

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2011

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (in the Chair)
Dr I D'Amico
Dr K Fernandes
Professor E Hancock
Professor J Hobcraft
Dr J Potts
Professor W Sherman
Dr A Sowden
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
Research Strategy and Policy Officer

Apologies for absence were received from Professor D Attwell, Professor M Collins and Professor J Steele

10-11/12 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2010.

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2010 were **approved**.

10-11/13 Meeting of Meeting 8 December 2010

The Committee **noted** that the meeting planned to be held on 8 December 2010 had been cancelled.

10-11/14 Activities of members of the Research Committee

The Committee **received** documentation on the pairings of departments with Committee members and **noted** the activities undertaken by Committee members in relation to these departments. It was **noted** that a number of

meetings were planned for the current term. It was reported that the feedback from departments was that they found the scheme useful and that some issues had already been identified.

10-11/15 Review of the Research Committee buddy scheme

The Committee **considered** the cost effectiveness and usefulness of the current buddy system. It was **noted** that it was unclear whether the scheme should be considered in relation to the departments or Research Committee effectiveness. It was **agreed** that some departments did appreciate the opportunity to discuss matters with senior members of the University, but it was not yet clear if pairing Research Committee members with departments was the most effective model.

It was **noted** that some departments would require more support and guidance than others. It was **agreed** to continue with the scheme until the end of the academic year when it would be more formally reviewed. In addition, Research Forum would be asked to comment on the matter. It was also **agreed** that it would be helpful to provide research committee members with more background information on departments, such as the Pre-REF questionnaires

ACTION AMG

It was further **noted** that a scheme for supporting departments during the REF process would need to be put in place but that this would be considered more fully when the more details of the REF process was available.

10-11/16 REF Impact pilot

The Committee **considered** a report on the recently published REF Impact Pilot. It was **noted** that, as a result of the pilot, there was more confidence that the methodology used in REF would allow the institution to present effectively the impact of its research. However, there were still concerns relating to the collection and availability of corroborating evidence. This was of particular concern for theoretical research where the application of the research was often realised in a different discipline or where work was cited in patents.

There was still some concern that in certain disciplines, the methodology created a bias towards more applied areas of a discipline and that theoretical research could be disadvantaged. However, it was recognised that the

relevant panels would be aware of this issue and should take this into consideration when developing the criteria.

10-11/17 Demonstration of the PURE Research Information System

The Committee **received** a demonstration of the recently installed PURE system to collate information on the University's research activities. It was **noted** that all departments were being visited to demonstrate the system.

It was **noted** that whilst much of the underlying data was being drawn from internal information systems and external publication databases, there was still effort required, such as the checking of imported outputs and inputting of other activities. Work was still being undertaken in relation to the importing of legacy data in relation to outputs, but it was agreed that the emphasis should be on ensuring that REF related outputs were inputted.

It was **noted** that the system would support the forthcoming REF submission, but that the data would also be used for promoting the University's research activities and could be reused for the production of CVs for research grants and possibly for performance reviews.

10-11/18 Review of the Research Ethics Framework

The Committee **received** a report on the recent review of the Research Ethics Framework and **noted** that the review had taken place within the context of a number of externally published criteria for good ethical governance. There were a significant number of recommendations made, but the aim was to create a framework that ensured researchers were accountable for the ethical issues relating to research but which did not unfairly constrain their research endeavours.

It was recognised that a key area was to ensure that staff were fully trained to recognise the ethical dimensions of research, particularly in areas where the ethical issues were less well understood. It was **noted** that the report was now being considered by the Registrar and the University Ethics Committee.

There was a discussion as to when the ethical matters relating to a project should be discussed and approved. The current sign-off process was at the application stage, but this did not expect that a full review would have been undertaken at this point, merely that ethical issues had been identified as requiring a review. To fully review all applications would be inefficient due

to the large number of rejected applications. The report had identified that there was a lack of auditing and reporting process post application.

The recommendations of the report would be considered in more detail and the Chair would ensure that the governance processes were in place to oversee the framework.

ACTION JKL/AMG

10-11/19 Assumptions for Research Grant Forecasts as part of the Medium Term Planning Process

The Committee **received** a paper on the assumptions used to forecast research grant income as part of the 2010/11 Medium Term Planning Process. It was **noted** that these assumptions were used where there was no additional or specific information relating to a department's plans and were generic assumptions for a base on which to build up the forecast. It was **reported** that the main change from 09/10 was a reduction in grant success rates, in line with national trends.

The Committee **noted** that there were significant issues relating to forecasting Research Council success rates, particularly in the context of the recently published Delivery Plans. It was **agreed** that there was significant uncertainty in the external environment but that the Research and Enterprise Office would continue to monitor the situation.

ACTION HAW

10-11/20 Research income by department and units, for the period from August 2010 to October 2010

The Committee **received for information** the research income by department and units, for the period from August 2010 to October 2010.

10-11/21 Research income by department and units, for the period from August 2010 to December 2010

The Committee **received** the research income by department and units, for the period from August 2010 to December 2010. It was **noted** that the income was currently in line with forecasts, but that some departments were more reliant on specific income sources. As such, there needed to be careful handling of income portfolios in the current challenging times. It was clear from the MTP

meetings that more departments were considering increasing applications to EU funding sources and that support for this would need to be reviewed.

ACTION MM

10-11/22 Issues relating to the recently published Research Council Delivery Plans

The Committee **considered** a report on the issues relating to the recently published Research Council Delivery Plans. It was **noted** that capital expenditure has been severely cut and that there was a shift in the culture of Research Councils to a more directive model of research funding allocation. In addition, funding for research students would only be available via block grants and all councils were considering ways to reduce the number of applications which they received.

It was also **noted** that the budgets presented by the Councils excluded administrative budgets and that all councils had made assumptions that reductions in administrative budgets could be achieved via various administrative efficiency measures. In addition, there were also assumptions based on the reduction in indirect costs. Should these savings not be realised, further reductions in research grant budgets might be implemented.

10-11/23 List of Main Panel and Sub Panel Chairs for the forthcoming REF

The Committee **received for information** a list of the Main Panel and Sub Panel Chairs for the forthcoming REF. It was **noted** that a number of York staff had been invited to serve on panels and it was requested that, in order to ensure that such staff were offered support, names were passed to the Research Strategy and Policy Office.

10-11/24 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the date of the next meeting was Wednesday 23 March 2011 at 2.15pm

January 2011

Anna Grey

Research Strategy and Policy Manager