



CROS Code of Practice

1. Purposes of CROS

The purposes of CROS (Careers in Research Online Survey) are to:

- Support those working with research staff by making available up-to-date information on the experiences of research staff and by encouraging the sharing of good practice
- Provide information to assist in monitoring the implementation of the Concordat

2. Code of Practice

This Code of Practice outlines how CROS is designed to be used, who has responsibility for and ownership of different elements of it, and how the information generated by CROS is to be made available and used.

3. Who is responsible for CROS?

3.1 The survey

The format, content and questions of the survey have been designed and developed by the long-standing CROS Steering Group, which comprises representatives of major stakeholder groups including institutions. This group will continue to oversee activities related to CROS; its membership will be revised to reflect the range of HEIs involved in CROS 2009.

3.2 The online survey instrument

CROS is hosted on BOS (Bristol Online Survey). The Institute for Learning and Research Technology (ILRT) at Bristol University is responsible for practical aspects of the instrument.

3.3 Running CROS within institutions

The decision on whether, and how often, to use CROS, and its administration within institutions, is the responsibility of the individual institution. Institutions can add their own logos and questions to CROS.

3.4 Reporting on aggregate data

The research and development unit of Vitae, under the direction of the CROS Steering Group, is responsible for producing an annual report based on the aggregate data and working with institutions to share effective practice.

4. Who can use CROS?

Any higher education institution or research institute (HEI) in the UK with a BOS licence can use CROS. Most UK HEIs have BOS licences, but information on registration and costs go to www.survey.bris.ac.uk

5. When will CROS happen?

CROS will be run every year during a three-month season, typically from March to June. Institutions are free to choose how frequently they make use of CROS.

6. How is CROS funded?

The initial work on CROS was funded by HEFCE. Current costs of the technical system are covered by institutional subscriptions to BOS (Bristol Online Survey). Costs of reporting and administration costs for Steering Group meetings are covered by Vitae.



7. Data ownership, access and reporting

7.1 Types of data

- Personal data are anonymous demographic data about the individual, collected on a voluntary basis at the end of the survey
- Quantitative data are the coded responses to questions in the body of the survey
- Free-text information is that entered by the respondent, usually at the end of each section

7.2 Data ownership and safe-keeping

The data belong to the individual institutions that collected them. They will be held by ILRT on behalf of the institutions and ILRT will comply with data protection legislation with regards to standards of safekeeping.

7.3 Access to the data

Institutions will have full access to all their own data and the comparative national aggregate. ILRT and the research and development unit within Vitae, acting on behalf of and under the direction of the CROS Steering Group, will have access to anonymous demographic (age, gender, etc) and quantitative data to enable them to produce an annual report described below. No other body, including the CROS Steering Group, will have access to the data. Institutions using CROS in any year will be told which other institutions are also using CROS that year.

7.4 Analysis of an individual institution's data

Analysis of each institution's data will fall to the institution. BOS provides in-built reporting facilities plus the means to export results to be used within other software packages.

7.5 Analysis of a benchmarking club's data

Institutions are encouraged to join benchmarking clubs to share their data, experiences and effective practice on a confidential basis. Analysis of such clubs' data will be provided on the same basis as in d. above. Dependent on demand CROS may set up some standard benchmarking clubs, eg the Russell Group, 94 Group. The aggregate results of these 'standard' benchmarking clubs may be published in the annual report. Institutions are free to set up their own 'private' benchmarking clubs with other participating institutions: there may be a small cost for doing this through BOS.

7.6 Analysis of aggregate data

The research and development unit within Vitae, under the guidance and control of the CROS Steering Group, will analyse the aggregate personal and quantitative data and produce an annual report. This will not refer to any categories containing fewer than ten responses. The report will not identify individual institutions or their results.

7.7 Identification of good practice

The research and development unit of Vitae will, as part of their analysis and again under the guidance and control of the CROS Steering Group, identify institutions manifesting good or distinctive practice and will invite these institutions to produce case studies to enable their practice to be shared.

8. Data protection and Freedom of Information (Fol)

Data and results from individual institutions, as well as overall data and results, will be stored securely on the ILRT server. Under Data Protection Act 1998 ILRT (University of Bristol) will meet Data Processor requirements. Individual institutions will be Data Controllers.



8.1 Data and results from individual institutions

No body, other than the institution, ILRT or the research and development unit of Vitae, will have access to that institution's data or results, or is permitted to identify or publish those data or results, without the prior consent of the institution. Data from individual institutions will not be released by CROS or its agents to any third party. Any persons making a FoI request to ILRT will be directed to make their requests to individual institutions. Under the Freedom of Information Act, an institution can be asked to share its results, but not the underlying data. CROS, which is not gazetted under the Freedom of Information Act, cannot be required to release data or results from individual institutions.

8.2 Overall data and results

It is a condition of using CROS that the institution allows their personal and quantitative data to be pooled with others, on an anonymous basis, to create the overall dataset, which will be used to create the comparative national aggregate and analysed for the annual report. No body other than the CROS Steering Group is permitted to publish the national aggregate results, or subset of, without prior consent from the CROS Steering Group, which will not be unreasonably withheld.

9. Use of data and results

Any use of CROS data and results will be informed by the following guidelines of best practice:

- 9.1** Each institution is free to use its own data and results for its own purposes.
- 9.2** The use of CROS data and results in public statements, advertisements or promotional activities will be only for the purpose of assisting the public to develop informed judgements, opinions and choices.
- 9.3** CROS data and results will not be used in false, deceptive or misleading ways, either because of what is stated, conveyed or suggested, or because of what is omitted.
- 9.4** Institutions and other users must not knowingly use CROS data and results to undermine the reputation and standing of institutions.
- 9.5** The use of, or referral to, institutions' CROS data and results beyond that which is in the public domain requires the prior consent of the institution(s), and prior consultation to ensure accuracy.
- 9.6** Public comment on any CROS data or results must be supported by appropriate interpretation of the data and results, with any necessary qualifications (such as survey size, response rate, cell size, special local issues) spelled out explicitly.

9.7 Anonymity and confidentiality

The rights of the respondent must be respected and no name or individual identifier will be collected. Free text comments may make individuals identifiable but such information should be treated as strictly confidential and no presentation of the CROS results should allow individuals or small groups to be identified.

9.8 Optimal use of results

The greatest value of CROS data and results is likely to be derived when the data and results are considered over a period of years within an institution.