

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2012

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (in the Chair)
Professor M Beaney
Professor K Fernandes
Professor E Hancock
Professor F Hardman
Professor P Kaye
Dr J Potts
Dr A Sowden

In attendance: Director of the Research and Enterprise Office
The Research Strategy and Policy Manager
Research Grants and Contracts Office Manager
IP Manager
Research Strategy and Policy Officer
REF Impact Officer
Director of Information and University Librarian

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Karl Claxton, Professor M Collins, Dr I D'Amico and Professor S Rees-Jones

11-12/34 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2011.

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2011 were **approved**.

11-12/35 Membership of the Committee

The Committee **noted** that Professor Mike Beaney and Professor Karl Claxton has joined the Committee, replacing Professor David Atwell and Professor John Hobcraft

11-12/36 Update on the Mock REF and consideration of feedback mechanism

The Committee **received** a report on the on-going Mock REF exercise and the process for managing the review of submissions by Research Committee members. Where members were unable to attend the following meeting, they were asked to submit comments in writing to the Secretary prior to the meeting. In addition, members were asked to consider what level of feedback to the department would be needed ranging from a written response to a full meeting with the PVC (R) and the department.

Given the nature of the discussion and the need to encourage a robust and full critique of submissions, it was **agreed** that where a Research Committee member was also the Chair of a Departmental Research Committee, they should leave the meeting when their department was being discussed.

It was agreed to recirculate the list as to which department was being mentored by which Committee member.

There was a discussion about when departments should discuss the grades awarded to papers as part of the REF process. It was noted that discussion on the quality of an individual's research should be seen as part of an on-going performance management process, rather than a REF activity per se. However, it was further noted that no discussion about whether members of staff would or would not be returned for REF should be undertaken at this point.

11-12/37 EPSRC Data Management Policy Road map

The Committee **received** a discussion paper on the EPSRC requirements on data management and the need to develop a roadmap for the oversight of research data. It was **agreed** that there should be a corporate responses to the issues raised and that a central solution would need to be put in place.

The need for an audit of data management, to identify the needs for the research policy was **noted**, which would include digital and non-digital data sources including lab books, whether the software used to produce to data would also need to be archived and the use of external repositories. This should clarify issues relating to the ownership of research data, especially when academic staff left the institution

It was **noted** that work was already being undertaken with external collaborators, such as White Rose. However, it was asked if this could be expanded to take account of the needs of Hull based HYMS staff, to avoid difficulties.

The difference between research data and research information was discussed and it **noted** that the current definition was a pragmatic description to allow differentiation between research outputs that would reside within PURE and the White Rose Repository and raw research data.

There was concern that the time line was extremely tight, especially for the production of best practice exemplars. In addition, it was recognised that the project could have significant resource implications. The Committee was reassured that work in this area had already begun within the institution and there were external developments that could be drawn upon. In addition, the first stage would only require limited input from departments and the resource implications for future years were being identified. It was agreed that the Senior Management Team needed to be made aware of the magnitude of the requirements.

ACTION PVC (R)

It was **noted** that additional guidance on the relationship between data management plans, data retention and data protection issues was required. It was **agreed** that this should form part of the road map implementation plan, together with communication and support for departments.

It was **agreed** that the Steering Group should be limited to the PVC (R), the Director of Information and University Librarian and the Academic Coordinators or their nominated alternates. The Secretaryship of the group would be discussed outside of the meeting. In addition the membership of the project group would be considered once a project leader had been identified.

ACTION ST/MM

The Director of Information and University Librarian was thanked for his helpful report.

11-12/38 Statement on research performance expectations

The Committee received a draft of the Statement on research performance expectation and **noted** that they had previously considered this document in

the previous year, when it had been entitled the Policy on Research Expectations.

It was **noted** that the aim of the statement was to provide clear guidance on the expectations of staff in relation to research activity and a more explicit recognition that the priorities for research should be set by the department and was not based on the priorities of individual's interests. However, this would require departments to develop more explicit research strategies that articulated what the priorities would be. Departments would need to ensure that the development of a research strategy should be a proactive and inclusive process, but that it should not be the aim to cover all individual research interests.

It was **noted** that there was no equivalent statement on teaching and learning expectations, but that this would need to be developed elsewhere.

It was **agreed** that this was a useful document which would allow departmental research strategies to be put into context and that it would be strengthened by including a reference to the need to develop a more managed research environment. It was **agreed** that whilst there was a need to encourage staff in their research endeavours, there was a need to improve the performance management of research. It was unclear to the Committee how research strategies linked to the planning cycle such as Long Term and Medium Term Planning meetings and operational matters

A number of additional points were **noted** for inclusion, including the requirements to add research activities and outputs into PURE and the need to cover other research related costs such as administrative support and replacement of high cost research equipment. It was agreed to review the wording of the research performance standards to make clear that national context related to geographical location rather than the quality marker and that it was the significance of the research in terms of publication outcomes rather than the locus of the research interest. There was concern that the opportunity for useful research blocks was not within Research Committees control.

ACTION AMG

Members were asked to supply detailed comments to the Secretary as soon as possible. Following this, the document would be circulated to Heads of Department for comment.

ACTION ALL

It was also **agreed** that following on from the document, work would be undertaken to provide a template for research strategies, including areas highlighted as part of the REF 2014 environment criteria.

ACTION AMG

11-12/39 Code of Practice for the Selection of Staff for REF2014

The Committee **received** the Draft Code of Practice for the Selection of Staff for REF2014 and **noted** that decisions on staff selection could not be undertaken until the code was formally agreed with HEFCE. It was **noted** that the institution was aiming to be as inclusive as possible, whilst recognising the need to reflect fully the institution's excellent research profile.

It was **noted** that decisions on individual staff selection were dependent on the profile of the UoA submission as a whole, including research environment and impact. Hence, setting a GPA for individual staff performance would not be sufficiently nuanced to capture the decision making process that was involved and did not capture the strategic decisions relating to different UoAs.

There was concern expressed that staff with similar output performance could be submitted in one UoA but not in another. It was noted that different UoAs already had different levels of performance and hence comparing across UoAs was neither helpful nor recommended. In addition, it needed to be recognised that the REF required a tactical approach which balanced quality against quantity, rather than a simple algorithmic activity.

The statement in 5.1 that REF submission would not be used when considering promotion was **noted** and approved but there was concern that the veracity of this statement was doubted by a significant number of staff. However, it was recognised that REF should not be used as an alternative to robust performance management processes

Members were asked to send any further comments to the Secretary a matter of urgency

ACTION ALL

11-12/40 Report on departmental research income by department and units, for the period August 2011 to December 2011
[CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE – FOIA EXEMPT – COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE]

11-12/41 Report on Enterprise Activity and expenditure
[CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE – FOIA EXEMPT – COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE]

11-12/42 Update on the Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund

The Committee **received** a report updating the activity relating to Wellcome Trust Institutional Strategic Support Fund. It was **noted** that Wellcome had now decided to require all future Wellcome bids to reference the Biomedical strategy. As such, work would need to be undertaken to ensure that such a strategy was in place.

11-12/43 Report from the 1994 Group on Postgraduate Students

The Committee **received for information** a Report from the 1994 Group on Postgraduate Students. It was recognised that the Committee would need to consider Postgraduate research matters in more detail at a future meeting.

11-12/44 Date of Next meeting

To note the date of the next meeting is Wednesday 21 March 2012 at 2.15pm

March 2012
Anna Grey
Research Strategy and Policy Manager