ORCID as the proposed identifier solution

In 2011, a Researcher ID Task and Finish Group was convened by JISC to analyse the need for identifiers for researchers¹ and to propose a solution for the UK. In their recommendations, the group named the Open Researcher and Contributor Identifier (ORCID) project² as the best available fit to the UK HE sector’s requirements. As part of a wider consultation process, JISC commissioned a study to undertake a broad, sector-wide validation of the group’s recommendations. After reviewing the consultation report, the group has agreed to endorse the following statement:

1) Signatory organisations to the below will join the ORCID Initiative or constructively engage with it.

By engaging with the ORCID initiative, members of the group can ensure that the use cases for UK HE stakeholders are influential in shaping its continuing development.

Therefore, the group advocates engagement with and a representative UK presence within the ORCID initiative.

2) The group recognises the importance of setting out a business case for investment in the next steps.

It should assess the benefits and potential costs of a national scale implementation of ORCID, to the sector as a whole, to universities and colleges and to individual researchers.

While the ORCID approach offers the best available solution to the UK’s identifier needs, a watching brief will need to be maintained to ensure that it remains so. In light of this,

3) A national co-ordination group for the implementation of ORCID should be established

The purpose of this will be to guide the implementation of ORCID in the UK. The co-ordination group will ensure that risks are managed appropriately so that UK researchers, universities and colleges benefit fully from ORCID. It will also assess whether new infrastructure needs to be built to address the risks set out in the consultation report. Since many researchers work outside HE who might benefit from ORCID, the group should include their representatives.

4) The group will delineate the national and institutional systems that the sector will continue to depend on both for administrative functions and canonical data.

¹ “Researchers” include research staff, doctoral candidates and other students who are likely to be named as authors”
² See http://orcid.org/ For clarity, ‘ORCID’ is used here to refer to the identifier system, and ‘ORCID initiative’ to the organisation developing and administering it.
As examples of the kinds of national systems that will need to interoperate with ORCID, the group cite the Research Councils Joint e-Submission (Je-S) system\(^3\), the Higher Education Statistics Agency databases\(^4\), Europe PubMed Central\(^5\) and e-GAP\(^6\) as systems that should be ‘taken for granted’ in the medium term. Similarly, institutional systems such as HR, research information systems and repositories will remain important to universities. Before implementing ORCID, the group will ensure that this list is reasonably complete and development requirements to enable interoperation, such as compatibility with existing standards\(^7\) and potential international partners\(^8\), are understood and supported.

Individuals will move between these systems, as well as between institutions over the course of their education and career. In order for any identifier to achieve the benefits outlined above, it must be able to ‘stick’ to an individual as they make these moves. In light of this, the group sees value in:

5) **Using ORCID to link to HESA student and staff records and other sector specific data for students and staff can ensure that careers and movement between institutions can be tracked.**

Use of a standard identifier across the sector will improve the quality of statistical analysis and information that can be derived from datasets like those held by HESA and other sector-level bodies.

6) **The UK will be best served by coordinated approaches to identifiers for related domains**

For example, both ORCID and ISNI address the author identifier problem. While the ISNI system is serving the library community, it has a much broader scope than ORCID, which is specifically targeted at researchers. However, there is considerable overlap between the two initiatives in terms of aims.

The group therefore acknowledges that it is important that ORCID and ISNI co-ordinate their efforts and find a way for the two systems to work together where appropriate to give a seamless experience to users.

7) **The group values that ORCID will be accessible to all participants in UK research, whatever their contribution or provenance.**

One of the concerns expressed has been around the coverage of any potential scheme or solution. ‘Researchers’ can be defined in a number of ways, and any UK solution must be capable of covering postgraduates and international collaborators as well as those from outside HE, such as industrial partners.

The ‘self-claim’ functionality proposed in ORCID, as well as its international scope, will address this need.

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3 https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/
4 www.hesa.ac.uk/
5 www.europepmc.org
6 https://e-gap.royalsociety.org/
7 Such standards include, for example, the Common European Research Information Format (CERIF).
8 For example the Brazilian Lattes organisation has created a national researcher CV system. http://lattes.cnpq.br/
As ORCID will be accessible to all ‘Researchers’, additional stakeholders will be included in the national co-ordination group set out above.

An identifier is, by its nature, personal information. As such, there are important concerns around privacy, security, data protection and trust to be addressed in implementing such a system. As it stands ORCID operates in accordance with (US) data protection best practice and as such meets the requirements set out below:

8) **Individuals should be able to control whether or what information is made public about them.**

9) **Identifiers should not encode semantic or personal information.**

10) **Data holders should not share more information than they need to and should work within the boundaries of relevant legislation and security controls.**

For example, an institution will have to share some information with the Research Excellence Framework team as part of their submission, or with HESA as part of their return. Unique IDs will enable this process to run more smoothly, but no additional information should be shared beyond that required by each exercise.

The following organisations have endorsed the above statement:

- The Association of Research Managers and Administrators (ARMA)
- Jisc
- The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- Research Councils UK (RCUK)
- The Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA)
- The Wellcome Trust

The members of the Researcher Identifier Task and Finish group are: Geraldine Clement-Stoneham (MRC), Simon Kerridge (ARMA UK), Gerry Lawson (NERC), Peter Tinson (UCISA), Andy Youell (HESA), Kimberly Hackett (HEFCE). At different times they have been joined and supported by staff from Jisc and UKOLN.