

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
Dean, Faculty of Sciences
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Professor John Clark
Professor Jason Edwards
Dr Jonathan Finch
Professor Timo Gans
Dr Mary Leng
Professor William McGuire
Professor Martin Smith
Professor Jo Swaffield
Director of Research & Enterprise
Deputy Director of Research & Enterprise
Research Strategy and Policy Manager

In attendance: Ms Liz Waller (RC.15-16/38 only)
Dr Alice Wakely (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Brown and Professor Stoneham.

15-16/31 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2015 (RC.15-16/23).

Arising from M15-16/23(h), it was suggested that data from the Research Councils on office rejects should be considered by Faculty Research Groups

as a whole. The Committee **agreed** that the Associate Deans (Research) would work with Research Grants and Contracts to determine the best way of taking this forward.

15-16/32 Funder strategy groups

Arising from M14-15/21 and M15-16/21, regarding compilation of informal information on colleagues with knowledge of funders and experience of successful applications, the Committee **received** the following updates:

- (a) The Research Strategy and Policy Manager **confirmed** that relevant 'Activities' data within Pure could be set to 'within Pure only';
- (b) The Director of Research & Enterprise **reported** that a formal end date was not appropriate for this piece of work: data would be collected in Pure on an ongoing basis. To date, there had been no formal drive to encourage staff to enter these data. The Committee **noted** the benefits of having such data available to departments and the University.

15-16/33 Academic workload modelling and allocation project

Arising from M15-16/24, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities provided an oral progress report on the research element of the academic workload modelling and allocation project. The Committee **noted** that the Dean of the Faculty of the Arts and Humanities and the Research Strategy and Policy Manager represented this element on the project working group, and that they had recommended to the group that activities within the research area should be differentiated as follows:

- (a) Internally funded research;
- (b) Externally funded research;
- (c) Managing the research of others;
- (d) Research student supervision;
- (e) Consultancy and knowledge transfer;
- (f) Impact. The Committee **noted** that whilst much impact activity would form an intrinsic part of externally funded research, this additional category would acknowledge substantial strategic pieces of work relating to impact;

(g) Acknowledgement of time for contributions such as sitting on a research panel.

It had been advised that 'sabbaticals' were not an activity in their own right, and should simply be acknowledged within time allocations. Further consideration would need to be given to the management of data relating to research activities.

The Committee expressed concern at reports that the gestation and rollout period now proposed for the project was longer than originally anticipated (i.e. full implementation from 2016/17). It **noted** that implementation of this project underpinned much of the work in train in the research area, and **decided** to request a formal progress report from the working group, including a timeline for implementation.

ACTION: Chair to approach JAR

15-16/34 Research Committee action log

Redacted paragraph - CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee further **noted** that the allocation of outstanding actions to the Faculty Deans needed to be reviewed following the appointment of the Associate Deans (Research).

ACTION: AW in consultation with Faculty Deans & Associate Deans (Research)

There was also a need for greater specificity in some of the actions proposed, in particular M15-16/27 in relation to development of impact case studies.

ACTION: Chair, Faculty Deans, Associate Deans (Research) & RSPO to discuss further

15-16/35 Report from the Chair on recent developments - CONFIDENTIAL & FOI EXEMPT

15-16/36 Developments in the external research framework

The Committee **considered** recent developments in the external research framework, in the form of

- (a) Extracts from the Higher Education Green Paper: *Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice* relating to research (RC.15-16/25)

and

- (b) The Nurse Review of Research Councils: Recommendations (RC.15-16/26).

The item was introduced by the Chair. The Committee **noted** that the Green Paper focused largely on teaching and the proposed TEF, and that the PVC for Teaching, Learning and Students was preparing a paper on the University's response to these elements. More detail in relation to research was provided by the Nurse Review.

In the course of discussion, the Committee **noted** the following:

- (a) The proposals that the Haldane principle and the dual support funding system should be maintained were welcomed. However, the proposal to combine Research Council (i.e. UK-wide) funding with QR funding (England only) under one body raised significant concerns.
- (b) Concern was also expressed in relation to the potential loss of HEFCE's expertise and administrative efficiency.
- (c) The Nurse proposal for a single overarching body for the Research Councils without a total merger was viewed as reasonably positive, although it was very important to maintain the Research Councils' levels of expertise. The proposed closeness to government and BIS was potentially a cause for concern, and in general, care was needed with the constituency of panels making high level decisions in relation to funding.
- (d) Regarding potential changes to the administration of funding, support for the status quo had the advantage of maintaining stability.
- (e) It was in the University's interests to make constructive recommendations regarding the effective and independent distribution of QR.
- (f) It was likely that efficiency savings would be sought through the use of metrics. Concerns had already been expressed by the Russell Group over the use of metrics both for the TEF and for distribution of QR funding. The Committee further **noted** that information regarding a review of REF was expected to be circulated shortly, and that it was possible that the review might be conducted from outside the sector, which was a matter of concern in terms of depth of understanding of the issues involved.
- (g) Regarding the intention expressed in the Green Paper to look at better integration of impact assessment in future REF exercises, it was essential that universities should be informed of any proposed changes as soon as possible.

- (h) There was a risk that closer links with InnovateUK might drain the Research Councils' budgets (or vice versa): it was unclear exactly what might be ringfenced.
- (i) The importance of research-led teaching had been acknowledged across the University. The Committee **noted** that the link between research and teaching had not been well articulated within the sector, and that the potential separation of funding for the two represented a threat to the research-intensive universities, particularly in terms of the additional costs of research-led teaching being acknowledged.

An overall lack of clarity and detail within the two papers was **noted**.

The Committee **noted** the questions relating to research within the Green Paper on which responses were sought: the University would be submitting a formal response, as would the Russell Group as a whole. It was **agreed** that a draft of the University's response in relation to the research-related questions should be circulated to members for comment in early January.

ACTION: Chair & AG

15-16/37 Responsible use of metrics

The Committee **considered** a paper on responsible use of metrics (RC.15-16/27). It **noted** the need to develop guidance in this area to ensure that metrics were used responsibly and reliably within the institution, taking into account disciplinary differences. The Committee **approved** the paper's proposal to establish a small working group to this end. In terms of timing, it was **agreed** that the first meeting should be held in February, but the project would need to benchmark parallel developments within peer institutions, and engage with any recommendations emerging at national level, before any guidance was finalised. Committee members were invited to contact the Research Strategy and Policy Manager if interested in contributing to the working group.

15-16/38 Amended (July 2015) HEFCE Open Access requirements for the next REF

The Committee **considered** an update on the amended (July 2015) HEFCE Open Access requirements for the next REF, outlining the potential implications for the University and setting out the activities in train to help

the University to meet these requirements (RC.15-16/28). Ms Waller attended the meeting to speak to the item.

The Committee **approved** the following recommendations:

- Researchers should be encouraged to deposit their author-accepted manuscripts into Pure as soon as possible after acceptance;
- Researchers publishing through the gold OA route should deposit the author accepted manuscript as required by the University Policy on the Publication of Research. The final published version of the record should also be deposited into Pure.

In relation to the oversight role proposed for Faculty Research Groups, the Committee **noted** that this raised the broader question of the role of faculties in the management of research. It **agreed** that the Committee would need to discuss the proposals in this area which were currently under preparation. Likewise, further information was needed in relation to the next REF, regarding how it would be managed and the role of faculties in this process. Nevertheless, the Committee acknowledged the need for the University to be compliant with Open Access requirements by the deadline of 1 April 2016, in order to be in a position to make a strong REF return and to meet the requirements of a number of funders. It **noted** that on the basis of the available information, current compliance rates within the University were low. The Committee **agreed** that the Associate Deans (Research) should not be responsible for *assuring* departmental compliance; however, it **decided** that the Associate Deans (Research) did have an important role to play in promoting and helping to facilitate departmental compliance in the short term, through the Faculty Research Groups.

ACTION: Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **noted** that the Library would be able to provide the Associate Deans (Research) and the Faculty Research Groups with the necessary data in January to look at current levels of compliance. It was suggested that historic data on annual numbers of outputs might be used as context. The Library would also increase its own communications with departments on the need for compliance.

ACTIONS: LW & Library Research Support Team

It was further **noted** that in the longer term, once faculty structures and responsibilities had been finalised, a mechanism would need to be

established for Heads of Department to report on departmental compliance to University Research Committee.

In relation to the handling of exceptions to Open Access publication, the Committee **noted** that these decisions would need to be academic-led. Following discussion, it was **agreed** that the Library would work with the Associate Deans (Research) on an exceptions procedure.

ACTION: LW & Library Research Support Team, working with Associate Deans (Research)

15-16/39 Post-REF Review - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/40 Post-REF departmental action plans - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/41 ADRR 2014-15: feedback to departments - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/42 Quarter 1 Research Grant Forecast Review - FOI EXEMPT

15-16/43 Research Councils: success rates benchmarking - FOI EXEMPT

15-16/44 EPSRC Strategic University Comparison Report on Diversity

The Committee **considered** the EPSRC Strategic University Comparison Report on Diversity for the University of York (RC.15-16/33). It **noted** that this was the first year that the EPSRC had produced this information, and that more comprehensive data were likely to be made available in future. It was possible that other Research Councils might also follow suit.

The Committee **noted** that the report had been shared with the relevant HoDs and Diversity leads. The data in the report were rather limited, making it difficult to draw many conclusions; however, it had been **noted** that

- The University's percentage of applications by female colleagues was in line with the sector;
- Whilst the University's overall success rate had been rising and was now above the sector norm, the success rate had been less good for female colleagues over the past two years. However, this had followed two years of 100% success rates, so could represent a fluctuation on small numbers.

15-16/45 Research Equipment Database

The Committee **considered** a paper on the University of York Research Equipment Database (RC.15-16/34). The Director of Research & Enterprise spoke to the item. The Committee **noted** the background to the project, its aims and potential benefits, details of progress to date and potential barriers to further progress, as set out in the paper. The Committee **approved** the third phase of development of the database, and **noted** that the Faculty for the Sciences would now take ownership of the project, led by its Operations Manager.

15-16/46 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise - FOI EXEMPT

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

15-16/47 HEFCE report on *Characteristics of high performing research units*

The Committee **received** for information the HEFCE report on *Characteristics of high performing research units* (November 2015) (RC.15-16/35).

15-16/48 Minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Humanities Faculty Research Group held on 12 November 2015

The Committee **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Arts and Humanities Faculty Research Group held on 12 November 2015 (RC.15-16/36).

15-16/49 Minutes of the meetings of the Social Science Faculty Research Group held on 8 September 2015 and 10 November 2015

The Committee **received** the minutes of the meetings of the Social Science Faculty Research Group held on 8 September 2015 and 10 November 2015 (RC.15-16/37).

15-16/50 Minutes of the meeting of the Science Faculty Research Group held on 12 November 2015

The Committee **received** the minutes of the meeting of the Science Faculty Research Group held on 12 November 2015 (RC.15-16/38).

15-16/51 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Wednesday 27 January 2016 at 9.15am, Room H/G17, Heslington Hall.

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December 2015