**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**
**Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 30 September 2021**

### 1. University Strategy for 2030 and URC Priorities

The Committee considered an update on the University Strategy for 2030 and URC Priorities. The following points were noted:

(a) The Research Strategy and identification of URC priorities would depend upon the details determined in the University Strategic Plan. The upcoming Council away-day on 8 October would focus on developing transformational initiatives, demonstrating the York vision of a University for public good. URC would be involved in the shaping of the plan and communication of details across the University (with communication to audiences also helped by an outside agency).

(b) A key aspect of developing the strategy was to co-ordinate existing structures and dynamics within the University – such as in aligning research and teaching – and ensuring synergy across these.

(c) The strategy was an opportunity to consider the future direction of the institution, and identify strengths upon which York could build.

### 2. Report against KPIs for 2020/21

The Committee considered a report against KPIs for 2020/21, and noted the following:

(a) ██████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████

(b) ████████████████████████████████████████████████

(c) ██████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████

### 3. Establishment of the Interdisciplinary Institute for Mental Health Research at York

The Committee considered a report on the establishment of the Interdisciplinary Institute for Mental Health Social Research at York (IIMHRY). The paper had been circulated to members over the summer, and comments had been tracked and incorporated as necessary. The paper had included the provision that the institute would review progress and assess the potential role of a home Faculty in two years time. The Committee endorsed the establishment of the IIMHRY.

### 4. Update on Due Diligence Procedures

The Committee considered an update on due diligence procedures at the University and approved the proposed actions. The decision had been made to not label the new process as 'light touch', as this wording had implied a degree of choice over whether to engage as required. The work was driven by both external and internal drivers, and the Committee recognised the importance of strengthening processes so that the University could demonstrate alignment with good practice and relevant requirements.

It was clarified that the responsibility for completion of the due diligence process lay with the PI, but that the job could be delegated. Some separation of work was needed in order to avoid conflicts of interest. Processes for due diligence needed to be proportionate and mindful of the capabilities of partner organisations. Such processes and requirements covered PGR students and PhD projects,

however it was **clarified** that the current work was focused on R-coded grants. Other areas which needed to fit in with due diligence would be addressed in due course.

### 5.   Review of the REF and lessons learnt from the process

The Committee considered a report on the REF and lessons learnt from the process. The following points were noted:

(a) It was important to initiate a review of the REF process prior to the release of results to ensure colleagues could reflect without a knowledge of outcomes. It was clarified that changes to the REF cycle were possible, however significant alterations were not felt to be likely. The Committee recognised the need to maintain the robust governance structure that had supported the REF. The value of research outside of the REF was emphasised.

(b) Discussion of staffing needs took place. With both the RSPO Manager and the University REF Manager leaving their posts, it would be beneficial to learn from colleagues who had experience as panel members. A move towards open contracts for administrative staff would further strengthen the support available for the REF. Any consideration of staffing needs needed to consider how changes might look across faculties, and it was important to consult within faculties on this count.

(c) Flexibility was valued, and it was acknowledged that experiences of the REF had varied across departments, and that allowing for nuance in the relationships between central administration and departments would be valuable. In some cases, the number of REF Check Exercises could potentially be reduced – so that light-touch and 'heavy-touch' exercises ran concurrently – however it was **noted** that this would have implications for deadline planning.

### 6.   Other Business

(a) The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for the Committee (Appendix One), and at the same time approved revisions to the process for the management of conflicts of interest (Appendix Two.)

(b) The UK Committee on Research Integrity (UK CORI) had been established, and would shortly commence an open recruitment for the chair and members. Consultation on priorities for UK CORI would take place during the autumn.

(c) Consideration of the work of Research Champions had identified the emerging theme of Place, which would be taken forward by a working group (led by N8). The focus would be on levelling, and the work of this theme would intersect with several others across the institution, such as environment and sustainability, health, and poverty.

(d) Progress continued with the YGRS Strategy, the timing of which would be aligned with work on the wider University Strategy. The Graduate School had developed a new scholarship scheme focused on BAME candidates, which would include bespoke support during the application and induction stages.

(e) At a recent Vitae conference, the UKRI Director (Talent and Skills) had announced a consultation on a 'New Deal' for PGRs (as noted in the Government's Research and Development People and Culture Strategy). This would involve consideration of the employment status of PGR students, namely the appropriateness of registering PGRs as staff, as well as looking at funding, recruitment and selection policies. The Committee recognised that this would be a long-term piece of work with immediate planning implications, but that it was important to be aware of changes on the horizon.

(f) Colleagues across all three faculties were looking forward to the upcoming strategy meetings. Activities such as awaydays and conferences were starting up again.

(g) The name of the Research & Enterprise Directorate would change to Research Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE). The Research Strategy and Policy Office would become Policy, Integrity and Performance (PIP). The Directorate was implementing a flexible working model, with teams assigned specific days to use office space. All members of the Directorate were now based in the Ron Cooke Hub.

(h) The Research Payments Policy had been approved by UEB and had now moved into the implementation stage. Departments would maintain records of payments, with an annual report being presented to URC. Clear documentation confirming the voluntary nature of engagement was a necessity.

(i) The Research Information Reporting project continued to progress. The group was in the process of securing a Chair for a working group. A development plan for PURE was in train.

(a) The Committee received an update from the Open Research Strategy Group on efforts within the University. Significant progress had taken place in terms of developing community support and engagement over 2020/21. Further support had also been put in place in terms of infrastructure. The need for a central Open Access fund remained, as did further work on open data, in light of funder expectations for research outputs.

(j) The Committee approved the proposed direction of travel and implementation plans for the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC). Six main areas had been identified in order to deliver on the improvement plans, and these would guide the subsequent approach. Each group would be led by a member of professional services with the aim of delivering their objectives by the end of 2024. Activity taking place across the institution would help to meet KEC goals, and the Committee emphasised the importance of aligning what was already in place.

(k) Members discussed the issue of expenses involved in the attendance of conferences and memberships of learned societies. Paying such fees would be a large financial commitment from the University, and the tax implications would need consideration. The Committee emphasised the need for good communication on this front, and approved the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to look further into this issue.

(l) ████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████

(m) The release of HESA data nationally had been delayed, and had been brought to the Committee at the earliest possible point. Reporting was available at Faculty-level too, as well as via Tableau. This data was the first available showing the impact of Covid across the sector, in terms of research income.

████████████████████████████████████████████████████████████
████████████████████████████.

(n) The Committee received for information the proposed changes to the online Research Integrity Tutorial.


**PROFESSOR MATTHIAS RUTH**                                              **MS ZOE CLARKE**
**PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH**
**21/10/2021**

**Membership and terms of reference 2021/22**

**Terms of Reference**

1. To advise Senate and the University Executive Board on all matters relating to the research strategy of the University; to support the development of the University's Research Strategy and to support the Vice-Chancellor, the University Executive Board and Pro-Vice-Chancellor(s) in driving the strategy forward.
2. To champion and promote research excellence and integrity, and to oversee the development and maintenance of the supporting policy framework, reporting annually to Senate and Council.
3. To set internal policy and monitor progress in response to external requirements (e.g. peer review processes, external research assessment), and to make recommendations and report in these areas to the University Senate and University Executive Board.
4. To identify priority areas for research support and to advise the University Executive Board on organisational structures for research, on the selective distribution of resources within the University in order to ensure appropriate alignment of resource allocation with research strategy, and where other initiatives within the University have implications for research activity.
5. To support the University in its engagement with key external stakeholders relating to research, including business, industry, the government, cultural institutions and funding agencies.
6. To monitor the research performance of the institution and its academic departments, entities and faculties in terms of research quality, sustainability of research income, and impact, drawing on national and international benchmarking data; and to advise the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on areas where improvements could be made, where there are significant risks and/or where new opportunities may be pursued.
7. To receive annual updates from departments on research activities and performance including research impact, in order to advise the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on areas where improvements could be made, where there are significant risks and/or where new opportunities may be pursued.
8. To monitor and influence the development of research policy and strategy of key national and international agencies in the interests of the University (e.g. UKRI, Research Councils, Research England, European Union).

**Committees which report in to University Research Committee**

Faculty Research Groups

University Research Priming Committee

Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee

York Graduate Research School Board

Global Challenges Research Fund Steering Group

Research Excellence Framework (REF) Strategy Group

Research Excellence Training Steering Group

Research Communications Strategy Group

Open Research Strategy Group

Mental Health Research Strategy Group

Centre for Future Health Steering Group

**Membership 2020/21**

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Chair)

- o **Professor Matthias Ruth**

- The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Engagement *(ex officio)*
  - o **Professor Kiran Trehan**

- The Dean of the York Graduate Research School *(ex officio)*
  - o **Dr. Kathryn Arnold**

- The Deans of Faculty *(ex officio)*
  - o **Professor Brian Fulton** (Sciences)
  - o **Professor Ambrose Field** (Interim Dean, Arts and Humanities)
  - o **Professor Stuart Bell** (Social Sciences)

- The Faculty Associate Deans (Research) (*ex officio*)
  - o **Professor Sarah Thompson** (Sciences)
  - o **Professor Richard Ogden** (Arts and Humanities)
  - o **Professor Yvonne Birks** (Social Sciences)

- The Director of Research and Enterprise *(ex officio)*
  - o **Ms Jennifer Gilmartin (Acting)**

- The Associate Director and Head of Research Services *(ex officio)*
  - o **Ms Jennifer Gilmartin**

- The Research Strategy and Policy Manager *(ex officio)*
  - o **Ms Anna Grey**

- Three academic members from each Academic Faculty, normally with experience on Departmental Senior Management Teams. No two of these members should be from the same department.

  - o **Professor Stuart Carroll** (until September 2022)
    History

  - o **Professor Stephen Smith** (until September 2022)
    Electronic Engineering

  - o **Professor Jacco Thijssen** (until September 2022)
    York Management School

  - o **Professor Lucy Carpenter** (until September 2024)
    Chemistry

  - o **Professor Karen Bloor** (until September 2024)
    Health Sciences

  - o **Professor Andrea Manca** (until September 2024)
    Centre for Health Economics

  - o **Professor Julian Richards** (until September 2024)
    Archaeology

  - o **Dr Merran Toerien** (until September 2024)
    Sociology

  - o **Professor Mary Fairclough** (until September 2024)
    English and Related Literature

- Research Strategy and Policy Officer (Secretary)
  - **Ms Zoe Clarke**
  - With additional administrative support from RSPO as necessary

- Representative of CITY College, Thessaloniki
  - **Professor Panayiotis Ketikidis**, Vice President for Research and Innovation

**Membership of University Research Committee: roles and responsibilities**

## 1 Representation

The University Senate is responsible for regulating and directing the academic work of the University. In relation to research, some of this responsibility is delegated to University Research Committee, as part of the University's formal governance structure. The scope of University Research Committee's business is set out in its terms of reference, which are published online together with details of its membership constituency, here: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/research-committee/.

In contributing to the business of University Research Committee, members represent the offices against which they are listed in the Committee's constituency. In the case of elected academic members, these members represent the broad academic community at the University of York, rather than the interests of their individual departments. The Faculty Deans and Associate Deans (Research) provide the link between the Faculties and the Committee.

## 2 Managing conflicts of interest

In order to ensure that the Committee's business is conducted robustly and transparently, members are required to identify and report any pertinent potential or actual conflicts of interest, both via an annual exercise, and on an ongoing ad hoc basis should such conflicts become apparent in the interim. This enables the conduct of the Committee's work to be adapted accordingly and the conflicts mitigated. Details of the Committee's procedures for handling conflicts of interest are set out in a separate document, available from the Research Strategy and Policy Office.

## 3 Full Committee business:

### (a) Committee meetings
University Research Committee meets six times per academic year, from September to June inclusive. Details for the current year can be found here: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/research-committee/. Members are expected to attend and contribute to all meetings, except where absence is unavoidable. Where the latter is the case, members are asked, as far as possible, to communicate their apologies to the Secretary in good time, and are encouraged to email informal comments on the business for the meeting in advance to the Chair and Secretary, in order to feed into discussions.

Agenda papers are circulated to members electronically a week before the meeting. All meeting papers are also made available online, in an ongoing archive within the secure web area for Committee members, here: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/research-committee/members/. In order to conduct business efficiently and effectively, members are expected to familiarise themselves with the contents of the agenda papers in advance of the meeting.

### (b) Annual Departmental Research Reviews
Annual research review reports, responding to a formal question set and data provided (for example in relation to research grants and publications), are submitted to University Research Committee by all departments at the end of July. Examples from previous years can be found within the secure web area for Committee members: https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/research-

[committee/members/](committee/members/). All elected academic members of University Research Committee are asked to review up to three reports each, within faculty groupings led by the relevant Associate Dean. Members are then asked to meet in their faculty groupings over the summer period to discuss reports and agree feedback to departments. If further discussion with a particular department is necessary, a subsequent meeting may also be held among the relevant Departmental Research Committee Chair, Head of Department, Associate Dean and the Committee member who considered the report.

**4      Additional individual contributions:**

Certain aspects of URC business, as detailed below, involve contributions from individual members. Elected academic members are expected to make a reasonable contribution to this work: the Chair will endeavour to ensure equitable distribution while ensuring appropriate representation for the task in hand. The following list is not exhaustive and other activities may arise where University Research Committee representation is needed.

**(a)    Membership of review panels**
From time to time, University Research Committee may decide to undertake a more detailed review of a department or research centre's research performance and management, e.g. following a REF exercise. The review is conducted by a panel, usually consisting of the Chair, two further elected academic members of the Committee, and one or two external academic panel members appointed by the Chair, usually on the basis of recommendations from the Faculty Deans/ Associate Deans (Research). A review usually takes the form of a half-day or full day visit to the department/centre, involving meetings with the departmental management team and representatives from the staff and student body. The Faculty Deans/ Associate Deans (Research) also meet with the panel in order to provide a Faculty perspective.

Panel members are asked to familiarise themselves with a fairly substantial amount of information relating to the department/centre's research endeavour prior to the visit (e.g. recent ADRR reports, departmental research and impact strategies, most recent REF submission and results). Following the visit, they are asked to review a draft report prepared by the panel secretary for accuracy and completeness, and to contribute to discussion of the final draft when it is presented to the Committee for approval of the panel's findings and recommended actions. Depending on the actions recommended, they may also be asked to comment in due course on further submissions by the department/centre to University Research Committee relating to the findings of the review.

**(b)    Membership of Research Priming Fund Committee**
Research Priming Fund Committee is a sub-committee of University Research Committee, responsible for advising on the allocation of dedicated University resources for pump priming research. Further details are available online here: [https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/priming-fund/](https://www.york.ac.uk/staff/research/governance/committees/priming-fund/)

The Committee holds an annual meeting in late July/early August to allocate funding for the forthcoming academic year, and, if sufficient funds remain, a second round of applications may also be assessed early in the following Spring Term.

The core membership of Research Priming Fund Committee consists of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research (Chair) and the Associate Deans (Research). This is supplemented by a pool of additional reviewers, consisting of all academic members of URC, from which approximately three to five per funding round will be called upon by the Chair to act as reviewer, depending on complexity and size of the requests, and competing demands on the resources available. Members will be approached to act as reviewers once all applications for the current round have been received, in order to take into account the subject spread of the applications and avoid conflicts of interest. Meetings will be scheduled as far in advance as possible, and preferably at the start of the academic year in question, in order to give plenty of notice of the dates.

Reviewers are asked to review a select subset of applications, sent out two to three weeks in advance of the meeting (half of these as lead reviewer allocated by discipline, half as second reviewer, allocated randomly), and to submit scores and brief comments for discussion by the Committee as a whole at the meeting. As far as possible, all reviewers should attend the meeting in person in order to enable moderation of scores.

Members of URC may also be asked by the Chair to comment via email on ad hoc applications which have been submitted outside formal meetings owing to exceptional circumstances.

**(c)** **Representation on working groups**
From time to time, members may be asked to participate in working groups, either for projects initiated by the Committee itself, or to represent the Committee in relation to projects led by other areas of the University. The workload involved will vary from project to project, but will be clearly established at the point at which participation is sought.

5. Administrative support for the Committee's business is provided by the Research Strategy and Policy Office.

**PROFESSOR MATTHIAS RUTH**

**Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Chair of University Research Committee**

**MS ZOE CLARKE**

**Secretary to University Research Committee**

**Research Strategy and Policy Office**

*Appendix Two: Process for the Management of Conflicts of Interest*

## Declaration of members' interests

Research Committee business, as set out in its <u>terms of reference</u>, involves evaluation and decision-making in relation to research and research-related activities conducted under the auspices of the University. In the case of Research Priming Fund Committee members, this includes informing decisions regarding the allocation of resources.

It is essential that this business is conducted robustly, transparently and equitably. To this end, all members of University Research Committee (i.e. both academic and non-academic) are required to identify and report any pertinent potential or actual conflicts of interest, so that the conduct of the Committee's work can be managed accordingly and the conflicts mitigated. This should take place via the central procedure for the declaration of interests, managed by the Governance and Assurance Office.

**The annual return may not be exhaustive. Members must actively identify any actual or potential conflicts of interest in relation to specific items of URC business as they occur. Any such conflicts should be declared by Committee members.**

Members are reminded that in any instance where a potential conflict of interest has been identified, the person concerned should take no part in discussion or decision-making relating to that conflict, and should leave a meeting during such discussion and decision-making. At the start of each URC meeting, members will be formally invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. Official records of the Committee's meetings will provide a transparent and robust account of how decisions and evaluations have been reached, including how any conflicts of interest have been handled.

Members will note that they are already required to declare some of this information via their department as part of the University's Declaration of Interests procedures, particularly in relation to potential financial interests. Nevertheless, it is important that this information is restated in relation to University Research Committee business, so that it can be acted upon to mitigate conflicts of interest which relate to the Committee's work.