

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 17 March 2021

1. Proposed strategic plan for the York Graduate Research School

The Committee considered the proposed strategic plan for the York Graduate Research School. The following was noted:

- (a) The proposed Strategy needed to have some built-in flexibility to ensure meaningful contribution was possible during the consultation phase. A one-page summary would be produced, highlighting the key issues and headlines of the proposal, to allow for effective engagement across the University community. It was clarified that the proposed plan would take place over a period of 10 years, however a clearer differentiation between the steps outlined (the vision, strategy and specific tactics) was requested. Consultation with research leaders, including signing off on the proposed Plan, was expected to conclude by the end of March.
 - (b) It was important to acknowledge the value of the 'lone scholar' approach, and the Committee noted that collaboration within York should not be encouraged to the detriment of external collaboration, as often researchers working as a 'lone scholar' within the University were intricately linked into wider networks both nationally and internationally (which in turn means that calling them 'lone scholars' is a misnomer).
 - (c) The changing attitude to both PGR funding and EDI within the plan was welcomed, however it was acknowledged that EDI efforts needed to be intersectional.
 - (d) Consideration was needed as to the workload implications of the plan.
- The Committee approved the plan and the associated direction of travel, subject to the above recommendations.

2. Update on the REF in advance of the final deadline on 31 March 2021

The Committee considered an update on the REF in advance of the final deadline on 31 March 2021, and noted the following:

- (a) The REF team was currently finalising the submission. Work on the environment templates was now finished.
- (b) [REDACTED]
- (c) Research Forum would be a good venue in which to begin discussions about the next REF cycle, however not all departmental REF leads were involved with Research Forum. It was agreed that a separate event would be organised for conversation with all REF leads.
- (d) Work on the REF had produced a lot of useful data relating to research, departmental practices and impact, and it was important to use such data productively. The information collected would be used to support strategic developments as relevant.

3. Recommendations for the management of APC payments from the UKRI Open Access fund

The Committee approved recommendations for the management of APC payments from the UKRI Open Access funds. It was noted that a downward trend in available UKRI funding combined with increased demand for Open Access publications meant that administering funds for Open Access publishing on a 'first come, first served' basis was no longer sustainable. The recommendations had been discussed at and developed with Faculty Research Groups. Guidance would be developed by the Library to assist departments and researchers in understanding the Open Access landscape and requirements.

4. Oral report on the MTP process

[REDACTED]

5. Other Business

- (a) The next stage of work on the University Strategy had been initiated, with the first meetings of working groups taking place from 17 March. Feedback from members and the wider University community would be valuable in optimising the Strategy. The Committee requested further information as to the membership of these working groups, and members were encouraged to make the Chair aware of colleagues whose involvement would be useful on such groups.
- (b) The consultation on the implementation plan for the Researcher Development Concordat had now ended, and more developments would be reported to the Committee as necessary.
- (c) UEB had recently approved a new annual leave policy for the 2020/21 academic year. All staff were encouraged to take 1 April and 6 April 2021 off and avoid sending emails at this time.
- (d) A consultation was ongoing regarding a proposal to re-organise the academic year from three terms to two semesters. Members were encouraged to provide feedback on the proposal from a research perspective.
- (e) The agreement in place with City College, Thessaloniki included the involvement of CITY College colleagues on University of York committees (including URC). The details of this involvement would be specified in due course. Good progress had been made in establishing the position of PhD students and the potential for co-supervised projects.
- (f) Recent news regarding cuts to ODA funding was a serious blow to the University and the sector more broadly. The University and the Russell Group sought further information from UKRI,

including (i) expectations for the winding down of projects (ii) contractual implications for the withdrawal of funding and (iii) possible measures to mitigate damage where projects had been part of long-term efforts and relationships. The Russell Group Directors Group would meet with the UKRI International Lead to discuss re-profiling existing projects to manage the funding currently available. Work was ongoing within HR and RSPO to collect the data needed to identify affected staff. Colleagues were reminded to make RGO aware of any project-specific communications they received, and to direct general information to the Head of Research and Enterprise. Colleagues were also reminded to inform their Co-Is at other institutions as relevant.

Secretary's Note: Work to gather the relevant data due to be completed by 16 April. A further update will be provided at the next meeting of URC.

- (g) The Dean of YGRS had met with the Head of the Research Innovation Development to discuss the new process for handling complex grants.
- (h) A number of grants were reported to the Committee, including three Marie Curie Fellowships, a new European ITN between Archaeology and a number of European institutions, an AHRC grant on "The Internet of Musical Events: digital scholarship, community and the archiving of performance (InterMusE)", and two Leverhulme grants (one to History on settler colonialism and one to Language & Linguistic Science on north-south dialect variation in England). An ESRC bid to establish a centre on the future of policing had been submitted by SPSW, which involved six PhD studentships (three of which would be at York). An MRC DiMeN bid had also been submitted, and mock interviews were currently taking place. The Dean of YGRS was involved with the MRC panel.
- (i) The Committee received a report from the Acting Director of Research & Enterprise (*FOI Exempt*):
- Following the decision taken at the February meeting (M20-21/48) that the Directorate would not chase up ResearchFish submissions, it was reported that the University had achieved an almost 100% submission rate (when accounting for the allowed exceptions as defined by funders).
 - Staffing changes continued within the Directorate. Interviews would take place shortly for positions within the Research and Knowledge Exchange Contracts (RKEC) team and RSPO.
 - Payment for Patients and members of the Public involved in research remained an issue, with HMRC guidance and funder requirements appearing to be in conflict. The University would develop a policy on this front.
 - It was clarified that there would be no further GCRF QR funding following the current allocated amount (which would end in July). In addition, cuts to the ODA budget meant GCRF, Newton and other grants were at risk.
 - It was clarified that researchers should follow the normal departmental business critical process in cases where emergency funding or support was necessary, following the close of the CoA UKRI funding. This guidance had not yet been communicated widely.
- (j) The Committee received an oral update on the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC). It was reported that five key areas had been identified and working groups established to develop detailed action plans to support the implementation of the KEC. The HEIF Strategy was currently being drafted, and would be presented to the Committee at its next meeting.
- (k) The Committee received for information a report on research grant applications and awards: Year to date January 2021 and previous four-year comparisons (*FOI Exempt*). [REDACTED]