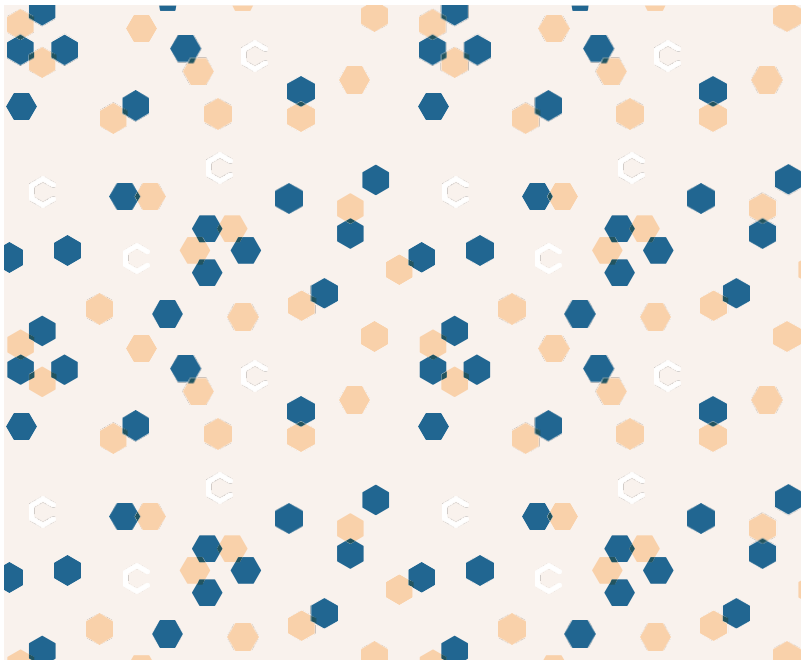




# COMPEER

Concordat on  
Mitigating COVID-19  
Pandemic Effects on  
Research





# Concordat on Mitigating COVID-19 Pandemic Effects on Research (COMPEER)

The global COVID-19 pandemic is having profound impacts whose nature and effects are still difficult to fully assess. While science plays an ever-increasing role and is perceived as an avenue to improve the human condition and provide a way out of this crisis, the whole scientific community is facing unprecedented hurdles.

Restricted travel, suspended fieldwork and laboratory work, closed libraries and archives, interrupted semesters, postponed or canceled conferences, hindered peer-review processes— the research ecosystem has been turned upside down. The COVID-19 pandemic has created a global climate of vulnerability that we must address collectively to ensure a smoother return to a new normal. Even small disruptions can have big impacts on the activities of the next generation of researchers (NGR), as the crisis is threatening to cause significant delays to the completion of projects, to graduation and to hiring. Major steps must be taken quickly to prevent overly burdensome consequences from affecting research capacity in the short and medium terms, which may greatly impede scientific advancement.

In a context in which the entire ecosystem has been hobbled and where scientific progress and success are measured by individual merits and contributions, there is an urgent need to take coherent and inclusive measures to assess the extent of the COVID19 aftermath and to support the NGR.

This Concordat seeks to mobilize and unite funding agencies, governments, academic and research institutions, researchers, publishers and other parties in (re) appraising how scientific research outputs are assessed in the context of education, graduation, funding, and hiring and promotion decisions. As its name, COMPEER, suggests, the goal is to ensure that individuals are fairly recognized for their merits and that the crisis does not create undue divisions and inequity between people, and that everyone is engaged in enhancing the academic experience for all and conducting research in a more sustainable, responsible and impactful way.

A number of themes run through the following recommendations:

- the need to recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has stalled most research
- the need to recognize the differential effects of COVID-19 according to disciplines, institutions, research topics, jurisdictions and career stages and aspirations
- the need to consider the specific effects of COVID-19 on individuals and, consequently, to adopt attitudes and actions that support the next generation of researchers
- the need to take this window of opportunity to reflect on enhanced practices for evaluating and conducting research in an inclusive, equitable and proactive manner

We advise that COMPEER be stringently applied for 5 years (2020–2025) to mitigate the knock-on and long-term effects of the crisis.

We recommend that its provisions subsequently be applied under any major circumstances with significant and global disruptive impacts on the research ecosystem.

We invite interested organizations, governments and stakeholders across all scientific disciplines to show their support by adding their names to this Concordat.





## General recommendation

- 1 Actively commit, in collaboration with stakeholders in the research ecosystem, to mitigate impacts and put in place exceptional measures to assess an individual's scientific contributions in the context of graduation, funding, and hiring and promotion decisions.

## For research funders and governments

- 2 Strive to maintain and, whenever possible, increase pre-pandemic funding levels amid the current financial pressure on government and organization budgets.
- 3 Recognize the possible disparities that could appear between candidates in terms of productivity and access to opportunities and the existing gaps (e.g., between disciplines, institutions, research topics, jurisdictions and career advancement) that may widen in times of pandemic and containment.
- 4 Support the Global South research capacity, and coordinate actions with major international organizations to ensure that researchers in these countries do not bear greater COVID-19-specific burdens.
- 5 Allow candidates in research funding and scholarship competitions to describe the impact of COVID-19 on their academic records and the progress of their work and career advancement.
- 6 Establish and disseminate specific instructions to evaluation committees on the consideration of exceptional situations that could affect the career advancement of the next generation of researchers and on the interpretation of evaluation grids in the era of COVID-19.
- 7 Provide guidelines to all new researchers so that they can clearly demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 on their productivity and research activities in their funding applications.
- 8 Reward those who invested in addressing COVID-19 and recognize that not all researchers can meaningfully contribute—hence the need to sustain non-COVID-19-specific funding.
- 9 Involve and provide meaningful opportunities to the next generation of researchers to contribute to science-policy dialogue, research governance and science diplomacy as well as to foster capacity development for solving major societal challenges.



## For academic and research institutions

- 10 Recognize the stress and anxiety that the pandemic has caused and offer long-term psychological counselling as well as, whenever possible, emergency financial support for mitigating the crisis' consequences.
- 11 Ensure that the disruption of institutions' activities has a minimal impact on the next generation of researchers and that it does not translate into undue consequences, e.g., non-recognition of the potential delay of research projects and graduation.
- 12 Be understanding, when assessing applications for hiring, tenure, and promotion decisions, of the impacts of COVID-19, especially for the next generation of researchers, and the implications of postponed or canceled funding and hiring competitions, travel restrictions, and the inability to offer and/or accept an interview or a new position abroad.
- 13 Provide guidelines to all new researchers/candidates so that they can clearly demonstrate the impact of COVID-19 on their productivity and research activities in their job, funding and promotion applications.
- 14 Promote the use of a broad range of impact measures, especially narrative and qualitative indicators of research impact, for the purposes of post-pandemic research assessment.
- 15 Provide clear guidance and best practices on how the impacts of COVID19 should be presented in CVs and applications.
- 16 Take advantage of the current situation to revamp and enhance academic training.
- 17 Train and involve the next generation of researchers as early as possible to the mechanisms underlying science-policy dialogue, research governance and science diplomacy to help capacity building in that field (i.e., by fostering skill development, such as policy analysis and program evaluation; understanding of the policy development process; leadership, mentorship and collaboration; interdisciplinary work; and knowledge mobilization to a variety of audiences).



## For Scientific Associations and Conference Organizers

- 18 Recognize the impacts of COVID-19 on networking opportunities for the next generation of researchers and their knowledge mobilization, and take actions over the coming years to reduce the impact of the pandemic in terms of loss of opportunities.

- 19 Actively involve the next generation of researchers in the creation and organization of events and initiatives so that they respond to their needs and foster meaningful networking and (inter)national collaboration.
- 20 Ensure equity, diversity and inclusion in contributing to, presenting at and organizing these events by broadly involving the next generation of researchers (e.g., in organizing committee, in inviting them as keynote speakers, in rewarding unsung heroes, in giving voice to less dominant perspective).
- 21 Encourage remote conferences and networking activities to respond to the current situation and take this opportunity to make future scientific conferences more environmentally friendly.
- 22 Take the advantage of the current situation to encourage open science and public engagement all around the world.



### For publishers

- 23 Ensure fairness in evaluation and publication processes so that the whole system of scientific knowledge dissemination is supported while research is slowed down.
- 24 Greatly reduce emphasis on metrics and scientometric indexes that may unduly maintain a long-term record of the impacts of COVID-19 on researchers' inputs and productivity.
- 25 While there is a critical need for evidence and a need to facilitate research dissemination of insights on COVID-19, remain careful to publish only quality research and avoid exploiting the current situation.
- 26 Take advantage of the current international cooperation in a time of crisis to accelerate the open science movement.



### For research ethics boards

- 27 Proactively accompany and support the next generation of researchers whose projects involve human participants, living organisms, animals and plants, and for whom research protocols are largely disrupted due to the crisis.
- 28 Develop ethical guidance for providing a framework for the responsible conduct of research during major disruptions to the research ecosystem, which would be applicable to future disturbances, transversal to all disciplines and jurisdiction, and pave the way for research sustainability.



### For researchers

- 29 Be supportive and understanding with students, trainees, postdocs and supervised employees, and recognize the impact of the pandemic on their projects and activities.
- 30 When involved in committees making decisions about funding, hiring, tenure or promotion, recognize the specific circumstances faced by the candidates that affected their productivity and output, and recognize the fact that such circumstances may have multi-year knock-on effects.
- 31 Be understanding with those who are in transitional stages of their career, as they may bear an increased burden and the crisis might significantly affect their career trajectories.
- 32 Give greater weight to narratives and demonstrations of the impacts of the crisis than to variations in indicators and proxies in candidates' CVs.
- 33 Recognize the impact, outside of disciplines or research programs, of researchers committed to contributing to the resolution of the pandemic.
- 34 Challenge research assessment practices that do not adequately account for COMPEER insights, and advocate for fair and supportive behaviours that mitigate the effects of the crisis.



### For the next generation of researchers

- 35 Build up your communities and work with your peers to mitigate the impacts of this crisis on research programs and career paths. Be creative. Be supportive.
- 36 Take the time to fully assess the impacts of COVID-19 on your research programs and career paths.
- 37 Present these impacts with integrity, without dramatizing or exaggerating the consequences.
- 38 Actively participate in steering research into a more sustainable, open, careful, fair, responsive, and socially engaged path.



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