

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2016

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
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
Dean, York Graduate Research School (except M15-16/64)
Professor John Clark
Professor Jason Edwards
Dr Jonathan Finch
Professor Timo Gans
Dr Mary Leng (except M15-16/64)
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: Mr Simon Davis (RC.15-16/61 only)
Ms Liz Waller (RC.15-16/62 & 63 only)
Ms Kirsty Dillingham (RC.15-16/70 only)
Dr Helen Jones, Research Impact Officer
Dr Alice Wakely (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor Bell, Professor Nik Brown and Professor Fulton.

15-16/52 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 9 December 2015 (RC.15-16/39).

15-16/53 Annual Departmental Research Reviews 2014/15

Arising from M15-16/19, the Committee **received** an oral update on provision of feedback to departments in the Social Sciences on ADRRs 2014/15. It **noted** that all meetings with departments had taken place apart from two which had been scheduled for the coming weeks.

15-16/54 Preparing for the Impact element of the next REF

Arising from M15-16/27, the Committee **received** an oral update from the Associate Dean (Research) in the Sciences on discussions regarding effective faculty-level support for impact in the Sciences. It **noted** the following:

- Discussions had been held with all HoDs and Chairs of DRC in the Sciences, and all departments had appointed Impact leads. It had been agreed to set up an Impact group for the Sciences which would hold its first meeting in the next few weeks. The Research Impact Officer was involved;
- Funding was potentially available to support an Impact support position at Faculty level for six months; thereafter, the Faculty Impact group would need to review provision for the longer term;
- Good practice relating to Impact would be shared across all three faculties.

15-16/55 Research Committee action log

The Committee **considered** an update on its action log (RC.15-16/40). It **noted** that a number of actions had been reallocated from the Faculty Deans to the Associate Deans (Research) as appropriate. In relation to M15-16/27: Development of impact case studies, it was **noted** that further clarification was needed in terms of the action required. The Committee **agreed** that appropriate mechanisms were now in place within all three faculties to support the development of case studies, and **noted** that there were plans for a University-wide forum to discuss impact issues across faculties.

15-16/56 Report from the Chair on recent developments

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair on recent developments. It **noted** the following:

- (a) The University's response to the Green Paper had now been circulated to all staff by the Vice-Chancellor's Office. The timing for preparing the response had meant that it had not been possible to involve all Committee members; however, the Chair and the Research Strategy and Policy Manager had written

the research elements. A response from the Russell Group had also been submitted, and was available online at <http://russellgroup.ac.uk/news/response-to-the-he-green-paper/>. It was clear that there was still a lot of detail to be fleshed out in relation to the Green Paper's proposals, some of which would be picked up by the Stern Review of REF. In the meantime, the University would continue to focus on the quality of its research and the support provided.

(b) **Redacted paragraph - FOI EXEMPT**

(c) In October 2015, the University had co-ordinated twelve bids to the Worldwide Universities Network Research Development Fund, for small-scale grants in areas of global challenge. For this year, the submission process had been formalised and all bids apart from one had been reviewed by Research Priming Fund Committee members prior to submission. £6,000 of RPF funding had been ringfenced by the RPF Committee and allocated as match funding to support the four bids which were successful:

- *Building sustainable mountain systems in sub-Saharan Africa: assessing the linkages between communities, ecosystem services, environment and health*, led by Dr Robert Marchant from the Environment Department;
- *Air Sensors Everywhere*, led by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, and involving the Department of Chemistry at York;
- *Climate Resilient Open Partnership for Food Security: CROP-FS*, led by the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and involving the York Biology Department and YESI;
- *Data Analysis with Privacy Protection for Epidemiological Research (DAPPER)*, led by the University of Bristol and involving the Centre for Health Economics and the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination.

(d) New support and governance arrangements had been agreed for the University's Athena SWAN activity, in response to the expanded scope of the scheme, as follows:

- A central steering group, chaired by the PVCR;
- A University-wide forum to share good practice, chaired by Professor Paul Walton;
- Faculty-level working groups, to support departments in preparing submissions, and coordinate Athena SWAN work within each Faculty;
- A full-time Athena Swan Co-ordinator as part of the Equality & Diversity team.

15-16/57 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **received** oral reports from the Associate Deans (Research) on recent developments, as follows:

Arts & Humanities

- Meetings were planned with all departments, to discuss research planning and support, impact case studies, and the value of metrics. The HRC Impact Officer would be involved;
- Concerns had been raised by some departments regarding workload modelling in relation to research.

Sciences

- An EPSRC visit had taken place the previous week, involving the Department of Chemistry and the Plasma Institute in particular;
- The Faculty Research Group was focusing on departmental research policy, and approaches to benchmarking quality.

Social Sciences

- Chairs of DRC had agreed to share departmental research performance expectations, and meetings were being held with individual departments to discuss implementation;
- There was cross-departmental agreement on the need for a Faculty-level role to support Impact. Proposals to support this role from the IAA fund would need the agreement of the ESRC.
- The ESRC DTP bid was due for submission on 18 February. It was **noted** that similar opportunities were anticipated in the Sciences and via the AHRC later in the year, and that a consistent approach to match funding was needed.

15-16/58 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise

The Committee **received** a report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (RC.15-16/41 – *FOI Exempt*). It **noted** current staffing pressures within the RDM and BDM teams: details of interim arrangements would be communicated to departments shortly. In relation to the two vacant posts, role reviews would be undertaken prior to the recruitment process, and faculties and Chairs of DRC would be consulted as part of this process. It was suggested that it might be helpful to raise awareness of the situation at Research Forum.

In relation to the data model for Pure, it was **noted** that it might be helpful to review the University's top ten REF Environment statements in order to identify what data it would be helpful for Pure to collect.

The Committee **agreed** that it would be helpful to circulate a copy of the report to Chairs of DRC.

15-16/59 BIS Stern Review of REF

The Committee **received** for information details of the Stern Review of REF (RC.15-16/42). It **noted** that the Review had been commissioned by BIS rather than HEFCE, and consultation on the next REF exercise was not expected until after the Stern Review had reported in the summer. The Russell Group was due to discuss the proposals in the next fortnight, although it was currently unclear whether the intention was to consult with the sector.

[Secretary's note: subsequent to the meeting, the Stern Review of REF has issued a call for evidence, with a deadline of 24 March. Formal responses have been requested across the institution, including via Chairs of DRC, and a draft response will be submitted to URC's next meeting for consideration.]

The Committee further **noted** the lack of Arts and Humanities representation on the Review panel; a bias towards the Sciences was also evident on the Nurse Review panel and in relation to the BIS Science and Innovation Audits.

15-16/60 Roles and responsibilities of URC members

The Committee **considered** a draft document setting out the roles and responsibilities of URC members (RC.15-16/43), and **agreed** the following changes:

- Clarification that declaration of interests forms should be completed by all members of the Committee, not just academic members;
- Inclusion of unpaid consultancy on the list of external interests;
- Removal of the reference to the 'summer vacation'.

Regarding the operation of the Research Priming Fund Committee, it was **noted** that pre-meeting review of applications placed a considerable burden on a small number of Committee members, and there was a tight turnaround once applications had come in to identify conflicts of interest, allocate applications and appoint alternates as needed. Support was expressed for widening the pool of reviewers to include more members of URC, and it was **agreed** that all those who undertook reviews should attend the meeting in order to enable moderation of scores. It was suggested that meetings should be calendared well in advance, and all academic members should aim to be available to act as a reviewer depending on the discipline spread of applications.

ACTION: RSPO to review with Chair and bring proposals to the Committee

The Committee **decided** that re-introduction of a formal 'buddying system' between academic members and individual departments was not necessary, given the changing structure of the University with the introduction of Faculties and the Associate Deans (Research).

15-16/61 Academic Workload Modelling and Allocation Project

The Committee **received** an update on the academic workload modelling and allocation project, including a draft workload allocation model (RC.15-16/44 & 44a). Mr Simon Davis from IT Services attended the meeting and gave a presentation on this item on behalf of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students, whose apologies were **noted**. The Committee further **noted** that the update had been requested following its previous meeting on 9 December 2015, where concerns had been expressed regarding the rollout period for the project and the representation of research within it.

In addition to the information provided on the background to the project, the pilot and progress to date, and likely outcomes, the Committee **noted** the following:

- a) The proposed timeline for the project, as follows:
 - 15/16 Report produced with recommendations for rollout: formal consultation with the University and consideration of resource implications by SMG;
 - 16/17 Models and principles in place, with possible extension to pilot; software tendering process;
 - 17/18 Software made available to departments.
- b) The project team recognised that enhanced guidance was needed in relation to workload modelling and allocation in relation to research, and clarity was needed on the balance between the four proposed categories of activity (Research, Teaching, Scholarship and Citizenship);
- c) The project team also recognised the need to take account of different staff categories.

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

- i. Whilst the drivers identified for the project were laudable, there needed to be a greater focus on enabling delivery of the University Research Strategy as a core aim i.e. supporting and rewarding research excellence, rather than concentrating on developing systems. The starting point should be to look at research performance

expectations and how these articulated with performance review, rather than starting with metrics. In particular:

- The model needed to acknowledge different career stages and to include certain types of activity at professorial level such as managing research;
 - The model needed sufficient flexibility to enable staff to focus on development of world class research at appropriate points in their career.
- ii. For the most part, the categories of Teaching and Citizenship involved identifiable hours which had to be delivered, unlike Research: there was a risk that research time would be squeezed out unless there was a conscious drive to achieve a realistic balance. There was also a need to look at how decisions were made within departments on time allocations, to ensure that it was not approached predominantly from the teaching side. Overall, it was very important to address the issue of overloading staff;
 - iii. The proposed rollout period was considered to be rather drawn out, given the importance of the above;
 - iv. There was a need to aim for simplicity and adopt an heuristic approach rather than seeking to capture every detail: the more complex the model, the less likely it was to reflect reality. There was also a danger that discretionary effort would be lost;
 - v. Research activity should also include external activities such as contributions to national funding panels and/or groups which influence policy at national level;
 - vi. There was a need to revisit the University's policy on consultancy to ensure that the current figures were correct and also fit for purpose;
 - vii. The national benchmarks on research student supervision should be consulted;
 - viii. Many departments already had their own specific workload allocation models, and it was important that the group should have sight of these early on even if the departments concerned were not actively involved in the pilot.

The Committee thanked Mr Davis for his contribution to the meeting. It **noted** that the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Research Strategy and Policy Manager would be able to pursue these points further within the project working group. The Committee also **noted** that there would be a further opportunity for colleagues to comment at HoDs Forum on 10 February.

The Committee further **agreed** that Committee members would feed in further comments on the representation of research within the workload allocation model as relevant.

ACTION: ALL to send comments to WMO & AG for feedback to the project working group

It was suggested that whenever new or revised University policies and procedures were proposed, these should be accompanied by an indication of workload implications for the relevant categories of staff.

ACTION: Chair to consider further

15-16/62 Data Transfer Agreements and Open Data Licensing

The Committee **considered** a paper on the deposit of research data with the University (Data Transfer Agreements and open data licensing) (RC.15-16/45). Ms Waller, Deputy Director of Information Services and Head of the Library & Archives, attended the meeting for this item.

In the course of discussion, it was clarified that Data Transfer Agreements would avoid the need for the University deposit service to seek repeated permissions from researchers, and would ensure that appropriate mechanisms were in place when researchers moved on from the University.

The Committee **approved** the report's recommendations, namely:

- (a) That researchers should be asked to agree to the terms and conditions of deposit and access for their data as specified in a Data Transfer Agreement;
- (b) That the Creative Commons CC BY licence should be applied to open research data deposited with the University as a default option, to enable data reuse without ambiguity.

15-16/63 UK Scholarly Communications Licence

The Committee **considered** a paper on the UK Scholarly Communications Licence (RC.15-16/46). Ms Waller attended the meeting for this item.

Further to the information provided in the paper, the Committee **noted** that:

- Further discussion regarding the UK Scholarly Communications Licence had recently taken place within the Russell Group;
- The Licence had not to date been discussed formally with the publishing community;
- Legal consultation was currently in train at national level, supported by Research Libraries UK.

The Committee **noted** the potential benefits of the UK Scholarly Communications Licence as outlined in paper, and that the current timescale for early adopters was implementation in December 2016.

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

- i. In relation to the risk of becoming an early UK adopter prior to formal consultation with the publishing community, it was **noted** that the Harvard Open Access Policy had been in place for a number of years without an adverse effect on researchers' ability to publish;
- ii. There was a need to look at the potential impact on smaller publishers and the University's relationship with them, which was of particular concern within the Arts & Humanities;
- iii. The implications for patented data and the application of embargoes needed to be explored further.

The Committee **approved** the report's recommendations, namely that:

- (a) The University should be an early adopter of the UK Scholarly Communication Licence;
- (b) Further work should be undertaken to understand the interface between the Licence and the York Publications Service to remove any administrative burden from academics and researchers as the Licence is implemented.

It was **agreed** that further dialogue was needed with departments about the ramifications of the Licence.

ACTION: LW to work with Associate Deans to identify specific questions to be raised with departments.

15-16/64 Post-REF Review - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/65 Information flow between URC and Faculty Research Groups

The Committee discussed the importance of having an information flow between URC and Faculty Research Groups which was fit for purpose, and **agreed** that the Associate Deans (Research) and the Secretary would discuss this further.

ACTION: AW & Associate Deans (Research)

15-16/66 Post-REF Review - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/67 Post-REF action plan - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/68 YCCSA: success measures - CONFIDENTIAL

15-16/69 Awards benchmarking to end December 2015 - FOI EXEMPT

15-16/70 Applications and awards to end November 2015 - FOI EXEMPT

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

15-16/71 Institution-wide review of research entities

The Committee **received** for information details of the institution-wide review of research entities (RC.15-16/53). It was clarified that the remit of the review was to look at research entities (including Centres, Units, Institutes, etc) which spanned more than one department, rather than to review the organisation of research within departments, although rationalisation of the nomenclature of both types of groupings was one proposed outcome of the review.

15-16/72 Minutes of the meeting of the York Graduate Research School Board held on 30 November

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the York Graduate Research School Board held on 30 November (RC.15-16/54).

15-16/73 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Wednesday 9 March 2016 at 9.15am, in Room HG17, Heslington Hall.

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February 2016