

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 1 October 2020

1. Proposed Priorities for the University Research Committee for 2020/21

The Committee considered the proposed priorities for the University Research Committee for 2020/21. In previous years, the proposed priorities had drawn on the University Research Strategy 2015-20 implementation, which has now come to its official end. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent pausing of the REF process had resulted in a number of activities planned for 2019/20 being delayed. In addition, a new University Strategy is under development. Given this context, the priorities for the Committee would largely continue from 2019/20, with the addition of Innovation, Entrepreneurialism and Industry Engagement, and with an eye towards main aims emerging from the new strategy, as those become clarified and approved. Some focus on risk and improving the quality of research data would also be necessary. The development of the University Research Strategy would also involve further consideration of KPIs.

2. University Research Strategy: To consider a report against KPIs for 2019/20

The Committee considered a report against KPIs for 2019/20 and noted that the University's performance against KPIs showed no areas for concern. [REDACTED]

3. Implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The Committee considered a draft report on the implementation of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity, and approved its inclusion on the University Research Integrity and Ethics webpages.

4. Annual Update from the Open Research Strategy Group

The Committee approved the Annual Update and the identified direction of travel, and requested that policy specifics be brought back before the Committee as appropriate. The report outlined the activity taking place to support Open Research at the University and proposed a future direction of travel, using a maturity model to outline six recommendations. These are summarised as follows:

1. Open Research Strategy Groups (ORSG) to undertake a holistic view of policies and associated responsibilities;
2. Open Research Operations Group (OROG) to establish a range of Community, Support and Engagement initiatives;
3. ORSG to develop and present a proposal for investment for a research data repository infrastructure for the University, and to continue endorsing and supporting the White Rose University Press and repositories;
4. ORSG to seek a budget for a central institutional open access fund through the MTP process;
5. OROG to lead the development of a skills and competencies framework, and increase the awareness of existing training;
6. OROG to lead on work to understand the impact of open research practice and expectations on equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

5. Strategic Framework for Impact evaluation: to receive for information a data indicator comparison 2016-17/2019-20

The Committee considered the annual data indicator comparison for the Strategic Framework for Impact Evaluation. The indicators listed in the report were chosen in 2015, and some limitations in the data had been highlighted. It was, however, still useful to discuss the indicators in light of the KEF and to consider whether the data indicators currently gathered were useful. The data are most valuable when used comparatively, and this could be aided by the development of an Impact Strategy.

6. Proposed Process for Due Diligence

The Committee approved a proposed process for due diligence, subject to a minor change of wording. It was suggested that a similar process for non-R-coded work would be useful.

7. University Mental Health Research Strategy

The Committee endorsed the draft Mental Health Research Strategy for the University and recommended further engagement with the Faculty of Arts & Humanities. The University was well-placed to develop a strong, interdisciplinary approach to research in this area, however a number of challenges were outlined for the future development of mental health research at York, including the need to diversify funding, improve partnerships and take steps to establish a DTP in order to train the next generation of researchers.

8. Review of Research Entities: Governance Models 1 and 2

The committee considered a report on the review of Governance Model 1 and 2 Research Entities and noted that there was scope to review how entities were reviewed and reported on. Within the Faculty of Sciences, there were several entities currently categorised as Governance Model 2 which would potentially be managed better within departments. There was also discussion within the Faculty of Arts & Humanities regarding the appropriateness of the governance model currently in place, and consideration of structural issues was welcomed. The Faculty of Social Sciences echoed the need to consider how research centres were situated within the University, which was particularly pertinent considering the expansion of several Centres to include PhD programmes.

9. Research and Innovation Development Funding Schemes: Budgets for 2020-21 and next actions

The Committee considered a report on the Research and Innovation Development Funding Schemes: Budgets for 2020-21 and next actions. It was noted that further information on returns on investment would be beneficial in answering the questions posed in the report.

UEB had approved the allocation of £200k for pump-priming in 2020-21 and would be launched in October via a streamlined call. No capital call would take place in 2020-21. The Fellowship budget had been slightly reduced. A job description for Research Champions had been launched.

10. Knowledge Exchange Funding and Reporting: An update on HEIF and the risks, an update on the KEF return and an update on HEBCIS

The committee considered a report on Knowledge Exchange Funding and Reporting: An update on HEIF and the risks, an update on the KEF return and an update on HEBCIS. It was noted that Research England would increase assessment on how HEIF funding was distributed and as such it was important that HEIF funding was not used for research administration activities. The Committee approved the proposal to reallocate the HEIF funding currently used for research administration into core Knowledge Exchange activities. This would also enable HEIF funding to be used in a more strategic manner.

11. Other Business

- (a) The Committee approved the Terms of Reference and Membership information of URC, and noted that all members of the committee were now due to end their terms at the same time. The potential administrative issues of this situation would be discussed further. Jenny Gilmartin had taken up the position of Acting Director of Research and Enterprise, following David McBeth's departure. This would offer stability for R&E during the interim period.
- (b) Work was ongoing to enhance the potential of the York Graduate Research School in terms of connecting across disciplines, including consideration of recruitment and diversity.
- (c) Supervisors and research students were encouraged to consider contingency plans for PhD projects, in light of the potential for further COVID-19-related disruption.
- (d) Several items related to research grants and activity were noted:
 - a. [REDACTED]
 - b. Several external partners of the Faculty of Arts & Humanities had been negatively affected by the ongoing pandemic. In response, the HRC had launched the Place and Community project.
 - c. [REDACTED]
 - d. Uptake of the UKRI funding extension offer was inconsistent across Faculties, and it was important to communicate to researchers that the extension was available. The opportunity was well-appreciated within Sciences.
 - e. The BioYorkshire initiative had officially been launched, along with associated webpages. The project aligned with the public good vision of the University.
 - f. [REDACTED]
- (e) The Committee noted concerns regarding the amount of pressure placed on staff, particularly the need to adapt to new ways of teaching. It was also noted that the level of stress was not equally distributed. The summer period had seen several successes in terms of research activity, and it was important not to lose momentum during the academic year due to such pressure.
- (f) The Committee received, for information, a Statement from UKRI on Reducing Bureaucracy in Research and noted suggestions regarding aligning processes and adopting a single CV approach. The Committee noted that implementing a two-stage grant application process would not necessarily reduce workloads.
- (g) The University continued to work towards the new submission deadline of 31 March 2021. The first phase of the REF Check had been completed and feedback was being shared with departments. The second phase of reviewing was now beginning. The Institutional Environment Statement continued to be developed prior to sharing a new version with departments.
- (h) The Committee considered a report on research grant applications and awards: year to date August 2020 and previous 4 year comparisons, and information on research income for 2019/20 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].