

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 1 May 2024

1. URC Corporate Social Responsibility Task & Finish Group: Draft Policy for Consideration

The Committee considered an update from the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Task & Finish Group and endorsed the draft policy for further consideration (Appendix One). The CSR Framework had been developed in response to a number of queries and requests for further guidance in this area, as well as an increased focus within the sector on the management of reputational risk. The draft policy would be discussed further with the CSR Task & Finish Group before being presented to UEB for approval.

The Committee recommended that the list of areas in need of additional scrutiny ought to be kept as broad as possible. It was clarified that the list of high-risk countries would be in line with those identified by the UK Government but not all would be included in the list. The process for identifying such research was not yet determined, however the use of Worktribe was suggested. Decisions regarding the continuation or termination of a project would not be reliant on just one factor and would take into account a number of factors alongside professional judgement. A number of areas were recommended for further consideration, including the management of data, the applicability to visiting scholars, and the funding of PhD scholarships.

2. Annual Research Review: Faculty Reports

The Committee considered reports from each Faculty outlining the results of the recent ARR process.

The Associate Deans for Research reported the following:

- (a) A number of core themes had emerged from the departmental ARR returns across all three Faculties, including concerns around workload, issues concerning recruitment and retention of staff, access to EU funding, the drive for interdisciplinarity, and the role of PGRs.
- (b) All three Faculties had approached the ARR using a similar process, however it was noted that greater standardisation in responses would enable more effective feedback.

The Committee observed the following:

- (a) Although the use of space had not been discussed specifically in the ARR returns, it was noted that this was a concern which intersected with many of those highlighted above.
- (b) A number of suggestions were noted for future iterations of the ARR: (1) to specifically seek comment on PGRs, (2) to consider in more depth how feedback will be coordinated and actioned, (3) to further standardise responses (as there had been variation in how departments engaged in the 2023/24 process), (4) to encourage wider reflection on 'big questions' within disciplines and (5) to consider specific questions regarding cross-Faculty and private sector engagement, potentially including philanthropy. The alignment with the Planning process was useful and should be continued.
- (c) It was important that the ARR was underpinned by a strong sense of purpose from URC, with desired outcomes and aims made clear. This would prompt greater engagement from departments.
- (d) It was further suggested that further reflection at the Faculty-level would be helpful in identifying activities not currently reflected in reports, for example those led by the HRC, as well as in preparing for the REF.

3. Other Business

- (a) Work continued on the recruitment of a PGR Representative to the Committee.
- (b) The financial situation facing the University was of concern, and the range of internal and external factors impacting the situation was noted. It was emphasised that strong research continued to take place despite the restraints.

- (c) A recent meeting of Russell Group Directors of Research had involved significant discussion of work to reduce bureaucracy, as well as the increased focus on risk in international collaborations. It was noted that work on this topic needed to consider PGR students and the funding thereof.
- (d) Discussion was underway in YGRS as to how bureaucracy might be reduced, including consideration of greater flexibility in co-supervision, the merging of committees and a review of the workload associated with TAP and Progression meetings. It was recognised that the digital systems in place at the University did not enable swift changes to be made. Graduate Chairs would be consulted prior to changes being made.

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