

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2014

Present: The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
Professor Michael Beaney
Dr Irene D'Amico
Dr Jon Finch
Professor Timo Gans
Professor Frank Hardman (MM39 – 48 only)
Professor Paul Kaye
Professor Jennifer Potts
Professor Martin Smith
Professor Jo Swaffield
Professor Stuart Bell
Professor Andy Tyrrell (acting Academic Co-Ordinator,
Sciences)

In attendance: Director of the Research and Enterprise Office
Research Strategy and Policy Manager
Research Grants and Contracts Manager
Director of the Researcher Development Team (MM44 - 45
only)
REF Impact Officer (MM46 - 47 only)
Research Integrity Project Officer (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Claxton, Professor Fulton, Professor Ormrod and Dr Rees Jones.

13-14/39 Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2013 were **approved**, subject to an amendment to M13-14/16 item (c), to read 'The new Vice-Chancellor *and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research*' (italics indicate addition) (RC.13-14/30). In relation to M13-14/23, the Committee **noted** that a revised draft of the publications policy would come to the meeting on 19 March.

In relation to M13-14/25, it was **reported** that 25 out of 28 departmental research strategies had been received. Of the three outstanding, one was

expected imminently, and two departments had referred to their versions from the previous year. This would be picked up by the Chair.

13-14/40 Research data management

Arising from M13-14/24, it was **reported** that the RSPO was working with the Information Directorate on a final draft, which was near completion and would be brought to the next meeting in March. The Deputy Director of Information (Information Services) would attend the meeting to speak to the item.

It was further **reported** that the EPSRC had sent out a short survey to individual academics asking about awareness of institutional progress in implementing the EPSRC Policy Framework on Research Data, but that institutional representatives working on implementation had not been contacted. It was **decided** that the Academic Co-Ordinator for the Sciences would look into the extent to which other colleagues within the cluster had received and responded to the survey.

ACTION: AT

13-14/41 Development of a new University Research Strategy

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair on plans to develop a new University Research Strategy, to be in place for January 2015. Initiated by the Vice-Chancellor, a preliminary draft was to be presented to SMG at its next meeting, and following consideration by Council in February, Research Committee would be asked to contribute to the drafting process at its next meeting in March. Input would also be gathered from departments via DRCs, drawing on departmental research strategies, and from the Academic Co-Ordinators, in order to ensure engagement and involvement across the institution. Although the outcome of REF would not be known until the end of the year, sufficient information on levels of departmental activity had been gathered in the course of the REF exercise in order to inform these discussions.

The Committee **noted**:

- (a) The intention that the Strategy should identify a number of broad and appropriate research themes, focusing on the University's research strengths internationally. The allocation of support and resources would follow these themes, and plans for enhanced operational support would be developed alongside the Strategy itself.

- (b) The importance of interdisciplinarity as a research strength at York; however, there was a need to rationalise the University's portfolio of research centres and institutes.
- (c) Associated plans to establish a Research Postgraduate School, strategically led by a senior academic, and supported by coherent governance and operational structures which took into account the role of departments and DTCs
- (d) That broad support had already been expressed by SMG for the above approach.

The Committee also **noted** that its input into the consultation would take place following changes to its membership and terms of reference agreed at the previous meeting (M13-14/16 refers), which were to be considered by Senate for approval at the end of the month.

13-14/42 Report on the governance of research integrity at York: ethics (FOIA exempt)

13-14/43 Report on the governance of research integrity at York: the role of DRCs (FOIA exempt)

13-14/44 Report on the governance of research integrity at York: awareness, training and guidance (FOIA exempt)

13-14/45 Careers in Research Online Survey

The Committee **considered** a report on the Careers in Research Online Survey (RC.13-14/36). The Director of the Researcher Development Team attended for this item. It was **noted** that the report presented the institutional results, focusing on areas of interest to the Committee. Although points of comparison had been made with the Russell Group in relation to the 2013 results, there was no meaningful comparison available relating to the University's previous performance: the University had last taken part in 2009, since when the survey had undergone significant change.

The Committee **noted** the statistics in the section relating to Equality and Diversity, and in particular that the percentage of respondents who considered that University staff were not fairly treated on the basis of gender was significantly higher than in relation to other attributes. It **decided** to refer the report to the Chair of the University's Athena Swan Committee for consideration and further investigation if appropriate. The Committee also

decided that the report should be referred to the University's Operations Group via the Director of HR, for consideration in a broader context.

ACTIONS: RD

The Committee **noted** that because the survey was completed anonymously, there was no way of informing participants directly of the University's results. However, following referral to Athena Swan, the Chair would consider whether it would be helpful for the RSPO to send the report to Chairs of DRCs for information.

ACTION: Chair & RSPO

The Committee **noted** that it would be possible to break the statistics down further by discipline and cluster in response to specific issues, but that it would not be feasible to reproduce the whole report in multiple discipline-specific versions.

13-14/46 Lessons learned from REF2014 (FOIA exempt)

13-14/47 Report of the working group on Embedding Impact in Research

The Committee **considered** the finalised report from the working group on Embedding Impact in Research (RC.13-14/35). The REF Impact Officer attended for this item.

During discussion, the Committee **noted**:

- Impact was an essential component of a leading research university
- The importance of building up impact evidence in relation to current as well as future research, in order to place departments in a strong position for REF 2020. Impact needed to be embedded within departments so that activities and evidence of their impact were planned and recorded on an ongoing basis as part of business as usual
- The need to co-ordinate impact activity and supporting resources across the University
- The need for a central database to collate contacts between departments and external organisations was much debated, and other HE institutions had struggled to introduce something along these lines
- The REF definition of impact was circumscribed within a given period of time, which had proved problematic for medical research and some

partnerships with industry. It was **noted** that this was likely to be raised by the REF panels themselves as part of the post REF2014 review at national level

- Support was expressed for the recommendation that impact should be built into performance review and considered as part of the supporting case for promotion.

The Committee **approved** the final report and further **agreed** that:

- (a) There was a need for a discrete high level University statement on impact in order to:
 - i. focus institutional understanding of the term, thereby promoting ownership
 - ii. inform the formulation of departmental impact strategies (as requested by departments)
 - iii. meet the requirements of the ESRC for the Impact Accelerator Award

The Committee further **agreed** that the University's impact statement should tie in with the broad themes of the new University Research Strategy. It was **noted** that a draft statement would come to the Committee for approval in due course

ACTION: Research and Enterprise, working with the Chair

- (b) Academic Co-Ordinators should lead on sharing successful Impact Summaries/Pathways to Impact between departments and clusters

ACTION: Academic Co-ordinators

- (c) Relationships with key external organisations should be managed on an individual basis rather than via a central database.

13-14/48 Research Grant Income to Month 2 (September 2013) (FOIA exempt)

13-14/49 Pricing principles and variable elements of HEFCE QR (FOIA exempt)

13-14/50 Reports from Committee members

The Committee **noted** concerns that there was a perception among some staff that promotion on the basis of research excellence should be subject to a length of practice requirement. However, it was **noted** that this was not articulated in

the University's promotions criteria, which were robustly evidence-based - although it was acknowledged that in practice it would take time to build up the necessary portfolio of evidence. The Committee **noted** that issues relating to level of appointment and eligibility for promotion were being considered by the Performance Excellence project.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

13-14/51 Minutes of the meeting of the University Ethics Committee held on 1 November 2013

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the University Ethics Committee held on 1 November 2013 (RC.13-14/39).

13-14/52 Minutes of the meeting of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 30 September 2013

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 30 September 2013 (RC.13-14/40).

13-14/53 Date of next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of its next meeting: Wednesday 19 March 2014 at 2.15pm in HG17.

January 2014
Alice Wakely
Research Integrity Project Officer