

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 5 May 2021

1. Update on ongoing work on University structures

The Committee received an oral update on the ongoing work relating to University structures. The following was noted:

- (a) The process was driven by academic innovation, with a focus on developing structures which enable and facilitate new opportunities. It was clarified that the focus was on creating academic opportunity which matched university strategy. UEB would not mandate the lower-level structures within new schools as part of this process, but schools should develop structures which mesh their needs with ongoing institutional change project priorities and developments.
- (b) As part of this process, three new Schools were under development: (i) The School of Physics, Engineering and Technology (ii) The School of Business and Society (iii) The School of Digital Creativity and Performing Arts. The initial areas of focus had been selected for their distinctive and internationally-competitive character. It was clarified that Schools differed from Departments in their role of creating opportunities for new areas of innovation.
- (c) It was clarified that there was no pre-calculated programme for departmental mergers, and that the process would evolve over time rather than being prescriptive in nature. Consistency and alignment with other areas of the University was necessary. It was emphasised that the work would evolve over time to suit the situation and needs of York.

2. Proposals for the management of matters relating to the Trusted Research guidance issued by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure

The Committee approved proposals for the management of issues relating to the Trusted Research guidance issued by the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure. This following was noted:

- (a) The appropriate management of security concerns was of increased importance, in part because of the strategic goals of York, but also because of a greater emphasis on this area from the UK Government. Funding bodies such as UKRI had indicated that a focus on this area was upcoming, and as such it was beneficial for York to initiate work on this count now. The issue was relevant sector-wide, and as such conversation was ongoing with other institutions, including as part of the Russell Group Research Director's Forum.
- (b) The Committee emphasised that oversight and management systems must be proportionate to the capabilities of partners, as well as recognizant of the need for quick decisions. It was noted that there had been proposals within the sector for the establishment of a central clearing house for the storage of due diligence information.
- (c) The Committee requested that a short summary document be prepared for researchers, which outlined where problems were likely to arise and how sensitive information should be managed.

3. Update on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers

The Committee received an update on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and noted that the consultation process for the implementation of the Concordat had been scaled back in recognition of the high workload faced by researchers. Through the consultation, a number of key factors in the career development of researchers had been identified: (i) obstacles caused by a lack of time, (ii) obstacles caused by a lack of awareness regarding available support, (iii) the value of mentoring opportunities (iv) the value of a supportive PI(s) in enabling professional development and (v) appropriate rewards for engaging in professional development.

Three working groups had been established, and it was noted that strong PI representation of these groups would be valuable.

4. Update on Knowledge Exchange activity at York

The Committee received an update on Knowledge Exchange activity at York, and noted the following:

- (a) It was clarified that the University had to choose five out of the eight available priorities to focus on in the KEC implementation plan, however the team and associated working groups were taking steps to incorporate aspects of the three remaining priorities into the implementation process. The Committee requested that the Head of Enterprise Services contact team members to reiterate the importance of involving academic colleagues and consideration of EDI issues.
- (b) An important aspect of KE work was clear communication with colleagues as to what resources or support is available and how it works. It was noted that robust communications channels would also help in improving the recognition and awards for KE (Priority Six).
- (c) It was intended that the University Partnerships and Engagement Committee (UPEC) would have oversight of KE activity and associated governance, with a focus on enabling innovation and high-quality outputs. The Committee was planning to hold its first meeting in June. It was emphasised that consideration would be needed as to ownership of the KEF. The Committee noted that further clarity on the ownership of research impact would be valuable, as this would be particularly relevant for future REF submissions.
- (d) The University HEIF Statement, provided as part of the report, outlined plans for the next five years of HEIF activity. It was noted that HEIF funding would cover professional and academic support as well as support for KE activity and IP management. The Statement was written with the recognition that the University's plans and priorities would develop over the five-year period.

5. Oral report on the establishment of an Environmental Sustainability Entity

The Committee received an oral update on the establishment of an Environmental Sustainability Entity. The following was noted:

- (a) The Entity would identify common factors across sustainability work at the University, and map out ways to move this work forwards in new and exciting ways. A series of goals and recommendations had been endorsed for further development by Planning Committee in March.
- (b) It was clarified that the Entity would enable the exploration of new research and teaching partnerships, such as DTPs, which would attract more interest and applications from researchers and potential students. Taking a longer-term view of funding support for the Entity, it was noted that new teaching opportunities were expected to arise from the development of this work across the University, and that the intent was to ultimately maintain a sustainable funding stream.

6. Other Business

- (a) The partnership with CITY College, Thessaloniki continued to develop. Seed funding would be provided for PGR students at CITY College; these students would formally be University of York students and subject to the rules and standards of York. It was noted that CITY College was of significant strategic importance to York, due to its geographical position within the EU. The University of York had a key role to play in helping to build the research capacity of CITY College through collaboration and the application of rigorous standards. Under the terms of the agreement with CITY College, representatives would be present on key committees to enable greater staff engagement and involvement in the governance structure at York. The Vice-President for Research & Innovation at CITY College would be invited to attend periodic meetings of URC – the Committee would be updated in due course. It was clarified that CITY College was focused on attracting excellence, and that York would support CITY College in building its research capacity. York was fully involved with the supervision of research projects, and both institutions were firm in a commitment to recruit high-quality candidates.

- (b) The new strategic vision for YGRS would be published shortly, following which it would be socialised amongst colleagues. Implementation plans were already under development for aspects of the strategic vision, including work on broader PhD programmes, professional doctorates, and part-time PhDs, all of which would offer greater flexibility and attract higher numbers of students from industry.
- (c) Progress continued to be made in the establishment of the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education, and the associated funding application would be submitted in due course. If the Consortium is granted funding, work would begin in September with a view to initiating pilot schemes by May 2022. It was recognised that a strong evidence base was needed in order to convince colleagues of the viability of such efforts. EDI considerations had grown in importance in recent UKRI communications and application processes, and it was important for York to demonstrate an awareness of this area.
- (d) Discussions had taken place with departments across the Faculties concerning the development of the 5-Year Forecast. Departments were beginning to turn their minds to strategic thinking.
- (d) Several grants and successful bids were reported, including the granting of a Leverhulme Trust fellowship to Professor Stuart Carroll (History). Further success was reported from the departments of History, English and Language and Linguistic Science. The Graduate Research School was undertaking efforts broaden access to the European Doctoral School, taking place in June in collaboration with partner institutions in Maastricht and Münster. A multi-morbidity bid, led by CHE, was in development.
- (e) Representatives from the Faculty of Arts & Humanities would present at the upcoming Consortium of Humanities Centres and Institutes on the Place and Community Project – the externally-facing event was a valuable opportunity to showcase the successes of the project.
- (f) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Several highlights concerning regional support were noted, including: 15 PAPI projects supported to a value of £256k; work on preparation and coordination of bids to the Community Renewal Fund via North Yorkshire Council and City of York Council; and overseeing the delivery of a number of projects within NYCC.
- (g) The Research & Knowledge Exchange Contracts (RKEC) team had recently recruited a new Head, and two further Contracts Officer posts were currently advertised. A new Research Strategy & Policy Officer position had been advertised, with a focus on Compliance activity. Analysis of the work of the Directorate was ongoing as part of the Professional Services Delivery Workstream. The Internal Funding Team would move into the Research Grants Operations team from 1 August 2021. RGO would also administer GR-coded (research-related) grants from 1 August 2021 in the same manner as R-code grants.
- (e) Work on payments for individuals involved with or participating in research continued. A Task and Finish group had been established to gather relevant information and facilitate the writing of a policy.
- (f) Colleagues across the University had demonstrated exemplary collegiality in response to the recent cuts to ODA funding. The cuts were a serious blow to the universities and their collaborators.
- (g) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

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