

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

Research Committee

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 24 November 2022

1. Proposed Priorities for 2022/23

The Committee considered potential priorities for 2022/23. The proposed priorities listed in the paper had been developed following discussion at the previous meeting of the Committee. The development of the Research Strategy was the highest priority. Initial thinking was underway on the ADRR. Further information on the review of research policies would be presented to the Committee in due course.

The Committee requested changes to the wording of two priorities to better reflect the focus of the Committee. The proposed priorities were approved subject to these amendments, and would return for information at the next meeting of the Committee. The recommendation that priorities be discussed in the final meeting of the year (rather than the first, as was currently the case) was also approved.

2. Knowledge Exchange Governance

The Committee considered Knowledge Exchange (KE) Governance at departmental level. The following was noted:

- (a) A number of changes had been made in response to comments from the September meeting of the Committee; these were outlined in the paper.
- (b) The paper had been approved by UPEC in October, including the role description. The Committee requested that the language of the role description be softened, for example describing contents as being 'within the scope of the role', in order to be less prescriptive across all Faculties. It was clarified that the role description had been requested by current Impact Leads.
- (c) It was requested that the role of Faculties be noted at the start of the document, for example through referencing collaboration with Faculty Impact Managers or noting continuous progress towards Faculty support for impact activity. The Committee noted that there was a need to properly embed Faculties in University processes, however in this instance the proposals related to Departmental Research Committees. Pragmatism was important and it was noted that further amendments could be made as relevant to address the structural issue.

The Committee approved the proposals subject to the above considerations and amendments.

3. Research Publications and Open Access Policy

The Committee approved proposed changes to the Research Publications and Open Access Policy. The following points were noted:

- (a) Approval had previously been granted for the development of the policy.
- (b) It was requested that further information on the scope of the policy in terms of conference proceedings and monographs be included in the accompanying guidance, which would be made available in due course.
- (c) The proposed policy would provide an approach for instances where journals were still supported through subscriptions. The University would write to publishers in advance to notify them of the change; the N8 was working collectively and would launch a statement in January. The University of Edinburgh had been the first to implement such a policy and had been successful thus far. It was acknowledged that potential complications may arise where a University of York staff member is not the leading author; it was clarified that agreement should be reached regarding obligations and licences early on in the research process.

- (d) The Committee recommended that extant groups which worked to support the sharing of datasets and software codes be contacted to assist in the development of a repository.
- (e) The Committee approved the suggestion that review take place every three years, however it was requested that an initial review be conducted following the first year of policy implementation to assess the change in full. A progress report would be presented to the Committee in the 2023/24 series of meeting.

4. University Regulation 12: Intellectual Property

The Committee approved proposed changes to University Regulation 12: Intellectual Property, to read “Each staff member grants the University a non-exclusive, irrevocable, worldwide, sub-licensable licence to make manuscripts of scholarly articles and conference papers publicly available under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution licence CCBY (or under an alternative licence if requested e.g. by third party funder)”.

The proposed amendment was needed in order to support the Research Publications and Open Access policy. The change had been consulted upon and legal advice taken into consideration. It was requested that the wording “or under an alternative licence if requested” be amended to specify publication under an “alternative open licence”.

It was requested that a full review of Regulation 12 consider the categorisation of PGRs and the impact of this on their intellectual property rights.

5. Open Research Strategy Group Annual Update

The Committee considered the annual report of the Open Research Strategy Group. Further to the information noted in the paper, the following was noted:

- (a) The Committee strongly supported the strengthening of research data infrastructure (Recommendation Three). This would be a large piece of work that would be taken forward by the Open Research Strategy and Operations Groups; specific requests for investment in policies and services needed further discussion. Although requirements for PGRs to deposit data were not expected, guidance and support would be developed in this area. The Committee requested that any University repository included guidance to aid reproducibility.
- (b) It was suggested that partnerships should be considered as part of institutional Open Access efforts, for example the White Rose Academic Press.

The Committee approved the recommendations included in the paper.

6. AECC Annual Report

The Committee considered the annual report from the Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee. The following points were noted:

- (a) The report covered a shorter timespan than usual in order to ensure alignment with the academic year reporting period. A number of successes and priorities for 2022/23 were reported.
- (b) The Committee suggested that the development of University-level positions on controversial or common issues would be helpful in ensuring the efficiency of processes. Stronger alignment of due diligence and ethics processes was also desired.
- (c) It was clarified that training had been delivered only to LRECs at this stage, and as such PGRs would not be included unless they were members of an LREC. It was further noted that oversight of the online training module was the responsibility of PIP, and wording surrounding this would be clarified.

7. AECC Terms of Reference

The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference for the Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee. The Committee requested that wording regarding the recruitment of lay members

be refined to remove references to ideal backgrounds or professions, and that a note about broad representation of the public be added.

8. Operational Plan for RI&KE

The Committee considered the Operational Plan for the Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange Directorate. The following points were noted:

- (a) The Operational Plan would be reviewed once a year, accompanied by quarterly light-touch reviews. The Plan was currently under consideration by Directorate Management Team.
- (b) The importance of open communication with the research community was noted in regards to the Professional Services Delivery workstream. It was essential that standards were consistent across the institution; this would take time to embed as the current system was fragmented.
- (c) Planning Committee had recently received an update on the Emerging Talent initiative. Academic buy-in was important to the success of the initiative.
- (d) The Committee requested further support for international recruitment of staff.

9. Research Intelligence on the Times Higher Education Ranking 2023

The Committee considered a report on research intelligence on the Times Higher Education Ranking 2023. The following points were noted:

- (a) This was an area with potential for controversy and the Committee emphasised the importance of clear communication and avoiding a 'quantity over quality' approach. There would be variation across the University and as such engagement from Faculties and the research community was essential.
- (b) The data presented used the University of Lancaster as a comparator, noting that the key difference between York and Lancaster was the citation score; if the University citation score was brought in line with Lancaster the performance would have been more even. It was clarified that the field-weighted citation index referred was per publication, and work was underway to correct departmental-individual links to ensure current data was accurate. It was noted that some conflict was possible between institutional and individual aims.
- (c) The Committee cautioned that an awareness of patterns was necessary – for example, method papers were likelier to be cited due to their nature. The Committee emphasised that citations should not drive promotion.

The Committee endorsed the need for academic representation in the discussion. Specifics would be picked up outside the meeting and reported back in due course.

10. REF Reflective Exercise

The Committee discussed the results of the REF Reflective Exercise. The following points were noted:

- (a) The paper reflected the sense of pride and achievement across the University at the results of the REF, and emphasised the need to plan long-term for the next research assessment process.
- (b) A number of operational aspects were raised in the report, including the number of Mock REFs and the resilience of data infrastructure. These aspects would be included in planning for the next REF and would be discussed with the REF Strategy Group and URC as relevant. The report on the Future Research Assessment Programme would be publicised shortly, followed by a high-level outline of what to expect early in 2023.
- (c) The challenge of maintaining a standard of excellence in the REF long-term was noted, in particular in terms of impact, which was a continuous process and was expected to increase in importance.
- (d) Feedback from the Committee would be valuable, and the Committee endorsed the suggestion that a mechanism to do so be developed. It was suggested that examples of good practice from the REF Reflection statements be circulated to departments.

11. Other Business

- (a) Progress continued on the Professional Services Delivery project, and engagement with academic and professional services colleagues was underway. Effective methods of cross-Faculty working were under continuous consideration, and importance of keeping communities of practice connected was noted.
- (b) [REDACTED]
- (c) Faculty-level strategies were under development.
- (d) The annual PGR review process would take place as usual, remaining separate from the ADRR. Departments would be asked to reflect on the PGR contribution to REF.
- (e) A new online tutorial for supervisors would launch at the end of November, and this mandatory training would bring the University into alignment with the rest of the Russell Group and the current direction of travel in UKRI. The compulsory aspect of the training was offered online whilst face-to-face engagement was strongly recommended, particularly for new supervisors.
- (f) The University had recently joined the Northern Accelerator Partnership, and the Committee noted the potential opportunities arising from this with regards to funding for commercialisation activity.

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19/01/2023

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