

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2010

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (in the Chair)
Professor D Attwell
Professor M Collins
Dr I D'Amico
Professor E Hancock
Dr J Potts
Professor W Sherman
Dr A Sowden
Professor Jenny Steele
Dr P White

In attendance: Director of the Research and Enterprise Office
The Research Strategy and Policy Manager
The Research Grants and Contracts Office Manager
IP Manager

Apologies for absence were received from, Dr K Fernandes, Professor J Hobcraft and the Research Policy Officer

10-11/01 Terms of reference and revised membership of the committee

The Committee **considered** the terms of reference and the revised membership was **noted**. The Committee **welcomed** Professor Jenny Steele to her first meeting of Research Committee.

In relation to the Terms of Reference, it was **noted** that since the last meeting, the Board for Graduate Schools had been disbanded. The Pro Vice Chancellor for Research was currently reviewing the oversight of postgraduate research students and that this might result in some changes to the Terms of Reference of the Committee in the future.

It was **noted** that the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee needed to be added to the list of reporting Committees and with this amendment the Terms of Reference were **approved**.

10-11/02 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2010.

The minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2010 were **approved**.

10-11/03 REF Impact pilot

Arising from M09-10/30 it was **noted** that the University had been asked to rework two of the submitted case studies for the REF Impact pilot for inclusion in the final report from HEFCE. It was recognised that there was a clear need for the University to engage with the external impact agenda and to clearly articulate the benefits of the research undertaken. The issue would be discussed with the Chairs of Departmental Research Committees at their next Forum.

It was **noted** that a generic report of the HEFCE pilot was due to be published shortly and that the Research Committee would wish to consider it.

10-11/04 Activities of members of the Research Committee

Arising from M09-10/34 Research Committee members were asked to report on any activities they had undertaken in relation to the support given to their nominated departments. It was **noted** that where members had been in contact with their departments a number of useful issues and good practice had been identified and discussed. It was suggested the 'buddy' system was an effective way of explaining the function of Research Committee and the decision making process, whilst providing a way that departmental issues could be raised. It was **agreed** that there would be a standing item on the agenda for members to share issues that had been raised.

ACTION AMG

It was **noted** that opportunities for raising issues and communicating across departments needed to be increased and that this system was one method. However, it was also suggested that it might be useful to develop informal networks between the members of Research Forum. It was **noted** that when previously proposed, the scheme had been proposed as a pilot exercise and it was **agreed** that the scheme should be reviewed at the December meeting in order to ensure it was cost effective.

ACTION AMG

It was **agreed** that the list of members and the departments they were linked to would be re-circulated.

ACTION RSC

10-11/05 Briefing paper on the development of the Research and Innovation Information System

The Committee **received** a briefing paper on the development of the Research and Innovation Information System (PURE) and **noted** the need to encourage academic colleagues to use the system once fully implemented. It was recognised that ensuring the data could be used a different multiple activities, such as generating web pages and performance review documentation would increase the usage.

It was reported that the contract with Thompson Reuters for the use of citation and legacy data, had now been signed. The relationship between the Researcher ID used by Thompson Reuters and RIIS staff identifiers was raised and it was **agreed** that this issue would be clarified. In addition, it was **agreed** to clarify how regularly the citation information provided was updated

ACTION RSC

It was **noted** that PURE would draw data from existing databases and that where errors were identified, these would need to be amended in the relevant system. As such, processes would need to be put in place to ensure that errors were effectively identified, reported and resolved.

It was **agreed** that a demonstration of the system would take place at the next meeting. The Committee commended the Research Strategy and Policy Office on successfully managing the project so far.

ACTION RSC

10-11/06 Issues identified from the Departmental responses to the Pre-REF Questionnaire

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Research Strategy and Policy Manager on the issues already identified as a result of the recently submitted Pre-REF Questionnaire from Departments. A number of common areas of concern had been identified such as the critical assessment and grading of outputs, the performance management of staff and matters relating to funding. It was **noted** that nearly all departments had submitted the questionnaire and that at least one submission would be more widely

circulated as containing a number of items of good practice. The questionnaires would all be put on the Research Committee web pages for members to read.

ACTION AMG

It was reported that some departments were concerned that developing a research strategy would impinge on the academic freedom of staff, but it was agreed that this should not be case. There was a need for departments to articulate how the research activities of the departments contributed to the overall success of the department and how resources would be used to achieve the overarching departmental strategy. However, it was **agreed** that more work was required to ensure Heads of Department and Chairs of Research Committee fully understood the role of a strategy.

ACTION PVC (R)

It was **agreed** that many departments were concerned regarding the need to identify research impact and there was an apparent deficit on the management of external collaborations. The committee recognised that support for departments would need to be tailored in relation to their needs and specific challenges, so that some departments would require more central support than others. It was also recognised that there was a difference in departments as to how far the changes in the Departmental Research Committees Terms of Reference and departmental management practices had altered and improved.

It was reported that the questionnaire had produced some very interesting information and had effectively acted as a launch of the REF process. In addition, it had given a context for a number of issues that needed to be explored further as part of the MTP process. However, there were a number of areas of concern in relation to some departments which would be explored further

ACTION PVC (R)

10-11/07 Final report on the proposed Consolidation of Interdepartmental Centres (IDCs)

The Committee **received** the final report on the proposed Consolidation of Interdepartmental Centres (IDCs). It was noted that this report had arisen, in part, from the concerns highlighted during the research reviews of IDCs in relation to the potential confusion of the relationship between IDCs and the relevant departments and the role and administrative load of Directors. It

was **noted** that there needed to be more clarity as to the differences between cost centres and IDCs

The aim had been to simplify the governance of interdepartmental research, whilst ensuring that there was sufficient oversight of activities which carried potentially significant financial risk for the institution. In addition, it aimed to clarify the role of Directors and the relationship of staff to IDCs. It was **noted** that there was no restriction on the use of the word 'centre', in relation to interdepartmental research groups. In addition, it was noted that whilst guidance had been given on the financial implications of a Director being 100% allocated to IDCs this did not infer that Directors should be so allocated.

It was also reported that the University was in the process of developing an organisational database to provide an agreed departmental structure of all departments, IDC and research units. This would allow interdepartmental research groups to be formally noted. It was **agreed** that there did need to be a process by which research centres that were no longer active could be removed and any corresponding web pages removed.

ACTION RSC

It was agreed that the document gave a useful definition as to the nature and governance for IDCs but that due to the sensitivities, a clear communication strategy would need to be developed. This would ensure that those potentially affected were able to appreciate the benefits, rather than perceiving the document as a devaluing of those activities not formally part of IDCs

ACTION RSC

10-11/08 Interdepartmental Research Centre Reviews Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies

The Committee **considered** the report of the Interdepartmental Research Centre Reviews Centre for Renaissance and Early Modern Studies. It was **noted** that there had been a delay in the production of the report, due to the ongoing discussion relating to the nature of IDCs. It was suggested that the new IDC structure was more conducive to such centres as CREMS.

The Committee **agreed** that there was clear evidence of an interesting research agenda and commented on the enthusiasm of those involved. The location, with the Berrick Saul building, was also commented on favourably. The Director was congratulated on the recent major grant award and the increased

numbers on the Masters programmes. However, it was recognised that the management of joint grants was still somewhat complex.

It was **noted** that Research Committee had now reviewed all research centres and in light of the revised governance proposal, it was **agreed** that no IDCs would be reviewed during the current academic year.

10-11/09 Research income by department and units, for the period from August 2009 to August 2010

The Committee **received** the research income by department and units, for the period from August 2009 to August 2010. It was **noted** that the outturn for the previous year was above forecast and was an increase on the previous year. However, there were significant movements within the relative amounts from different sources of funding with the income from research councils falling. There was also a fall in the number of live awards held from Research Councils. In contrast, much of the growth was from UK Health related research and the evidence was that this trend would continue in the future.

The University's success in relation to EU funding was noted, particularly as the University was already a significant holder of EU grants compared to other institutions. However, as a proportion of total research income for the University, it was relatively small. It was also apparent from the pre-REF questionnaire that EU funding was an area that departments were looking at in more detail, but the transaction costs needed to be recognised.

The data indicated that nearly all departments were diversifying in terms of the research income. Whilst data was still not available on success rates for all research councils, the information already available suggested that the success rates for grant applications were falling.

10-11/10 European Commission's 'HR excellence in research'

The Committee **noted** the award of European Commission's 'HR excellence in research' badge, which acknowledged the University's alignment with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment in relation to the Universities commitment to the principles of the Concordat. The University was one of only 10 institutions to hold this award. The Action Plan for the full implementation of the Concordat was also **received**.

10-11/11 Date of next meeting

The Committee **noted** the schedule of meetings for 2010/11. All meetings are due to take place on Wednesdays at 2.15pm

8 December 2010 – this is a revised date
19 January 2011
23 March 2011
8 June 2011

It was noted that the next meeting would take place on Heslington East and it was agreed that a tour of the new facilities would be arranged prior to the meeting.

November 2010

Anna Grey

Research Strategy and Policy Manager