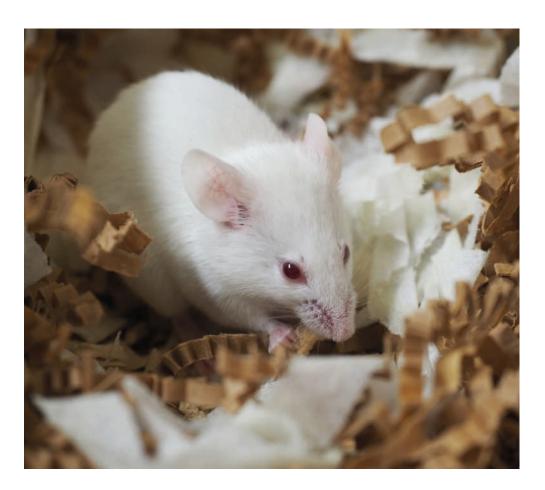


Under the Concordat, signatories that carry out research on animals (research signatories) should make it clear to all staff they employ that animal research is carried out by their organisation. Often, staff whose role is not directly connected with the use of animals in research, for example staff working in administrative roles or in other departments, are unaware that their employer undertakes this type of work. Signatories should be open with staff, students and others internal to the organisation, enabling concerns to be voiced and providing accessible information to those who want to know more.

Since the Concordat was launched in 2014, signatories have developed a range of initiatives to raise the profile of the animal facility within their organisations. Many signatories have excelled in this crucial area of the Concordat, which ensures that animal research is no longer a closely-guarded secret. More and more staff from research institutions understand that animal research is not something done elsewhere and by other people, but something that happens where they work and that they can understand the need for. If they are uncomfortable, they are now able to make it known and find out more, dispelling rumours about the research and improving transparency.

It is now good practice for animal facilities to advertise positions openly, allow non-research staff to visit the facility and to include interview questions highlighting that the organisation carries out animal research as part of the recruitment process for all staff regardless of their role. For some organisations recruitment processes are more structured, ensuring that new starters understand how animal research fits into the structure and ethics of the organisation.





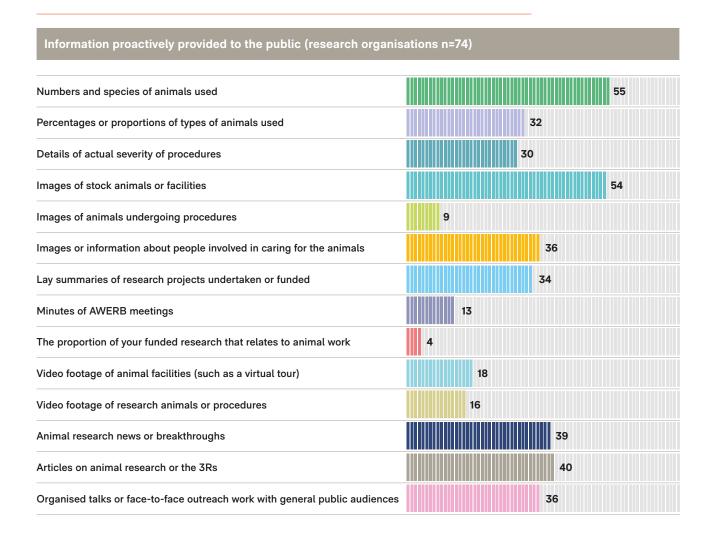
Virtual tours are now used extensively, not only to provide engagement to those outside an organisation, but also to allow non-research staff to see for themselves the work carried out inside the animal facility. Opportunities for non-research staff to visit the animal facilities are offered by most (84%) research signatories, but since the pandemic has made these visits an impossibility, virtual tours have become the best way to ensure access to staff who are not in key worker roles. Several signatories reported that planned staff engagement activities had been postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but they hoped to be able to move forward with offering tours and open ethics discussions soon.

"Because of the SARS-Cov2 pandemic, the University has moved to virtual 'Open Days' and virtual 'Applicant Visit Days' for prospective students and their parents. Nevertheless, talks from the Department of Pharmacology staff still mention animal research in the context of drug discovery research with weblinks provided in the online chat to our University animal research pages and to UAR's webpages as well as virtual lab tours." – UNIVERSITY

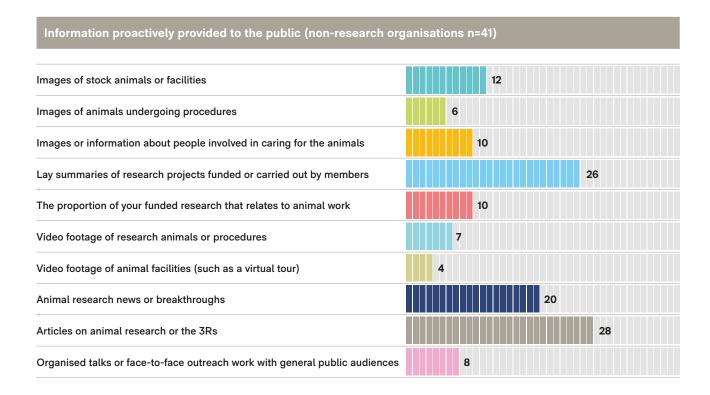
"We also hold informal 'townhall' meetings where staff are encouraged to share their experiences in a non-technical and positive way." – NON-PROFIT ORGANISATION

1.3 Explaining involvement with the use of animals in research

"Our quarterly publication is now distributed to members electronically and as a result can be shared widely with non-members, including the public. [Our] Twitter feed is shared widely and has raised our profile and openness." – LEARNED SOCIETY



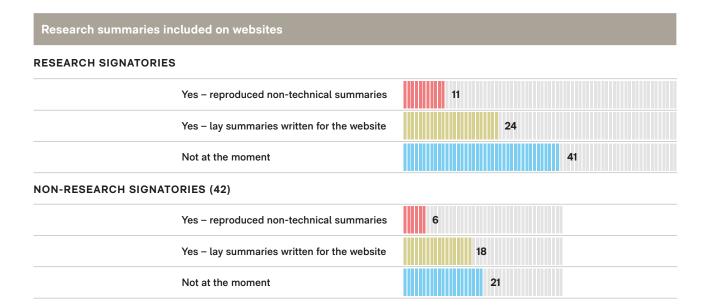




A number of research organisations described how they share photos and videos of their animals and facilities with third parties, including the press and other organisations' websites. For business reasons around competitiveness and confidentiality, many commercial organisations are unable to share absolute numbers of animals used, but do make the species they use available, and some indicate the proportion of their animal work done in different types of animals.

Both research and non-research organisations have continued to develop the information about animal research that they put into the public domain. In 2020 and 2021 more organisations have actively engaged with social media as a means of providing proactive information about animals in research, reaching new audiences through Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and Reddit.

Some of the non-research organisations are still unclear how they can play a role in communicating openly with the public, since they do not carry out research themselves, though the nature of virtual communication during the pandemic may be changing this thinking, as the role of societies and funders in communicating about the research they support has proved key to furthering everyone's knowledge and understanding. These organisations provide community, bringing researchers together and connecting them to the beneficiaries of their research. While many see animal research as only a small part of their work, it remains important that their members and stakeholders understand why it is nonetheless essential. Non-research organisations can play a huge role in the Concordat by communicating the importance of openness to individuals, truly embedding the changes in practice that we have seen so far.



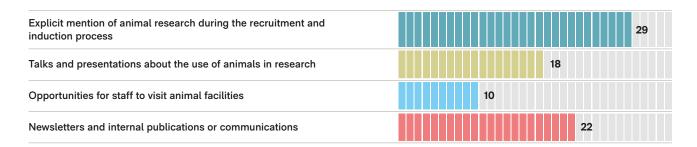
A large number of research organisations (~20) reported that they were in the process of updating the way that research projects are included on their websites. Restrictions around live events and engagement have, in some cases, provided opportunities for teams within these organisations to review how their research is communicated and to develop simpler processes that allow this information to be shared more easily. A few organisations reported that their work does not fall easily into projects so that instead they report more generally on the types of work carried out in specific areas or research groups.

Non-research signatories are asked to make their use of or support for using animals in research clear to staff, grant holders and supporters: those who are considered internal to the organisation's interests. Although some of the smaller organisations do not employ any staff, all had taken steps to engage their stakeholders on this subject, making it clear that it is a key part of their mission and remit. For over three quarters (85%) of non-research signatories, animal research was explicitly mentioned during their recruitment processes, so that their staff and stakeholders engaged with the process, and almost one third (30%) of these organisations provided their staff with opportunities to visit animal facilities and learn about the research carried out first hand.

Very small organisations should consider that this commitment could hold for the appointment of accountants, auditors, insurance companies and web designers as well as employees. The aim is to ensure that those individuals who work with Concordat signatories directly understand their connection to animal research.



Do you make your support of animal research clear to staff, grant holders or supporters through any of the following? (non-research signatories n=34)



1.4 Partnership working

"Our experience of partnership working is very positive with openness supported by most but not all collaborators." – RESEARCH FUNDER

Have you implemented any of the following practices when working in partnership? (research organisations)

A policy in place outlining requirements around openness on animal research when working in partnership	Research sigs (30)	12
	Non-research sigs (23)	10
Guidance for staff, members or grant holders to encourage openness when working in partnership	Research sigs (30)	9
	Non-research sigs (23)	10
Participation or delivery of meetings and events to facilitate partnerships and openness around animal research	Research sigs (30)	21
	Non-research sigs (23)	13

Research organisations vary in their approach to partnership working. As in previous years, most academic and aligned organisations find that their partnerships involve signatories or other organisations with closely aligned values. Many consider partnership working a benefit, which allows them to explain the need for openness and encourage others to adopt a transparent position around the use of animals in research. It has led to a more unified approach towards openness.

For other organisations there are sensitivities around partnerships where cultures and values may be very different from one another. In particular, organisations involved with overseas partnerships



must ensure that they take due account of a range of concerns while upholding their commitments. These organisations may find that adopting policies around partnership working can be helpful in managing expectations and ensuring clarity.

Commercial partnerships can present greater difficulties due to commercial and security interests and confidentiality clauses associated with particular pieces of work. It is clear that commercial research organisations are not able to communicate about specific pieces of work in the same way that others are able to, and are only able to provide general information about their animal research. This does not prevent them from being open about animal use but does mean that, while they may provide images of animals on a study to a third party website, they would not be able to provide details of particular trials or the partners they work with.



Commitment 2

We will enhance our communications with the media and the public

"We have chosen to engage with demonstrators visiting the University campus as a way to both highlight the reasons for our use of animals in research to a wider public audience and to look for ways to create better ways to have dialogue with groups who are opposed to animal research." – UNIVERSITY

2.1 Position statements on animal research

All Concordat signatories are required to have a public-facing position or policy statement online that clearly indicates the organisation's rationale, including their ethical position, for supporting the use of animals in research.

The 122 signatories to the Concordat on 14 May 2021 all have public-facing position statements online, which are linked to from the **Concordat website**. Each year signatories provide UAR with a URL to their statement so that the Concordat website, which connects signatories to their statements, can be maintained. UAR periodically checks statements throughout the year to make sure they are active and that the Concordat website is up to date.

Signatories are encouraged to create websites with extensive information about the animal research they carry out, fund, or support. Since the launch of the Concordat, we have seen an increasing amount of detailed information available online, showcasing research and demonstrating best practice in animal facilities. Best practice examples for websites now include numbers and species of animals used, proportions of grants or funded research involving animals, examples of research projects in lay language, information on the 3Rs and animal welfare, videos, images, and virtual lab tours, and details of harms experienced by the animals such as severity statistics. Although we have not seen many new channels used in 2021, more organisations are now using digital content such as videos, virtual tours and infographics to provide in-depth and accessible information.

Position statements should be easily accessible to everyone, not just those actively seeking information about animal research, so the number of clicks it takes to reach the Concordat pages from the website Homepage is relevant to openness. The modal number of clicks to information about animal research from the Homepage is two and the majority (79%) of signatory organisations have information that can be located within three clicks.

A full list of URLs for all website animal research policy statements is provided in the appendix.

2.2 Inclusion of animal research in communications and media releases

"Our quarterly report has a clinical and pre-clinical research section, in which we include all our activity on animal research in the last quarter. NC3Rs actively participate on our advisory and regularly write guest blogs for our website." – TRADE ASSOCIATION

Inclusion of animal species in press releases (where relevant to the research) is now common practice, with 90 signatories reporting that it is a standard procedure in their organisations.

A formal policy that requires animal research to be proactively included in media releases and media enquiries is used by 19 signatories, and a further 62 signatories reported that, while they don't have a formal policy in place, an informal process is recommended and followed. Five signatories reported that they have plans to introduce a policy around processes for media engagement. Where media policies are used by organisations, they describe what information should be included in press releases, how to handle media enquiries, how pictures of research animals should be used, and how lab visits should be conducted.

The adoption of a formal policy is recommended good practice for Concordat signatories as it helps ensure that expectations around openness are fully understood and saves time when handling media enquiries.

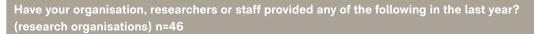
Signatories have reported many ways of engaging with the media about their involvement with animal research, including commenting to the media on a general issue around animal research (21), providing reactive comment to the media (20), providing proactive comments to the media (24), providing panel members for press conferences or briefings (1), and providing interviews or long-form pieces where the use of animals in research was a key topic (19). Due to COVID-19 restrictions, some of these numbers are reduced from previous years. There have not, for example, been many opportunities to provide media access to animal facilities, although three organisations have reported doing so.

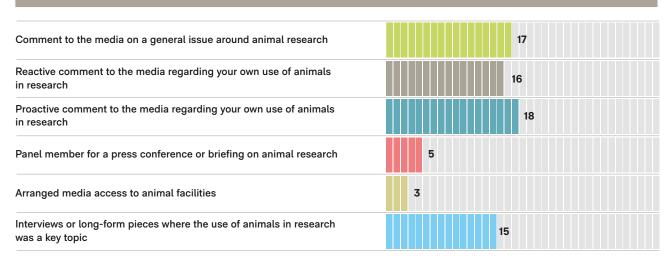
Many concordat signatories have capable press offices which now include stories and comments about animals in science as a standard practice. The years 2020 and 2021 have seen unique challenges as some of the large, well-established press offices have shifted focus completely to deal with expert enquiries related to COVID-19 research, and animal facilities have been closed to all but key workers.



Organisations have continued to provide appropriate comment to the media, but many signatories reported that they have not provided media comment around the use of animals in the period covered by this report, noting that this is unusual, and a direct result of circumstances around the pandemic. Most interviews and comment to the press provided over the reporting period relate to research associated with COVID-19, including a pharmaceutical company's CEO providing media comment over non-human primate use in COVID-19 vaccine development, and the use of large and small animals to study COVID-19. A few media items related to animal research but not to COVID-19 looked at the development of a wireless limb control technology and a field study of elephant seals and glaciers. Some member organisations and learned societies of the Concordat do not monitor their members' communications with the media and so are unable to comment on this aspect of the Concordat.

Signatories are recommended to include information about the animal research they carry out, fund, or support in other forms of communication such as annual reports and official documents, public-facing leaflets and brochures, and magazines and posters. Animal research details are now included in annual reports by 33 signatories (increased from 28 in 2020), but only nine signatories reported that they communicate about animal research in leaflets and brochures (from 27 in 2020), reflecting the reduction in printed communication during the reporting period. Signatories have also included animal research in annual reviews, public newsletters, policy papers and on social media.





was a key topic



Concordat signatories come from a wide range of organisations, and not all are public facing or regularly involved with the press. This affects the nature of their work on openness as they are more likely to engage in proactive communications through, for example, expert panels and briefing sessions.

For example, commercial organisations and smaller, not-for-profit organisations rarely issue media releases about their animal work but have established communication channels with stakeholders and policy makers where they often lead on communications around the 3Rs and publication standards.

2.3 & 2.4 Support for media and public engagement on animal research

"This last year has been an ideal opportunity to demonstrate the value of animal studies in developing safe vaccines against COVID. We have partnered with NC3Rs on promoting best practice and we have featured in publications by NC3Rs." – NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION

Signatories are continuing to support the development of media-trained champions who can respond to stories about the use of animals in research on behalf of their organisation. UAR provides media training to its member organisations (although it has not been possible to deliver this hands-on training during the pandemic), and many use alternative providers or provide in-house media training. Fifty-three signatories reported that they provide media training for staff and/or members who wish to engage with the media on animal research, which is a substantial decrease from 75 signatories last year. Many of the non-research signatories provide this in the form of general media training rather than specific training around animal research. Some organisations, particularly learned societies, indicated that they are unlikely to work directly with media. Notably, for many organisations there have been fewer opportunities for either media engagement or media training during the pandemic, and several organisations have reported difficulties engaging the media on animal-research stories.



"We are finding that the majority of news outlets are focused on the pandemic and the bar for what makes a 'news' story is considerably higher. In our experience, news reporters are predominantly interested in research involving human subjects, as it is considered to be at a more advanced stage." – UNIVERSITY

Some organisations have seen real challenges to their communications brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic which has raised the profile of animal research with the public, giving rise to greater awareness but also to protest. Some organisations have found themselves facing greatly changed attitudes and situations with regard to their work, including some new challenges.

"Over the past year, the Institute has been at the centre of multiple conspiracy theories surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic [...] We have prepared media statements if media attend or contact us as a result of the protests. We continue to be open and transparent around the use of animals in research in our news stories, press releases, dealing with the media and in our public engagement activities." – RESEARCH INSTITUTE

In addition to media training, guidance or support to help staff or students deliver public engagement events about the use of animal research is recommended. Signatories use a mixture of in-house communications support, coaching by staff with communications experience and UAR's public engagement training. These training programmes were extremely limited in 2020, but during 2021 more training programmes have been running, with an emphasis on online engagement increasing accessibility.

Po you provide media training for staff who wish to engage with the media on animal research? Research signatories Non-research signatories 11 No Research signatories Non-research signatories Non-research signatories 35

2.5 & 2.6 Good practice in publication guidelines

"The interim Vice Principal for Research looks at all papers academics submit to our publications approval system and looks specifically at how they describe the animals they use in research. If there is insufficient detail this will be queried with the authors prior to submission." – UNIVERSITY

It is recommended practice that signatories require good publication standards and a checking process to make sure said standards are adhered to. While not all signatories enforce adherence to the ARRIVE guidelines⁴, 78 signatories stated that they endorse and actively encourage staff to meet them. These signatories include organisations that carry out their own research and members that are involved in research practice. In 2020 signatories also mentioned their work in following the PREPARE⁵ guidelines, and this year signatories were expressly asked whether they work to these. The requirement that ARRIVE guidelines are met is often viewed as an issue for the journals, who can specify them as part of the publication process, but the Concordat recommends that research organisations, and those whose members are researchers, take steps to ensure that ARRIVE is recognised and employed by those who use animals in research, to support transparency around their research practices.

Several commercial organisations employ their own standards based on ARRIVE, and these are required for all published work. PREPARE guidelines are not publication standards, but provide a framework for ensuring experimental design and data collection that supports ARRIVE.





Do you require that PREPARE guidelines are met for the research that your organisation carries out?



Signatories are also encouraged to communicate their 3Rs work to the media and the public. Signatories reported that they include information for the 3Rs on their websites (81), other organisational publications such as leaflets, reports, and magazines (41), and media releases (26). Support for the 3Rs and welfare in the sector is also on the increase with 39 signatories reporting that they host 3Rs discussions and prize-giving events.

⁴ www.nc3rs.org.uk/arrive-guidelines

⁵ norecopa.no/prepare



Commitment 3:

We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to learn about animal research

"Many of our face-to-face events where we engage with volunteers have been cancelled due to COVID-19. These research-focused sessions would have covered our use of animals in research and would have been opportunities to engage with the public on this issue." – RESEARCH CHARITY

3.1 Co-operative working to provide explanations of animal use in research

"The NVS gives tours and presentations to 5th year Vet students and Engineering students, from ours and other universities." – UNIVERSITY

Signatories were asked to provide examples of when they had collaborated with other organisations to provide information about the use of animals in research. Fewer examples were provided than in previous years, as expected given the restrictions on events, but 26 examples of collaborative work were shared, including presentations to other organisations and invitations to join AWERB meetings, supported and made more accessible by the move to online events and meetings.

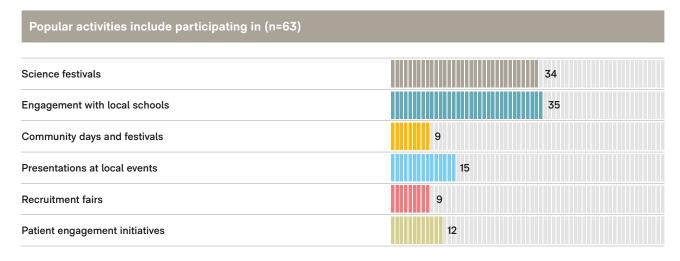
Social media is increasingly used to engage public audiences, and the restrictions on engagement activities have driven the use of online and social media, with the number of signatories using Twitter, Instagram and Reddit to talk about their animal research continuing to increase.

3.2 Activities that encourage public engagement with the issues of animals in scientific, medical and veterinary research

"Due to the pandemic there have been restrictions on public engagement activities that have been possible regarding animal research." – UNIVERSITY

Signatories are continuously developing innovative ways to talk about animal research with the public and develop new ways of engaging each year. This aspect of openness brings the research to life, but has been greatly restricted through the pandemic. During 2021 organisations have adapted to the new circumstances and we have seen schools open again, as well as new opportunities for online engagement. All areas of public engagement have, however, been significantly impacted by restrictions on events, with numbers of signatories participating in particular activities lower than in previous years.

Many of the smaller non-research signatories do not directly develop public engagement activities, but encourage their members to become STEM Ambassadors, allowing them to be part of an active outreach network.



Many signatories support openness around animal research through schools engagement, which is valuable for bringing young people into the sector as well as for raising awareness of animal research, animal welfare and the importance of humane research practices.

Many of the signatories that carry out animal research reported that their usual schools'

engagement was impossible during the pandemic and that they are hoping their programmes will restart soon.



No



Pes: through UAR Research signatory Non-research signatory Research signatory Non-research signatory Non-research signatory Non-research signatory Research signatory One-research signatory Non-research signatory Non-research signatory One-research signatory

Research signatory

Non-research signatory

When possible, signatories that carry out research are recommended to allow public access to animal facilities, so that visitors can see what is involved in the research and how animals are cared for. No signatories are required to do this under the Concordat, but it remains one of the best and most effective ways to provide members of the public with opportunities to learn about animal research. In previous years signatories have provided access to groups including politicians, special interest groups such as patients, and students. During the pandemic there have been few opportunities to invite visitors into facilities, although increasing numbers of organisations now offer virtual tours.

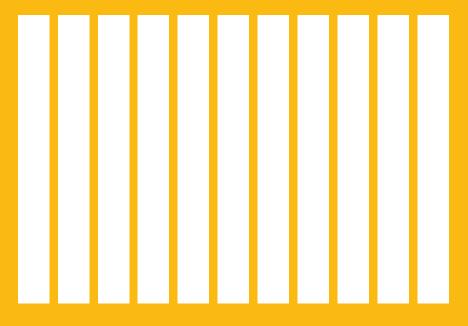
"In the past we have supported veterinary or biomedical work experience requests and also provided training to other establishments in best practices, including the provision of tours of our establishment to promote animal housing and enrichment. We have been unable to do this in the last year due to the pandemic but will start these again when rules allow." – NOT-FOR-PROFIT ORGANISATION

Part



Openness case studies

Submitted April 2020 - March 2021





Introduction

The Leaders in Openness standard recognises a structured and embedded culture of openness, which communicates effectively to colleagues within, and the public beyond, the life-sciences sector. Leaders in Openness are those signatories that provide clear, transparent and relevant information to people from a range of backgrounds and ethical views.

This initiative was launched in 2019 to recognise those organisations that consistently meet stretch goals and implement the recommendations of the Concordat. The assessment process looks at complex areas such as the balance of information about harms and benefits in detail, and the initiative supports all signatories by providing clear examples of embedded good practice from a range of organisations. Candidates' public-facing communications are reviewed by public and peers against criteria for current good practice in openness around media communications, staff engagement, website development and public engagement. Full details of this initiative, including the criteria and assessment process, are available on the Concordat on Openness website⁶.

Leaders in Openness are presented annually and, once awarded, they are held by an organisation for three years. The first 13 Leaders in Openness were announced in 2019. In 2020 the University of Edinburgh became a Leader in Openness, and in 2021 they were joined by the University of Reading.

Here, we offer selected case studies of excellence to share good practice implemented by the Leaders in Openness.



Leaders in Openness 2021

Agenda Life Sciences
The Babraham Institute
The Francis Crick Institute
Imperial College London
The Institute of Cancer Research
Motor Neurone Disease Association
Newcastle University
The Pirbright Institute
Royal Veterinary College
University of Bath
University of Cambridge
University of Edinburgh
University of Leicester
University of Manchester
University of Reading

 $^{^{\}rm 6}\ concordatopenness.org.uk/leaders-in-openness$

University of Cambridge

Website

www.cam.ac.uk/animalresearch www.ubs.admin.cam.ac.uk

The University of Cambridge website is exemplary, and while many excellent and innovative websites about animal research have now been developed by signatories to the Concordat on Openness, it is still considered by many to be the gold standard.

Online presence is central to University of Cambridge communication about the use of animals in research. The University was an early adopter of a proactive, open approach and in 2014 launched a dedicated section of its public website, which provides substantial information about its animal research.

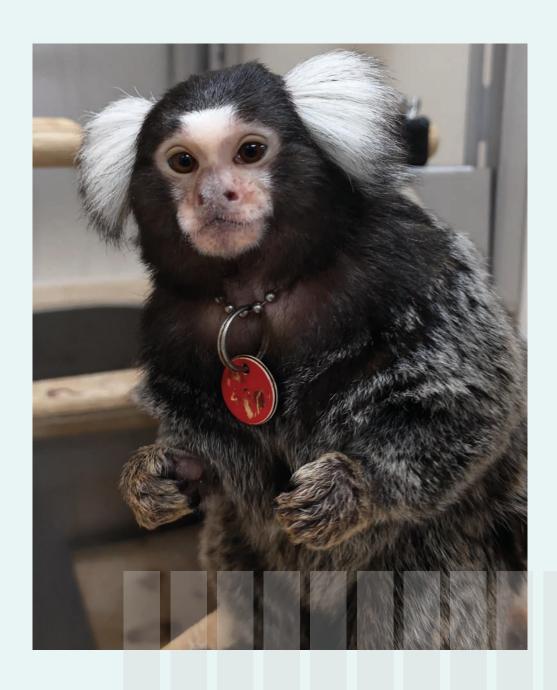
The University's webpages are easy to find, located under 'research' and clearly visible on the menu system of the main website, ensuring that visitors to the University of Cambridge website are aware that research at Cambridge includes work on animals. The webpages go far beyond communicating the University's policies on animal research and animal welfare. They include detailed information about the different species being used, harms, limitations and benefits, numbers of procedures over several years, use of particular species, and case studies. More recently, severity data and additional non-regulated animal use data have also been made publicly available through the website, and Cambridge has continually reviewed its pages to push the boundaries of what is considered appropriate to share with the public.

Their 'Latest animal research news' feed pulls together every piece of public content – press releases, features and video – based on research involving animals, explaining clearly which animal models were used in research projects, and why.

The Cambridge website features two award-winning films that explore the use of animals in helping researchers understand and fight cancer and OCD. These videos explain why animal models are vital to progress, discuss animal welfare – including showing inside facilities – and demonstrate the principles of the 3Rs. Deliberate decisions were taken to be frank about how animals are used, for example showing mice with visible tumours and cannulated marmosets. The website also allows public comments under these films on the University's social media sites, to encourage discussion. The first of the films attracted positive media coverage and led to both local and national BBC coverage, including access to the Cambridge animal facilities.

The University Biomedical Services webpages, though oriented towards staff, have been made public to support openness. These include redacted minutes from the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB) and the Non-Technical Summaries for granted project licences active at the University. This content is linked to from the main University site.





University of Reading

Media engagement

The University of Reading has sought to lead by example in its engagement with media around animal research. It is committed to regular engagement with local and national media about research involving animals, proactive communication of its statistics on animal research procedures, and media campaigns to actively lead public discussions about using animals in research.

In the past two years, the University has won Understanding Animal Research awards for its campaigns and media activity. In 2019, its campaign to name a baby llama was timed to coincide with the Conservative leadership election, prompting discussions about the use of llamas for vital antibody research (www.reading.ac.uk/internal/staffportal/news/articles/spsn-832596.aspx). In 2020 another llama was at the forefront of a media campaign about nanobody research for COVID-19 treatments (www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/releases/PR852292.aspx) and received national and international coverage including BBC News Online.

University of Reading campaigns have blended traditional and digital media opportunities to reach a wide audience, and its campaign posts about llamas, which are among the highest performing posts on social media, can be viewed at the following links:

www.facebook.com/the university of reading/posts/were-running-a-poll-to-name-our-new-baby-llama-yes-we-have-a-baby-llama-vote-tod/2034212490018868

www.facebook.com/theuniversityofreading/posts/2778734332233343

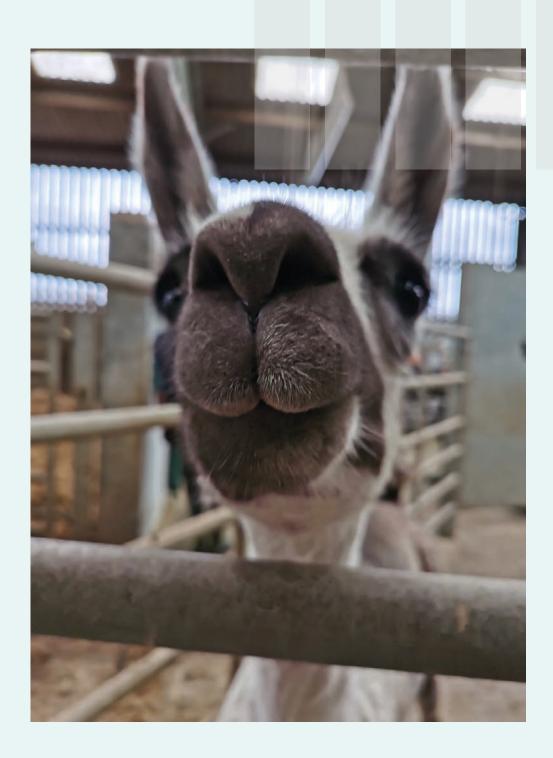
www.facebook.com/watch/?v=279991066721721

Reading's approach to social media engagement with animal research has been developed to work for the University's key audiences, while retaining critical elements of scientific accuracy and informative content. The campaigns are designed to be bold and engaging, with a human-centred rather than corporate tone.

As well as proactive campaigns, the University of Reading was an early adopter of labelling press releases and news stories to make it clear to journalists and the public when published research has involved animals (www.sciencemediacentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/AMS-press-release-labelling-system-GUIDANCE.pdf.) This press labelling system is now adopted for all news stories and press releases in health and life sciences at University of Reading. In line with best practice, news stories also include information in the body of the release where animal models were used.

Reading welcomes requests from journalists to the University and resulting pieces have included a BBC Countryfile (www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b3jyf2) section on new technology and smart machinery , BBC News channel (www.reading.ac.uk/news-and-events/releases/PR806131.aspx), Al Jazeera and a regional BBC TV visit to their Centre for Dairy Research to film cows and llamas used in research.





University of Bath

Internal engagement

In meeting its Concordat commitments, the University of Bath identified the need to engage its own staff and students as central to its strategy. This need became particularly evident when the Animal Justice Project (AJP) targeted campaigns at University open days in 2015 and 2016. All staff who would be meeting visitors at the open day were briefed about Bath's animal research so that they could answer any questions that arose. The AJP launched its Lifeline Campaign at the open day in September 2018, and the University gave permission for a demonstration on campus in a prominent spot. This more-open approach contrasted with previous years when AJP campaigners demonstrated at the University gates.

At the University of Bath, animal research has always been a component of taught courses within the Faculty of Science. For example, taught undergraduate courses include the ethics of animal research and the Concordat on Openness. To engage with students, beyond biomedical students, the University of Bath has worked with its Students' Union (SU). SU Officers have toured the animal facility and commented that this was a valuable experience as they were occasionally asked questions about animal research and had little idea how best to respond. They suggested that the event should be held annually. The student magazine ran two articles in the October 2018 edition in response to the AJP Lifeline Campaign, posting interviews on animal research with a spokesperson for the AJP and for the University.

Most animal researchers within the University of Bath are engaged with the aims of the Concordat on Openness, and several researchers have their own laboratory websites or blogs. However, to help ensure that all animal researchers at Bath are aware of the Concordat and the University's approach to meeting commitments on openness, all staff and students, both academic and technical, who are engaged in animal research are invited to join the Animal Users' Forum (AUF). The Openness Concordat is a standing item on the agenda for AUF meetings so that researchers can discuss any developments or queries they may have about openness.

To engage staff across campus, the University of Bath has developed a programme working with University structures. Departmental Research Ethics Officers (DREOs) have been asked to be 'ambassadors' in every department, providing accurate information about how and why animal research is conducted at the University. Dr Sarah Bailey (as Chair of the Animal Users Forum) facilitated this process, giving a short presentation on the Concordat and animal research at Bath to the University Ethics Committee. The presentation was followed by a tour of the animal facility, which was well received as informative and relevant by the Committee members. The success of this session has led to further engagement through talks and facility tours for ethics officers and for administrative staff, with feedback showing that staff felt better informed about the necessity of animals in research.

This is an ongoing activity and will continue to evolve and to be refreshed with support from students and staff as well as senior management and the communications team of the University.

Bath Time is the official student newspaper of the University of Bath and has published articles on animal research in collaboration with animal researchers; **Animal Justice Project** 'Lifeline Campaign' members on campus at the University of Bath **Open Day September** 2018; examples of news articles from the animal research webpages that are external facing and also serve as an internal repository for all staff in relation to policies and news on animal research.





Why science is being more open about animals in research

Turning them on, turning them off – how to control stem cells



Showing the public the high welfare standards research animals receive will build trust in scientists, says Dr Sarah Bailey, Chair of the Animal Research Forum.



Scientists at the University of Bath have identified how a mutant gene in fish is involved in controlling stem cells.

Newcastle University

Public engagement

Newcastle University has developed a full programme of engagement and involvement to ensure that stakeholders and the public beyond the University have opportunities to understand the animal research that is undertaken, and why it is important. While Covid has limited what is able to be offered, engagement work remains a priority for the University.

Patients with arthritis under the care of the local NHS Trust were offered the opportunity to learn more about scientific work involving animals that leads to the development of treatments and therapies – sometimes even those that they were receiving. This major patient engagement project was enthusiastically received by participants who were able to question the Chair of the ethics committee, the University's Named Veterinary Surgeon and a research principal investigator. The patients reported that they found the event informative and highlighted how much they had learned about the scientific process of developing treatments.

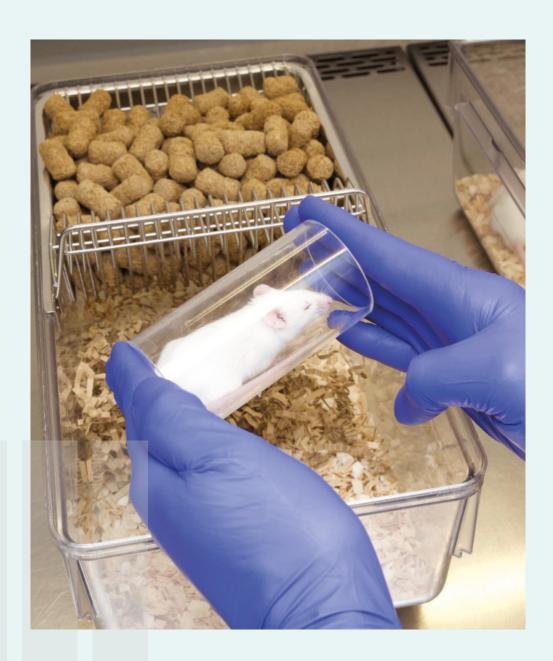
Newcastle hosted its inaugural open day in 2019 for family and friends of those working in the animal facility with presentations on the use of animals, tours of the animal holding rooms and demonstrations of equipment. Staff said that this helped them explain their work and its importance to those closest to them and, as a result, there are plans to expand the event to also include family and friends of research staff.

Vet students are offered clinical and research placements as part of a scheme by the Laboratory Animal Veterinary Association. Visits are available for prospective vet students, animal science, and biomedical science students, when they can be accommodated, and Newcastle has hosted visits from several political stakeholders, providing them with an insight into how and why animals are used in the University's research.

Staff from the University took part in an event to recognise the contribution to science made by animals within the facilities. This event was the first of its kind in the UK, though the value of recognising the contribution of the animals to those who work with them directly has been noted in the research community around the world.

Primarily aimed at animal care technicians, their immediate families and *in vivo* research groups, attendees also included members of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body, colleagues who were not scientists or animal technologists and a representative from UAR. Warmly welcomed by those who took part as a chance to reflect on the work and achievements, plans are being developed to repeat this event.





Part

Concordat administration





Evaluation of management processes

"We would be interested to hear how other membership/Fellowship organisations are using the Concordat. The focus is (rightly) on organisations that fund or undertake research, but there may be areas where different support by different types of organisations could further promote the aims of the Concordat." – LEARNED SOCIETY

UAR actively manages the Concordat and asks for feedback from signatories on the support they have been given over the year.

Signatories reported that they are happy with the Concordat, find it valuable, and feel that it is enabling change in their organisations. The reporting process is seen as useful, and signatories prefer the shorter form for returns, although some non-research signatories still feel that the



reporting process does not fully reflect the scope of animal research, and focuses on the use of experimental models in research institutions. The Concordat on Openness aims to be inclusive and to represent the range of organisations that fall within its scope. The reporting serves as a reminder of what other organisations are doing, but also provides opportunity for comment by organisations that do things differently.

During the pandemic, it has not been possible for signatories to meet to learn from one another and discuss ways forward. During 2021 the first virtual Concordat signatories' event was held, providing a space for discussions and presentations from recent Leaders in Openness. We look forward to a return to face-to-face meetings, and a greater opportunity to support signatories on their journeys.

Because of their particular difficulties around media communications, it can be difficult for commercial organisations to gain recognition, for example as Leaders in Openness, and it will be important to ensure that in future years the process is achievable by all signatories that are demonstrating best practice for their type of organisation.

One signatory suggested greater delineation between research and non-research organisations, so that is clear that the expectations and requirements are different.

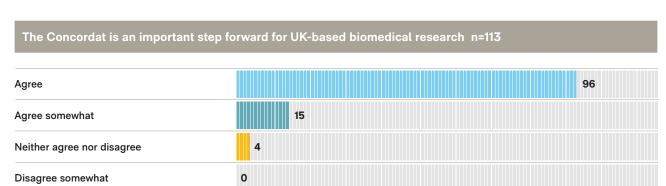
Concordat signatories agreed (76%) or somewhat agreed (19%) that they understand the Concordat commitments and the support available to help fulfil them. Only 5% (six signatories) did not agree.

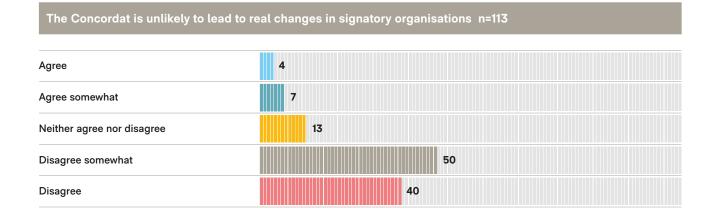
Similarly, 83% of signatories saw the Concordat as an important step forward for biomedical research, while 13% qualified their agreement as 'somewhat', and 3% neither agreed nor disagreed.

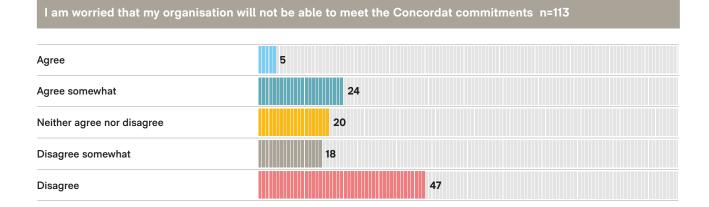
Disagree

Only 10% of signatories were unconvinced that the Concordat would lead to real changes in their organisations, which is consistent with 2020, but lower than in earlier years. For some organisations internal and structural difficulties can make implementing the Concordat challenging, and small, sector-focused organisations whose work is not public facing can feel less involved with openness, although they are supportive.

0









Most signatories (81%) found the Concordat communications helpful. The newsletter and stand-alone website were seen as particularly useful, providing clear examples that others could follow.

Most signatories (91%) agreed that they knew how to get help in meeting the Concordat commitments, and most signatories are happy with the support they receive in implementing the Concordat (79% agreed or agreed somewhat).

Concerns about meeting obligations under the Concordat were mixed across a variety of organisations, who gave different reasons, including internal structures, resources, continuing fearfulness of researchers and distance from the research process which can reduce animal research as a priority.

We asked signatories about areas where they would like more support or that they would like to see the Concordat address, and the following themes emerged:

- Talking about non-lab-based (behavioural, ecological, agricultural) work with the public
- Organisations are keen for meetings and presentations on openness to staff again as soon as this is possible
- Specific support around openness for charities and learned societies
- Some organisations would like to do more but have difficulties with resources or eliciting the support of key staff, which continue to create barriers to openness
- Developing joint communications initiatives that aim to reach the national media





Appendix

Concordat signatory online statements about the use of animals in research

Research organisations

Aberystwyth University	www.aber.ac.uk/en/rbi/staff-students/ethics/animals/#statement-on-use-of-animals
Agenda Life Sciences	www.agendalifesciences.com/animal-research-position
Alzheimer's Research UK	www.alzheimersresearchuk.org/about-us/our-influence/policy-work/position-statements/animal-research
Animal and Plant Health Agency	www.gov.uk/government/organisations/animal-and-plant-health-agency/about/research#ethics-committee
Asthma UK	www.asthma.org.uk/research/strategy/ethics
Aston University	www.aston.ac.uk/research/research-strategy-and-policy
AstraZeneca	www.astrazeneca.com/sustainability/ethics-and-transparency/animals-in-research.html
Babraham Institute	www.babraham.ac.uk/our-research/animal-research
British Horseracing Authority	www.britishhorseracing.com/regulation/role-of-the-bha-in-horse-welfare
Brunel University London	www.brunel.ac.uk/about/administration/governance-and-university-committees/Animal-Research-at-Brunel
Cardiff University	www.cardiff.ac.uk/research/our-research-environment/integrity-and-ethics/animal-research
Cefas	www.cefas.co.uk/about-us/policies-plans-reports-and-quality/policies/animals-in-science-and-animal-welfare-policy
Charles River Laboratories	www.criver.com/about-us/about-us-overview/animals-research
Durham University	www.dur.ac.uk/animalresearch
Envigo	www.envigo.com/our-work-with-animals
Fera Science	www.fera.co.uk/about-us/standards-and-accreditation
The Francis Crick Institute	www.crick.ac.uk/research/platforms-and-facilities/biological-research-facility/animal-research
GlaxoSmithKline	www.gsk.com/en-gb/research-and-development/our-use-of-animals
Harper Adams University	www.harper-adams.ac.uk/research/concordat-on-openness
Imperial College London	www.imperial.ac.uk/research-and-innovation/about-imperial-research/research-integrity/animal-research
Institute of Cancer Research	www.icr.ac.uk/our-research/about-our-research/animal-research
King's College London	www.kcl.ac.uk/innovation/research/corefacilities/bsu/index
Lapcorp	www.drugdevelopment.labcorp.com/commitment/animal-welfare
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	www.lshtm.ac.uk/research/research-governance-and-integrity/animal-research
Medical Research Council	www.mrc.ukri.org/research/research-involving-animals/why-we-use-animals
Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency	www.nibsc.org/about_us/our_use_of_animals.aspx
Moredun Research Institute	www.moredun.org.uk/research/about-moredun-research-institute
Newcastle University	www.ncl.ac.uk/research/researchgovernance/animal
The Open University	www.open.ac.uk/research/governance/ethics/animal
The Pirbright Institute	www.pirbright.ac.uk/animalresearch
Porton Biopharma	www.portonbiopharma.com/animal-policy
Public Health England	www.gov.uk/government/publications/public-health-england-phe-research-involving-animals
Queen Mary University of London	www.qmul.ac.uk/research/strategy-support-and-guidance/animal-research
Queen's University Belfast	www.qub.ac.uk/sites/AnimalResearch
Robert Gordon University	www.rgu.ac.uk/research/university-research-policies/research-involving-animals
Rothamsted Research	www.rothamsted.ac.uk/sustainable-agriculture-sciences
Royal Veterinary College	www.rvc.ac.uk/research/about/animals-in-research
Sequani	www.sequani.com/Detail.aspx?page=Animal-Welfare

St George's, University of London	www.sgul.ac.uk/about/governance/policies/use-of-animals-in-research
Swansea University	www.swansea.ac.uk/research/research-integrity-ethics-governance/research-ethics
UCB Biopharma	www.ucb.com/our-company/Animal-welfare
UCL	www.ucl.ac.uk/animal-research
UKRI	www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-standards-and-data/good-research-resource-hub/use-of-animals-in research
Ulster University	www.ulster.ac.uk/research/institutes/biomedical-sciences/animals-in-research
University of Aberdeen	www.abdn.ac.uk/staffnet/documents/policy-zone-research-and-knowledge-exchange/University_of_AberdeenStatement_on_Use_of_Animals_in_Research.pdf
University of Bath	www.bath.ac.uk/topics/animal-research
University of Birmingham	www.birmingham.ac.uk/facilities/bmsu
University of Bradford	www.bradford.ac.uk/research/research-integrity/biological-services-unit
University of Brighton	www.brighton.ac.uk/foi/university-information
University of Bristol	www.bristol.ac.uk/animal-research
University of Cambridge	www.cam.ac.uk/research/research-at-cambridge/animal-research
University of Central Lancashire	www.uclan.ac.uk/research/integrity/animals
University of Dundee	www.dundee.ac.uk/research/governance-policy/policyroadmap/statement-on-use-of-animals
University of East Anglia	www.uea.ac.uk/about/university-information/university-policies/animal-research-concordat
University of Edinburgh	www.ed.ac.uk/research/animal-research
University of Exeter	www.exeter.ac.uk/research/about/aboutus/animalsinresearch
University of Glasgow	www.gla.ac.uk/research/strategy/ourpolicies/opennessinanimalresearch
University of Hertfordshire	www.herts.ac.uk/research/research-management/ethics-and-research-integrity/animal-research
University of Leeds	www.leeds.ac.uk/info/5000/about/520/animal_research
University of Leicester	www.le.ac.uk/dbs
University of Liverpool	www.liverpool.ac.uk/research-integrity/animal-research
University of Manchester	www.manchester.ac.uk/research/environment/governance/ethics/animals
University of Nottingham	www.nottingham.ac.uk/animalresearch
University of Oxford	www.ox.ac.uk/news-and-events/animal-research
University of Plymouth	www.plymouth.ac.uk/research/animals
University of Portsmouth	www.port.ac.uk/research/research-culture/research-using-animals
University of Reading	www.reading.ac.uk/research/animal-research
University of Sheffield	www.sheffield.ac.uk/rs/ethicsandintegrity/animal-research
University of Southampton	www.southampton.ac.uk/awerb
University of St Andrews	www.st-andrews.ac.uk/research/integrity-ethics/animals
University of Stirling	www.stir.ac.uk/research/research-ethics-and-integrity/animal-research-at-the-university-of-stirling
University of Strathclyde	www.strath.ac.uk/science/biomedicalresearchatstrathclyde
University of Surrey	www.surrey.ac.uk/school-biosciences-medicine/biomedical-research-facility/animals
University of Sussex	www.sussex.ac.uk/research/about/standards/research-procedures-involving-animals
University of York	www.york.ac.uk/research/animal-research
Wellcome Sanger Institute	www.sanger.ac.uk/about/who-we-are/research-policies/animals-in-research
Wickham Laboratories	www.wickhamlabs.co.uk/animal-welfare



Concordat signatory online statements about the use of animals in research

Non-research organisations

Academy of Medical Sciences	www.acmedsci.ac.uk/policy/uk-policy/animals-in-research
Anatomical Society	www.anatsoc.org.uk/research/animals-in-research-policy-statement
Animal Technician Development Programme	www.s3science.com/about/animal-research-why
Association of Medical Research Charities	www.amrc.org.uk/position-statement-on-the-use-of-animals-in-research
Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry	www.abpi.org.uk/medicine-discovery/new-medicines-data/research-using-animals
BBSRC	www.ukri.org/councils/bbsrc/guidance-for-applicants/animal-use-in-research
Biochemical Society	www.biochemistry.org/home/science-policy/policy-position-statements
BioIndustry Association	www.bioindustry.org/policy/pre-clinical-and-clinical-research/animal-research
Blood Cancer UK	www.bloodcancer.org.uk/research/animals
British Association for Psychopharmacology	www.bap.org.uk/position_statement
British Heart Foundation	www.bhf.org.uk/what-we-do/our-policies/animals-in-research
British Neuroscience Association	www.bna.org.uk/about/policies/#animal-research-policy
British Psychological Society	www.bps.ac.uk/education-engagement/animal-research
British Society for Immunology	www.immunology.org/policy-and-public-affairs/briefings-and-position-statements
British Toxicology Society	www.thebts.org/news/animal-research-the-british-toxicology-societys-position
Cancer Research UK	www.cancerresearchuk.org/our-research/involving-animals-in-research
Children with Cancer UK	www.childrenwithcancer.org.uk/childhood-cancer-info/we-fund-research/research-faq
Compass Pathways	www.compasspathways.com/our-research/animal-welfare
Cystic Fibrosis Trust	www.cysticfibrosis.org.uk/the-work-we-do/research/animal-testing
EPSRC	www.epsrc.ukri.org/about/standards/animalresearchpolicy
Eurogentec	www.eurogentec.com/en/animal-facilities
Humanimal Trust	www.humanimaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/research/our-stance-animal-testing
Institute of Animal Technology	www.iat.org.uk
Kidscan Children's Cancer Research	www.kidscan.org.uk/position-animal-testing
Laboratory Animal Breeders Association	www.laba-uk.com/site/?page_id=95
Laboratory Animal Science Association	www.lasa.co.uk
Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association	www.lava.uk.net/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=26
Leukaemia UK	www.leukaemiauk.org.uk/Pages/Category/research-strategy
Medical Schools Council	www.vetschoolscouncil.ac.uk/concordat-on-openness-on-animal-research
Microbiology Society	www.microbiologysociety.org/publication/position-statement/2015-use-of-animals-in-research.html
MND Association	www.mndassociation.org/research/about-mnd-research/animal-research
MS Society	www.mssociety.org.uk/research/latest-research/animal-research
NC3Rs	www.nc3rs.org.uk/who-we-are-and-what-we-do
NERC	www.nerc.ukri.org/about/policy/animals-in-research
Ovarian Cancer Action	www.ovarian.org.uk/our-research/animals-research
Pancreatic Cancer UK	www.pancreaticcancer.org.uk/for-researchers/other-research-policies
Parkinson's UK	www.parkinsons.org.uk/about-us/animal-research-and-parkinsons
Pfizer	www.pfizer.co.uk/animal-welfare
The Physiological Society	www.physoc.org/animals-research
PTEN Research	www.ptenresearch.org/for-families-living-with-phts/our-research/use-of-animals-in-research

The Royal Society	www.royalsociety.org/topics-policy/publications/2015/animals-in-research
Royal Society of Biology	www.rsb.org.uk/policy/policy-issues/biomedical-sciences/animal-research
Society for Endocrinology	www.endocrinology.org/media/1643/14-11_animalresearch.pdf
Society for Experimental Biology	www.sebiology.org/animal-biology/animal-welfare-code
Understanding Animal Research	www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/about-us/uar-position-on-the-use-of-animals-in-research
Universities UK	www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/research-policy
Versus Arthritis	www.versusarthritis.org/research/information-for-researchers/our-approach-to-research/our-research-policies
Veterinary Schools Council	www.vetschoolscouncil.ac.uk/concordat-on-openness-on-animal-research
Wellcome	www.wellcome.ac.uk/what-we-do/our-work/our-policy-work-animal-research
Wings for Life	www.wingsforlife.com/en/research-policy

Photo Credits

Page 2, 3, 6, 7, 13: The Pirbright Institute Page 16: University of Reading Page 21, 23, 28: The Pirbright Institute Page 36: University of Leicester Page 41: University of Cambridge Page 43: University of Reading Page 45: University of Bath Page 47: University of Newcastle Page 49: The Institute of Cancer Research Page 51: University of Leicester



































































































































































































































































Understanding Animal Research Abbey House 74-76 St John Street London EC1M 4DZ

www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk 020 3675 1230 office@uar.org.uk

ISSN 2754-4702

