U N I V E R S I T Y O F Y O R K

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 25 July 2021

1. Report from the Chair

(a) It was agreed that the regular review of research entities not be conducted for 2020/21, in recognition of the workload faced by staff and the level of change ongoing at the institution. The review would be picked up following approval of the Strategic Plan, which would also allow for a better understanding of the role that schools and entities might play in the University structure.
(b) Professor Panayiotis Ketikidis had agreed to act as the representative of CITY College on URC, attending up to two times a year at least, though likely more often. His involvement with the Committee would be beneficial for the connection between CITY College and the University.

2. Draft submission for the Knowledge Exchange Concordat

The Committee endorsed the draft submission for the Knowledge Exchange Concordat. This following was noted:

(a) The draft, which included a range of long- and short-term actions, would be submitted in July, and comments were welcomed. Feedback from Research England was due in October, with further work and a progress report taking place in 2022. The University would continue work on the areas highlighted in the improvement plan prior to Research England feedback, with the recognition that such work was not driven solely by the KEC.
(b) It was recognised that colleagues were already undertaking KE activities without these being explicitly recognised as KE, and it was important that this was communicated.
(c) The Committee requested that KE material continued to be presented to URC following the re-establishment of UPEC.
(d) The HEIF 5-Year Statement was included for information.

3. Annual Statement on Research Integrity for 2020/21

The Committee approved the Annual Statement on Research Integrity for 2020/21, included elsewhere on the Senate agenda.

4. Implementation Priorities for the York Graduate Research School

The Committee considered a report on implementation priorities for YGRS. The following was noted:

(a) A one-page plan had been developed outlining the vision and mission statement of the work. It was noted that the PGR community was a key driver for the University.
(b) It was clarified that consideration was needed as to how resources might be made available for the implementation of the YGRS Strategy.
(c) It was acknowledged that garnering input from across the institution as part of a full consultation process would be beneficial and necessary.

The Committee approved the further development of the implementation plan and Strategy as outlined in the paper. Further iterations of the Strategy would be presented as relevant.

5. Future Research Assessment Programme and Review of the REF

The Committee considered a report on the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) and the University REF Review, and the following was noted:

(a) Research England were clear that some form of research assessment exercise would take place in the future (FRAP) and that this exercise would award QR. A broader consultation on the future of REF would take place in the autumn.

(b) The internal review of the REF process had shown some positive lessons, as well as highlighting areas in need of development. The Committee recognised that need to develop a system of ongoing preparation for the next assessment exercise without creating a burden.

6. Proposals for the review of promotions criteria

The Committee considered proposals for the review of promotions criteria, and noted that interdisciplinarity was key to the University's Strategic Vision. It was recognised that interdisciplinary work required specific skills, and that these skills should be acknowledged. It was noted, however, that such incentives would potentially have inadvertent consequences, and the Committee emphasised the importance of valuing both disciplinary and interdisciplinary work equally.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would discuss the issue further with appropriate colleagues across the University. Further developments would be brought to the Committee as relevant.

7. Digital Skills and Culture Framework

The Committee considered a report on the University Digital Skills and Culture framework. The following was noted:

(a) Consistency and clarity were needed in the digital tools used by the University, and the tools used should be appropriate to the needs of the community, with room for Department- or office-specific practices to develop.
(b) The biggest potential barrier to effectively implementing digital tools is cultural, and the Committee recommended that some focus be given to training staff and students as to the appropriateness and best uses of platforms.
(c) The University Slack license had been extended to include students.
(d) The benefits, particularly during the pandemic, of digital tools such as Slack was noted.

The Committee endorsed in principle the development of a Digital Skills and Culture framework, but noted that the issues raised during the discussion needed to be incorporated into the documents before full endorsement was possible.

8. Proposals for the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Institute for Mental Health Research

The Committee considered proposals for the establishment of an Interdisciplinary Institute for Mental Health Research. It was clarified that the physical space aspired to as part of the proposal was envisioned as a neutral ground for all contributors, with co-operation across departments being aided by a dedicated space for such interaction. It was noted that funding opportunities would be easier to access with the establishment of an Institute.

Further feedback would be sent to the Research & Innovation Development Manager in Applied Health and Social Care. A business plan would be developed, articulating the ways in which an Institute would further elevate mental health research at York, before seeking approval from UEB.

9. Other Business

(a) The Committee considered a report on funding for the Centre for Future Health, and approved the contents. The Committee congratulated the Centre for Future Health for their continued successes.
(b) The Committee considered a report on the UKRI research audit for 2020/21, and noted that the areas identified as 'risk category moderate' would be addressed by relevant teams within the University.
(c) The Committee received for information a report on research grant applications and awards: year to date April 2021 and previous 5 year comparisons. [redacted] Colleagues should be encouraged to engage with EU funding opportunities.
(d) The RSPO had recently recruited a new Compliance Officer, who would assist in strengthening the University approach to compliance and due diligence. Time was needed to develop the proposed

central system for the recording of due diligence information, and a rough deadline of December was currently in place. In the interim there would be a focus on gathering the relevant data.

(e) Following discussion at the REF Strategy Group it was decided that, following a final meeting in July, REF business would return to URC for the foreseeable future.

(f) Work continued on the development of a policy for paying research participants, and a final policy document would be presented to URC in the first term of 2021/22 following UEB approval.

(g) Progress had been made within RKEC, and the Committee commended the new Head of RKEC and his team for their work thus far. It was recognised that the number of contracts completed in June was higher than the number of contracts entered for this first time this year. Several provisions had been put in place which had strengthened RKEC processes.

(h) The Professional Services Delivery Workstream continued with a focus on the Contracts team. A workshop would take place involving all those who support research grants to conduct an end-to-end review of the full process in order to identify bottle-necks.

(i) Discussion continued within the Faculty of Sciences concerning the move to blended working, and the importance of the culture and community that shared workspaces provided was noted.

(j) Conversation at the recent Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities had shown that a mix of situations remained across departments – some were rather busy, whilst others were allowing for space and time for colleagues to adjust to new practices. The meeting had also included discussion of research culture, and it was recognised that this would be a long-term and broad conversation.

(k) The DiMeN application, reported previously (M.20-21/46), had been a success, and the University was now a partner on the project. The interview focused strongly on the research environment.

(l) The Graduate School continued to work on expanding provision for distance-learners, including the development of distance-learning PhDs. It was noted that the majority of training would remain online throughout 2021/22.

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25/06/2021