

Public Dialogue on Openness in Animal Research Interim Evaluation Report

This interim report provides high-level observations about the delivery of the public dialogue on openness in animal research conducted between April and October 2013, as well as a readout of all participant views on the process overleaf. A full and more detailed Evaluation Report with an additional focus on dialogue impacts will follow, once the following are complete:

- A Review of the Dialogue Report and the draft Concordat, once published
- A brief survey of Concordat members
- A round of interviews to consider impacts of the public dialogue

Overall, the evaluators believe the process was *a credible dialogue that participants really enjoyed*. The evidence for this comes from direct observation (of email traffic¹, Oversight Group meetings, materials review, and 3 public dialogue events) and analysis of participant questionnaires. This will be built upon with the remaining evaluation activities over the coming weeks.

At a high level, the evaluators make three key observations regarding delivery:

Oversight Group. This group was critical to the success and credibility of the dialogue. It was fully bought in to the dialogue from the start, including the dialogue's scope and objectives. The group was functional and attentive, meeting regularly, and understanding of the need to work consensually if the dialogue was to be effective. It was well chaired by UAR, operating consensually rather than UAR 'steering' the work unduly. All members effectively had a veto, although it was never referred to in such terms. Members of the Group participated fully and with great commitment. They also displayed thoughtful sensitivity to their relationships with other group members in order to achieve an agreed dialogue process with agreed materials.

Balance. A huge amount of effort was put into getting the process and materials balanced. This manifested itself in two main ways. Firstly by the delivery contractor's persistent efforts to involve anti-vivisection viewpoints, and their willingness to repeatedly develop materials until everyone on the Oversight Group was happy with them (despite a very tight budget). Secondly, the Oversight Group's close attention to the nature and balance of materials alongside the delivery contractor. Materials - both written and audio-visual - were open about a wide range of views existing, and gave a flavour of what those views were. Participants largely agreed that the information provided was balanced (see Q3 overleaf), and some specifically highlighted the anti-vivisection video as being useful, as it showed a different point of view that was important for the deliberation.

Time. A significant time constraint existed from the start of the public dialogue. This was driven by a public commitment to release the signed Concordat in October 2013, a driver that was understandable but ultimately not particularly helpful. As well as creating extra work and extra tension, it created an unnecessary sense of cynicism towards the dialogue from some parties. The stakeholder workshop for example was organised with less than two weeks' notice, which in turn made some NGOs perhaps understandably feel 'bumped' into the process: from their point of view, what was the rush? Ultimately, the Concordat process was delayed in any case. The learning point here is that public dialogue on a contentious topic takes longer than everybody expects, and that a tight time constraint has real practical downsides and impacts that can't be 'managed away'.

Overleaf we reproduce the compiled analysis from all 48 participant questionnaires.

Rhuari Bennett and Helen Fisher, 3KQ

¹ This includes reading and reviewing nearly 500 emails on the project to date.

UAR Public Dialogue

Aggregated data report and observations from all 3 event locations

Attended: 48 participants
Response rate: 100%



1 What three words would you use to describe your experience of these events?

The 'wordle' below illustrates the words participants used most frequently when answering this question, across both events in all three locations.



			Strongly Disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither	Tend to agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Evaluator's Observations
2	I understand how these public events fit with the wider framework/concordat project		0%	2%	2%	59%	37%	0%	Very good agreement that people understood how the events fit with the wider concordat/framework process. It is noticeable that most of the agreement is tentative and not strong, perhaps implying that the majority of participants did not fully understand the connections between the events and the concordat. This context was provided briefly in both event 1 and event 2. However, it is probably not necessary for participants to understand this context in order to contribute constructively.
3	Overall the information presented was fair and balanced (including the short videos shown)		0%	6%	2%	44%	48%	0%	Very good agreement that the the information was fair and balanced. A few participants felt they wished to see a video of animal research being 'done properly' to create even better balance. Given the contention around achieving balance, this is a real achievement in the compilation of materials between delivery contractor, OG members and wider stakeholder inputs.
4	I could ask questions easily and get appropriate answers		0%	0%	0%	40%	58%	2%	All participants agreed that they could ask questions easily and get appropriate answers (except one who didn't know). This is a solid result given the potential for over-technical responses, or becoming daunted by the complexity of the topic. The RSPCA input was a key element of this and was very well received by all but one participant.

5	I had enough time to discuss the issues		0%	0%	2%	38%	60%	0%	Almost all participants felt they had enough time to discuss the issues, most strongly agreeing. There were a few comments about the possibility of compressing the time and the discussions being a little repetitive at times, but not too many for it to be a real issue: rather something to consider in future workshop designs to try and reduce the potential repetitiveness of the questioning and discussion.
6	I was able to contribute my views and have my say		0%	0%	2%	26%	72%	0%	Almost all participants felt they could contribute their views and have their say, with most strongly agreeing. Key factors contributing to this were the facilitators' style and approachability, as well as the structure and format of the day, combined with relatively low numbers of participants at each event.
7	The facilitation was independent and professional		0%	0%	2%	23%	75%	0%	Almost all participants agreed that the facilitation was independent and professional, with the clear majority strongly agreeing. Indeed, the one person who answered 'neither' was also the person answering the same in Q5 and Q6.
8	I felt comfortable with the presence of observers (those watching but not participating)		0%	0%	0%	23%	75%	2%	All participants except one (who didn't know) said they felt comfortable with the presence of observers. This appears to point towards there not being an issue with observers in public dialogue, as long as numbers are sensible, and they are introduced properly with purpose. However, it would probably not be sensible to draw a firm conclusion on this until the question is tested again in other public dialogues.

9	I am confident that these events will make a difference to openness on animal research		0%	2%	10%	44%	29%	15%	Fairly good agreement that participants were confident that the events would affect openness in animal research. The picture is nuanced though, with a range of levels of confidence. Whilst this is one of the least positive results of the evaluation, it is not altogether unusual or unexpected due to the inability of the participants to have any visibility on impacts or even the route of impact. It puts significant emphasis on the process of translating dialogue outputs to the concordat, as well as perhaps considering how any impacts of the dialogue get fed back to participants.
10	I found the time/energy to do the follow-up work between the two events		0%	2%	0%	33%	63%	2%	Almost everyone found the time/energy to do the followup work between events, most strongly agreeing. Whilst we might expect a little 'optimism' in their responses given they were encouraged strongly and repeatedly to do the homework by the facilitators, it is clear in the data and also in direct observation that homework was done well by the majority of participants. Key factors in the success of this were the way in which the facilitators briefed the task, in conjunction with the homework task sheet being a 'takehome guide'.
11	Overall I am satisfied with the two events I attended		0%	0%	2%	17%	81%	0%	Almost all participants were satisfied with the events overall, most strongly agreeing. In a sense this is the overarching proxy for participant satisfaction and therefore success of delivery from their perspective.
13	Taking part in these events has affected my views on the topic of animal research		0%	2%	4%	26%	68%	0%	94% of participants said the events had affected their views, with most strongly agreeing.

14	I learned something new as a result of taking part		0%	0%	0%	21%	79%	0%	All participants agreed that they had learned something new as a result of taking part, most strongly agreed.
15	I am likely to change something that I do as a result of taking part		2%	9%	9%	43%	26%	13%	Most participants felt that they are likely to change something they do as a result of taking part, but there was a significant spread of other views, including disagreeing or not knowing. The mix of 'agree' and 'disagree' here isn't a concern given the main function of the dialogue is to affect the concordat, not participants actions.
16	I am more convinced of the value of public participation in these sorts of topics		0%	0%	4%	43%	49%	4%	Almost all participants left feeling more convinced of the value of public participation, although much of the agreement was tentative. Although it is impossible to make an evidenced link to Q9, it may reflect the fact that many participants weren't yet fully convinced that the dialogue will affect things significantly.
17	I am more likely to get involved in these kinds of events in future		0%	0%	2%	23%	70%	4%	Almost all participants said they are more likely to get involved in these kinds of events in future.
18	I am more likely to recommend participation of this kind to others		0%	0%	0%	35%	63%	2%	Almost all participants are more likely to recommend participation of this kind to others.

ATTENDEE COMMENTS

12 Please add comments to explain any of your answers, especially ones where you have disagreed:

Overall people said they enjoyed the events, finding them interesting and informative. No single issue was raised frequently: one expressing doubt as to the impact of the research, one suggestion to publish a list of changes to transparency in animal research, and two people saying some of the conversations felt a bit repetitive.

19 If there's one new thing I've learned from the events it's...

A huge range of learning is raised by participants, with very little 'trend' emerging. People cite the factual information they have learned: the nature and scale of testing, the rules in place. People mention learning about the nature of the issue: its complexity, the need to ask questions and have debate in order to build understanding, and there being two sides to the story. Finally, others said that more research is needed, and more transparency is needed within the research.

20 The best aspect of the events was...

On the best aspects of the events, participants frequently cited: the information provided and therefore the learning they got, the debates and discussions with people of different backgrounds and views, the video - in particular being able to see different sides of the issue i.e. explicitly including the BUAV video.

21 The worst aspect of the events was...

Almost half of all participants either actively said they had no 'worst aspect', or chose not to answer this question - from which one might assume they had no particular issue they wished to raise. For the remainder, the worst aspects of the events listed in order of frequency were: watching the video (from BUAV) as it was distressing and shocking and demonstrated bad practice, the unhelpful way in which some people chose to participate in discussions and how some discussions felt repetitive, environmental factors like it being hot, the food, or air conditioning.

22 Any other comments?

No particular observations here: largely positive feedback about having enjoyed the events and how they appreciated how they were run.