

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2012

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (in the Chair)
Professor M Collins
Dr I D'Amico
Professor K Fernandes
Professor E Hancock
Professor F Hardman
Professor P Kaye
Professor J Potts
Professor S Rees-Jones
Dr A Sowden

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

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Beaney, Professor Karl Claxton, Professor Brian Fulton, Professor M Ormrod and Professor A Webster

12-13/12 Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October 2012.

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 June 2012 were **approved**.

12-13/13 Membership of the Committee

Arising from M12-13/01 the Committee **noted** that in relation to the membership of the Committee, advice was currently being sought regarding administrative membership, but that there were some governance issues still to be resolved.

12-13/14 Development of the Research Committee Working Groups

Arising from M12-13/05 the Committee **noted** that in relation to the development of the Working Groups, Academic Coordinators were beginning to identify potential members, but that no meetings had yet taken place.

12-13/15 Code of Practice for Staff Selection for REF

Arising from M12-13/07 the Committee **noted** that the Code had now been formally approved by HEFCE

12-13/16 Research Committee members reports on activities undertaken in relation to the support given to their nominated departments

The Committee **noted** that Research Committee members had not undertaken any activities in relation to the support given to their nominated departments, other than the work related to the REF preparations, as expected.

12-13/17 Research Council Success Rates

The Committee **received** a report on Research Council Success Rates 2011-12 and **noted** that whilst these had improved, this only brought the institution in line with the sector average and that for some councils the institution was still below the average. In addition, success in one discipline area could hide poor performance in another.

12-13/18 Research Applications and Awards 2011-12

The Committee **received** a report on Research Applications and Awards 2011-12 and **noted** that whilst application rates were holding steady, award numbers were poor. However, whilst there were signs of improvement, there was evidence that the institution was losing market share. Work was being undertaken to benchmark performance more accurately, in order to target support more effectively.

Whilst the reasons for bids being unsuccessful was not always apparent, the evidence suggested that the institution was not as robust as it should be in relation to internal peer review of grants prior to submission and that that other institutions were better at understanding RCUK research priorities and strategy. It was also suggested that departments should systematically review the comments from funders on unsuccessful applications with a view

to improving future bids. The evidence demonstrated the importance of Departmental Research Committees in supporting and managing research activities. It was therefore important that they were focussed on how research ideas were generated, grants were developed and applications correctly reviewed prior to submission, in order to ensure grants were given the best opportunity of success.

Whilst there was some concern regarding the potential adoption of the more strategic EPSRC model for allocating research grants by other councils, it was **noted** this was being raised where appropriate but that this was not seen a major issue by other similar institutions.

It was suggested that there were a significant number of staff who were not fully conversant with how to apply for research grants. This included senior staff, often those in disciplines that had not traditionally applied for grants and were not used to collaborating on research projects. As such, more training for such staff might need to be provided and staff should be encouraged by their DRCs to attend the new grant writing programmes that were being offered. The PVC for Research would remind Chairs of DRCs to identify staff to attend the current grant training programmes.

ACTION JL

12-13/19 Research Grant Income (FOIA Exempt)

12-13/20 Research Grant Peer Review Process

The Committee **considered** a paper on the Research Grant Peer Review Process and **noted** this topic had been discussed previously. Whilst a number of departments had developed review processes, it was **agreed** that few were as robust as expected and a minimum standard for internal peer review was proposed. This would still give departments flexibility to manage grant applications, but would give a common framework to operate within. The paper also clarified how the institution would handle those grants calls with clear or implied quotas.

It was **agreed** that the minimum standards should include a review of the justification of research costs, but that the costing details would be managed via existing processes. Whilst it was important that there was some flexibility with regard to deadlines, it was **noted** that DRCs did need to take responsibility for ensuring that the grants were properly reviewed. It was also suggested that the departments be encouraged to develop a checklist for

reviewers, such as considering the pathways to impact. It was **agreed** that in the first instance it was essential to set a basic level of peer review against which departments could add additional requirements as required. It was **agreed** that departments should publish the procedures on their websites.

There was concern that much of the work of departments was focussed on teaching deadlines and hence research grants were given a lower priority. It was **agreed** that this was a culture that needed to be changed and that grant applications needed to be planned more strategically. One option would be to ensure research grant writing was recognised within workload models.

It was **agreed** that after four months, departments would be asked to provide details of their peer review process and that Research Committee would be asked to evidence that the process was being followed as part of their annual reports.

Subject the changes suggested, the minimum requirements for peer review were **approved**.

ACTION HAW

12-13/21 Confidentiality and REF

The Committee **received** a paper on confidentiality in relation to REF2014 preparations. It was **noted** that during the development of case studies, a need for a number of Non-disclosure Agreements (NDAs) had been identified. In order for these to be appropriately managed, it had been **agreed** that members of staff involved in reviewing REF submissions would need to complete a declaration of interests, including work that might be undertaken in relation to University activities. Members of the Committee were therefore asked to return that Declaration of Interest Forms to the REF Impact Officer as soon as possible.

ACTION ALL

The Committee were reminded that all REF assessment discussions should be treated as strictly confidential and that these would be deemed as FoI exempt. Whilst this had been the case for previous submissions, the case studies had highlighted the need for more robust procedures, due to the commercially sensitive data that was involved. Members were asked to read the requirements on confidentiality in the paper and ensure that all information was stored securely.

12-13/22 Assessors for Research and Impact Strategies and Impact Templates and update on departmental submissions

The Committee **received** information on Assessors for Research and Impact Strategies and Impact Templates and were given an update on departmental submissions. It was **noted** that in relation to research strategy, HYMS had now submitted a document and that the only outstanding response was from SPSW. A number of Impact Strategies were still pending

12-13/23 Departmental Research Strategies

The Committee **reviewed** the Departmental Research Strategies and made comments on individual strategies which would be forwarded to the respective department.

In addition, the Committee **noted** a number of generic comments with the main conclusion that whilst significant time and effort had clearly been spent on the documents, very few of the strategies demonstrated a clear articulation of departmental priorities and few described current research strengths, other than in a generic way. In light of this departments would be asked to reconsider their strategies and ensure that they provided this information, in line with the original request. A number of strategies were clearly exemplars and would be circulated to provide an indication of the type of information that is expected.

ACTION AMG

12-13/24 Departmental Impact Strategies

The Committee **reviewed** the Departmental Impact Strategies and made comments on individual strategies which would be forwarded to the respective department.

Whilst many of the strategies were more advanced than anticipated, the Committee **noted** a number of generic comments, in particular that many strategies did not consider how to take account of, or factor in, the time of their academic staff as a resource. Additionally, many strategies could have made more reference to the central resources which can be drawn upon, such as the staff in the Research and Innovation Office.

Measuring and reporting on impact was felt to be the least developed aspect of impact strategies. Some made useful reference to future usage of Pure for

this purpose, and it was **noted** that Pure would function as a way to collect and report on impact activities.

The strongest strategies outlined a vision of impact within their department, which demonstrated what impact meant in the context of their department, and therefore, how they would approach impact activity.

In future, impact strategies should be able to refer to research strategies (and vice versa) to link both aspects together more clearly.

12-13/25 UoA Impact Templates (FOIA Exempt)

12-13/26 Minutes of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 5 October 2011

The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 5 October 2011

12-13/27 Research Pump Priming Fund Committee held on 31 August 2012

The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the Research Pump Priming Fund Committee held on 31 August 2012

12-13/28 Research Pump Priming Fund Committee held on 19 September 2012

The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the Research Pump Priming Fund Committee held on 19 September 2012

12-13/29 Summary of the allocation of Research Pump Priming Funds 2012-13

The Committee **received for information** the summary of the allocation of Research Pump Priming Funds 2012-13

12-13/30 Report to the Wellcome Trust in relation to the C2D2 funding

The Committee **received for information** a copy of the report to the Wellcome Trust in relation to the C2D2 funding

12-13/31 Date of next meeting

The Committee noted the date of the next meeting on Wednesday 16 January 2013 at 2.15pm

December 2012
Anna Grey
Research Strategy and Policy Manager