

# UNIVERSITY OF YORK

## Senate

### RESEARCH COMMITTEE

#### Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 28 September 2023

#### **1. University Research Strategy: Finalised Research Strategy, Draft Implementation Plan and Draft KPIs and Success Measures**

The Committee approved the draft University Research Strategy as well as proposed success measures and KPIs and a timeline for the completion of the implementation plan. It was noted that the Research Strategy and associated Implementation Plan were living documents that could change in response to circumstances and the needs of the institution. The Committee emphasised the importance of considering and identifying the most appropriate methods of oversight, including the timing of reporting, and in particular noted questions around effective measurement of research culture.

#### **2. Research Excellence Framework 2028**

The Committee approved a report on the upcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2028, including (1) a summary of changes, (2) Terms of Reference for the REF Strategy Group and (3) REF Consultation Response.

There were a number of changes to the REF process for 2028, including an increased focus on the 'People' element of the assessment, however methods of measuring performance in this area remained under discussion. The University consultation response had been shared for comment with key stakeholders.

It was particularly noted that the submission of outputs for non-research staff had potential to be contentious and would have an effect on recruitment and internal expectations for colleagues. The inclusion of staff on T&S contracts would be welcome for some colleagues, such as technicians, however the implications needed to be considered for current policy. The Committee identified the risk of increased workload and the potential for large numbers of contract variation requests affecting total FTE. Clarity for staff on non-standard contracts was necessary.

Regarding the Terms of Reference for the REF Strategy Group, the Committee recommended that a colleague from Health Sciences be included as this department operated across UoAs.

#### **3. Strategic Priorities for the York Graduate Research School for 2023/24**

The Committee approved the proposed strategic priorities for the York Graduate Research School (YGRS) for 2023/24. A number of key themes had been identified for 2023/24 and it was recognised that the specifics of the Strategic Priorities would possibly be subject to change depending on circumstances. The priorities had been discussed with Faculties and teams across the University.

The Committee observed that discussions regarding the oversight of CDTs and DTPs needed to be handled with sensitivity, recognising the range of relationships involved. 'Oversight' in this instance referred primarily to enabling effective feedback to YGRS on the activities taking place. It was important to encourage a sense of community and belonging for colleagues, and it was noted that this might entail a consideration of the use of space. A venue for sharing best practice would also be provided.

#### **4. Policy for the Classification and Management of Research Entities**

The Committee approved the draft policy for the classification and management of research entities. There had been previous attempts to resolve a number of questions surrounding the position and role of research entities, and the proposed policy aimed to streamline further.

Effective information-gathering was necessary. It was noted that not all entities were led by just one 'Lead Department' and recognising variation across Faculties and disciplines was important; it was further clarified that identifying a Lead Department was required as part of management systems at the University, and so was needed on a pragmatic level. Consideration was needed as to the most appropriate approach concerning both line management and PGR supervision.

The policy would be reviewed in 12 months to assess the implementation and its success thus far.

## **5. Proposed Process for the Annual Research Review**

The Committee **approved** the proposed process for the Annual Research Review, subject to comments noted below.

The impetus to amend the ARR, previously ADRR, was in part due to the increased prominence of Faculties and the need to reflect their role within the institution. It was important to enable appropriate and reliable oversight for URC, ensuring alignment towards common goals. The process would evolve over time in response to circumstance and institutional needs. The intent was for the ARR process to be synced to the planning round, with the expectation that URC would receive ARR returns alongside Faculty planning documents, however this would not be the case for 2023/24.

A number of areas were suggested for inclusion in the question set; (1) space to reflect on REF performance, (2) KE, impact and creativity, (3) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Over the course of discussion, it was requested that the proposed deadline of December – previously suggested to align with the first deadline of the planning process – be pushed back in the interest of workload. This would be discussed further with the AD(R)s. A template including an indicative length of answers was also requested.

## **6. Other Business**

1. The Committee approved the proposed changes to the Policy on Research Data Management, and endorsed the University's support for the Concordat on Open Research Data Management
2. The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for 2023/24, and a paper would be presented at the next meeting of the Committee to discuss a number of comments concerning membership.
3. This was the last meeting of the Committee for Dr Jackson and the Committee thanked him for his work. An offer had been made to a potential successor; further information would come in due course.
4. The PSD process continued, with HR discussions regarding structural and role transitions underway. It was hoped that the initial transitions could be implemented in early 2024, followed by the planned process and system improvements.
5. The recent Vitae International Conference on Researcher Development had included a workshop on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on PGRs, as well as a presentation from Universities Minister George Freeman, MP, which suggested increased government investment in fellowships.
6. Changes to the funding model used by the AHRC would impact the University, reducing the number of funded scholarships significantly. York was, however, potentially well-placed to take advantage of the research themes highlighted by the funder.
7. The New Deal for PGRs had recently been published by UKRI. Of note was a planned rise in PhD stipends and an increase in the number of part-time PhDs. The New Deal had specifically flagged two York projects – the Yorkshire Consortium for Equity in Doctoral Education (YCEDE) and the Research SuperVision Project (RSVP) – which put the University in a good position going forward.

**PROFESSOR MATTHIAS RUTH**  
**10/10/2023**

**MS ZOE DEACY-CLARKE**