

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2011

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (in the Chair)
Professor M Collins
Professor K Fernandes
Professor E Hancock
Professor J Hobcraft
Professor Paul Kaye
Dr J Potts

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

Apologies for absence were received from Dr I D'Amico, Professor F Hardman, Dr S Rees Jones, Dr A Sowden and Research Grants and Contracts Office Manager

11-12/23 Minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2011.

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 October 2011 were **approved**.

11-12/24 Enterprise activities and the relationship to Research Committee

Arising from M011-12/03 the Committee **considered** a paper from the Director of the Research and Enterprise on enterprise activities and the relationship to Research Committee. It was **noted** that the operational activities and governance structures were not ideally aligned, as the area was covered by two different Pro Vice Chancellors. In addition, the Business Advisory Committee only had a very limited remit which did not cover all of the enterprise activity.

It was suggested that the Research Committee should take a more proactive interest in translational research activities, but that this would need discussion with the Pro Vice Chancellor of Enterprise.

It was **noted** that much of the work of the Research and Enterprise Office, and many of the staff were funded from HEIF funds and the Committee asked to receive a breakdown of where funding was allocated.

ACTION MM

It was **noted** that the Strategic Initiative Fund, which operated separately from the Research Priming Fund, did not formally report to Committee. It was **agreed** that it would be appropriate for Research Committee to receive an annual report of projects and funding. In addition SIF funded projects should also be set up within Agresso so that they could be individually monitored and loaded into PURE, to allow better tracking of the internal funding that staff received

ACTION MM

It was **agreed** that the governance of enterprise activities be discussed by the Director and the relevant PVCs and the Registrar with a view to coming to a governance arrangement that was fit for purpose. It was agreed that these discussions should feed into the overarching discussion on the role and remit of Research Committee

ACTION PVC (R)

11-12/25 Postgraduate Research Student development matters

Arising from MM11-12/09, the Pro Vice Chancellor for Research **reported** that the paper on PGR matters had been delayed pending more wide ranging further discussions. It was **noted** that the QAA Code of Practice for Research Students was currently being reviewed and that Research Committee would be asked to comment. Preparations for the forthcoming QAA visit had highlighted a number of issues and that the PVC(R) was minded to involve Research Committee in the strategic oversight of PGR matter and developing stronger support structures.

There was also a discussion on the implications for Departmental Research Committees and the suggestion that DRCs should take responsibility for PGRs rather than Boards of Study. It was **agreed** to discuss this issue further at Research Forum.

ACTION AMG

11-12/26 Departmental responses to the Research Committee reviews of specific Departments following RAE 2008 results

The Committee **considered** the departmental responses to the Research Committee reviews of specific Departments following RAE 2008 results. It was **noted** that there was a large difference in the approach from departments in relation to the Research Committee recommendations but that some departments had made significant improvements to their research management. It was **agreed** that members would send written comments in order to provide detailed feedback to departments on progress.

ACTION ALL

It was also **agreed** that some of the comments demonstrated a lack of understanding in relation to the funding of research activities and that this needed to be addressed.

There was also a question regarding those departments that had been reviewed by Planning Committee. It was **noted** that the departments had been reviewed and that the reports would be circulated and members asked for comments

ACTION AMG

11-12/27 Report on recent guidance released on the Freedom of Information legislation and research information

The Committee **considered** a report on recent guidance released on the Freedom of Information legislation and research information and noted the need to be assured that departments had robust data management processes. It was **agreed** that whilst this was an important issue, the Information Directorate should have responsibility for ensuring compliance with the new developments. A report on the current policies, roles and responsibilities in relation to research data management would be requested from the Information Directorate for the next meeting.

ACTION AMG

In addition, the Freedom of Information Officer would be asked for details on the number of research related FoIs that were being submitted and the types of requests being made.

ACTION AMG

11-12/28 Revised departmental allocation for Research Committee members in relation to supporting departments for the forthcoming REF

The Committee **considered** a revised departmental allocation for Research Committee members in relation to supporting departments for the forthcoming REF. It was **agreed** to suspend the departmental buddying system for the REF period and to use the REF contact links instead.

Due to a number of other issues, it was **agreed** that Prof Collins would continue to work with the History of Art department on non-REF issues, in addition to the main REF contact. It was also **noted** that Prof Hardman had been missed of the list of REF contacts. Whilst the list was acceptable in principle, there was concern that additional support might be required in relation to the Physical Science subjects, due to the volume of potential Impact case studies. The list would be amended and circulated to members and departments.

ACTION RSC

[**Secretary's Note**:- Following the meeting the Chair agreed that Prof Hancock would also continue to work the School of Management on non-REF issues]

It was **noted** that the Mock REF had now been submitted and that the documentation would be submitted to Committee members as required. It was not intended that members reviewed and commented on outputs. In addition, Committee members would be given access to the relevant elements of PURE

It was suggested that some departments were still not clear on how REF panels operated in relation to assessing submissions, and it was suggested that past and current Panel members be asked to present a session at a forthcoming Research Forum to talk about how Panels operated

It was further **noted** that there were discussions taking place nationally on whether the percentage of staff submitted by an institution would be available and that it was anticipated that this information would be made available via HESA.

11-12/29 The role and development of Research Committee

In reference to MM11-12/03, the members **considered** further the role and development of Research Committee. It was **agreed** that there was a need for Research Committee to be more robust and proactive and for a structure to be

put in place to co-ordinate and foster large research collaborations. A proposal for research coordinators was discussed, though it was recognised that such a change was a decision for the Senior Management Group. However, the advantages of providing a focus for doctoral training and large collaborative bids was recognised, though there was a need to ensure that cross discipline activities were still supported.

It was **agreed** that the Committee should be involved in considering PGR strategy, feeding into future developments, ensuring interdepartmental activities across subject disciplines were encouraged and taking a lead in considering research grand challenges. As such it needed to become more managerial in its outlook.

There was a discussion as to the topics and developments that Research Committee currently oversaw and it was **agreed** to produce a report on issues that it had been previously considered, especially on a regular basis. It was also **agreed** to hold a research committee awayday to distil a global view of research opportunities, potential gaps and future developments based on the information from the Mock REF.

ACTION AMG

11-12/30 Responses from departments in relation to Internal Peer Review of grants

The Committee **considered** the responses from departments in relation to Internal Peer Review of grants. It was **noted** that not all departments had yet submitted their response and that these departments would be asked to submit the information as soon as possible.

It was **agreed** that the expectation should be that all departments would have some form of peer review of grants as a minimum standard, together with formal monitoring of grant rate submissions and success rates. In addition, this information should be reported to Research Committee on an annual basis.

It was recognised that a full review of all grants, especially when a large multi-disciplinary grant was involved, was not always appropriate and that some flexibility would need to be written into departmental procedures. However, departments did need to be more robust in ensuring that poor quality bids were not submitted and that the feedback should be seen as developmental not as merely an administrative hurdle. It was also **noted** that

cross departmental reviewing of bids via interdepartmental Research Colleges would be helpful.

It was suggested that there were two stages in relation to the development of a grant during which peer review could be useful, namely the development of the research idea and at the grant submission stage. For staff new to grant applications, providing mentoring early on in the bid writing stage was helpful.

There was concern that departments were not taking the management of grant applications seriously and that a more robust procedure would be appropriate. In particular, there appeared to be little recognition that the Research Grants and Contracts Office requested that bids were submitted 10 days in advance of a deadline, in order to give sufficient time for checking. It was **agreed** that Research Committee should ask departments to take greater note of this deadline, to reduce the operational risk that bids were submitted without sufficient oversight.

ACTION HAW

There was a view that some of the responses appeared to indicate that departments were not fully behind a more robust research management process and that there was a lack of appreciation of the importance of research grant funding. In addition, there was concern that current workload models did not fully take into account research activities and that this was an area that the University might need to develop a stronger policy on.

It was **agreed** to revisit the issue when all departments had submitted a return, with a view to producing a paper on the concerns with current processes and developing a more robust requirement.

ACTION AMG

11-12/31 Code of good practice for research

The Committee **considered** the current Code of good practice for Research and **noted** that it had been last reviewed in 2005. The Committee was concerned that there should be greater awareness of the code by academic staff, given that it underpinned most terms and conditions of research grants. It was suggested that, as with students and the plagiarism module, staff should be required to undertake training on the topic on a regular basis, for example every 3 years.

It was **agreed** that the policy needed to be updated in light of changes to data managements and the review of the current ethical framework. Members were asked to read the code and send any changes to the secretary.

ACTION ALL

11-12/32 Code of practice on the fair and transparent selection of staff for submission to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework

The Committee **considered** information from HEFCE on the required Code of practice on the fair and transparent selection of staff for submission to the 2014 Research Excellence Framework. It was **noted** that a Code of Practice would need to be written and that no selection decision could be made until it was in place.

It was **agreed** that the Code of Practice should be submitted to HEFCE for approval for the April deadline.

ACTION AMG

11-12/33 Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting was Wednesday 18 January 2012 at 2.15pm

December 2011

Anna Grey

Research Strategy and Policy Manager