

UNIVERSITY OF YORK
Senate
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

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/>. 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/>

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

Approved by URC on 30 September 2021