

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2016

- Present:** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
Dean, York Graduate Research School
Dean, Faculty of Sciences
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences
Acting Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences
Professor Nik Brown (M16-17/01 - 13 only)
Professor Jason Edwards
Professor Maria Goddard
Dr Mary Leng
Professor Jenny Steele
Professor Elizabeth Tyler (except M16-17/15)
Director of Research & Enterprise (M16-17/01 - 13 only)
Research Strategy and Policy Manager
- In attendance:** Dr Karen Clegg (M16-17/12 only)
Dr Rachel Curwen (M16-17/13 only)
Ms Kirsty Dillingham (M16-17/18 & 19 only)
Dr Alice Wakely (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Clark, McGuire, Ormrod and White, and Ms Watson.

16-17/01 Membership and terms of reference

The Committee **noted** details of its membership and terms of reference (RC.16-17/01). It **noted** that updates were needed regarding references to the UEB and to Faculties, and that the Global Challenges Research Fund Steering Group should be added to the list of committees reporting in to URC.

ACTION: AW

It further **recommended** to Senate that ToR 5 should include 'the culture industry' in the list of key external stakeholders relating to research.

The Committee welcomed its new elected academic members: Professors Goddard, Steele, Tyler and White. It thanked Dr Giles for her contribution to the Committee's work as Acting Associate Dean (Research) for the Arts and Humanities, and **noted** that Professor Buchanan had resumed her role as Associate Dean (Research) and would formally attend the Committee from the next meeting onwards.

16-17/02 Elected academic members' terms of office

The Committee endorsed the extension of elected academic members' terms of office to a 30 September handover for the academic year in question (RC.16-17/02).

16-17/03 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting, and reminded to return their completed annual declaration of interests forms to the RSPO by the end of the month.

16-17/04 Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2016 (RC.16-17/03).

16-17/05 Research Committee action log

The Committee **considered** a progress report in relation to actions carried over from 2015/16 (RC.16-17/04). It **noted** that action relating to liaison with HR regarding promotion criteria in relation to Impact activity (M15-16/125 refers) was pending with the Chair. The Committee further **noted** that the action relating to consideration of Research Council information by FRGs (M15-16/23 refers) was now closed as this was occurring on a regular basis.

16-17/06 Report from the Chair

The Committee **received** an oral report on recent developments from the Chair, as follows:

- (a) The working group reviewing research entities was due to meet again in a fortnight following a consultation over the summer. There was broad agreement on the direction of the group's recommendations, and a draft report would be presented to the Committee's next meeting.
- (b) In July, UEB had considered a paper on the University workload model pilot and agreed that departments should align to common principles with flexibility for implementation using local models and preferred software. Research time would be included in time allocations, but without further defining into activity types. A further paper on implementation of this option, including further detail of process, was due to be considered by Planning Committee on 28 September, and then by UEB in October. The Committee **agreed** that the Chair should request clarification at Planning Committee in relation to:
- Time allocation for Impact activity
 - Whether time allocation for PGR supervision was to be counted under teaching or under research.

ACTION: Chair

- (c) Allocation of RCUK Global Challenges Research Funding (GCRF) received by the University had been agreed as set out in agendum 23, enclosure RC.16-17/17, with the close involvement of the Associate Deans (Research).

16-17/07 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **received** an oral report on recent developments from the Associate Deans (Research), noting the following:

- (a) The ADRR process had been conducted successfully, including use of the new feedback pro-forma: feedback was now being sent to departments and discussed with them as necessary. The Associate Deans (Research) thanked all those involved in the process.
- (b) The GCRF workshop held the previous week across all three Faculties had been very productive.
- (c) The White Rose DTP had been accredited by the ESRC, with an allocation of 38 FTE ESRC-funded studentships per year, and funding of £16.8 million over 6 years. 14 departments across all 3 Faculties were involved,

and a paper on the implications for implementation was being prepared for Planning Committee.

(d) Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION

16-17/08 Report on PGR recruitment – COMMERCIAL SENSITIVE INFORMATION

16-17/09 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise

The Committee **received** for information an oral report on recent developments from the Director of Research & Enterprise, noting the following:

(a) Personnel: Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION

(b) The Economic Development Team and the Continuing Professional Development Unit had relocated to the Hub.

(c) The University was required to submit a Knowledge Exchange Strategy to HEFCE by 31 October in order to secure HEIF funding. A draft would be circulated for comment in early October to the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the PVC-R, the Deans and Associate Deans (Research) and the Registrar and Secretary.

(d) New activity identified for the coming year raised resource implications for the Directorate, namely: Support for GCRF; launch of the new research grants management system; implementation of the Learning Needs Analysis; the research communications project; work relating to Impact; and preparations for REF2021. A paper was in preparation for UEB.

16-17/10 Implementation of the University Research Strategy: progress report

The Committee **considered** a summary of progress made in 2015/16 in relation to implementation of the University Research Strategy (RC.16-17/05).
Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION

The Committee further **noted** that the following activities were still pending:

(a) Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION

- (b) Work was currently being undertaken, for completion during 2016/17, to ensure that TRAC data were robust and that differences between departments were better understood.
- (c) Development of a research communication plan, led jointly by the Research & Enterprise Directorate and the External Relations Office.

16-17/11 Priorities for 2016/17

The Committee **considered** proposed priorities for 2016/17 arising from the University Research Strategy and external developments (RC.16-17/06). The following points were **noted**:

- (a) URC would need to maintain oversight of the management and planning of the REF2021 submission, to ensure that robust processes were in place, particularly in terms of oversight of research performance. It was **agreed** that the ADRR process had run well in 2015/16 and could be extended to monitor REF preparedness: the balance between metrics and peer review would need to be considered. A paper would be prepared for the Committee in due course, setting out further detail. Preparations for REF would also be discussed by UEB. The Committee further **agreed** that whilst it would maintain oversight of REF2021, it was not sustainable for it to be engaged at the level of detail it was for REF2014 and still maintain business as usual without additional resource.
- (b) The importance of developing a Research Communications Strategy was **noted**, particularly given the current diversity of sources of information e.g. in relation to research funding opportunities. Research & Enterprise and External Relations were organising a consultation meeting on 17 October, and academic input was essential. The Committee **agreed** that a half day rather than a full day of discussion was a more realistic time commitment for academic colleagues, and **noted** that it would be appropriate to invite academic colleagues to attend for a morning session, given that there was a Royal Society visit scheduled for the afternoon.
- (c) It was **agreed** that it was not appropriate to involve External Advisory Boards in research performance benchmarking.

(d) It was **agreed** that work on Impact was a key priority.

(e) **Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

16-17/12 Implementation of the Learning Needs Analysis for Research Training

The Committee **considered** proposals for the implementation of the Learning Needs Analysis for Research Training (RC.16-17/13). Dr Clegg attended the meeting for this item.

The Committee **noted** the importance of support for training needs as a key element underpinning the University Research Strategy. It **approved** the principles and vision developed for Research Excellence Training (RET).

In relation to the proposed governance structure to support RET, the Committee **noted** that the structure drew on existing groups as far as possible, including the YGRS Board and Operations Group. New and agile RET Steering and Operations groups were needed in order to galvanise activity in this area, and care would be taken to conduct business efficiently, and to complement rather than duplicate existing support. Structures would be reviewed following a year of operation. The Committee further **noted** that the proposed Terms of Reference and Membership had been endorsed by those listed as members. It **approved** the proposed governance structure as a working model.

Paragraph redacted- SENSITIVE INFORMATION

16-17/13 Appraisal of Research Champion Activity - CONFIDENTIAL

16-17/14 Stern Review of REF

The Committee **considered** Lord Stern's Research Excellence Framework (REF) Review: *Building on success and learning from experience* (RC.16-17/08). In the course of discussion, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) Further clarification was needed regarding:
 - i. The definition of research active staff. It was **noted** that removal of the independent staff check would reduce the administrative burden, but would also remove institutional discretion.

- ii. How the contribution of PhD students who published as sole author and then left the institution would be recognised.
 - iii. How no net increase in the number of outputs and case studies submitted across the sector would be achieved, given the recommendation that all staff should be submitted. It was **noted** that across the sector, only 43% of eligible staff had been returned in REF2014. Further work would be needed on the implications of this approach for the University and for the individual Faculties in terms of the number of outputs and case studies required;
 - iv. Whether claims made within Environment statements about research strengths would be mapped against the quality of outputs submitted.
- (b) Potential changes in staff behaviour could arise given that outputs would no longer be portable. It was **noted** that this would not necessarily have a disproportionately negative effect on early career staff since all staff would be affected. Moreover, these changes could promote stability within the sector and encourage the appointment and retention of early career staff, based on potential, early in the REF cycle.
- (c) The Committee **noted** that although the number of staff submitted would determine the number of outputs required, these would not necessarily be evenly distributed between staff.

Concern was expressed in relation to removal of the need to provide personal circumstances for staff, given that it would still be possible to measure contribution towards the average, and Units of Assessment would effectively be penalised if they had a large proportion of staff with special circumstances. However, it was further **noted** that the administrative burden associated with personal circumstances had been considerable, and that staff expectations should be managed internally. The Committee **noted** the need to revisit departmental research performance expectations by career stage in this context. In addition, it was **noted** that the proposed system would enable the contribution of those providing short-term research cover to be recognised.

Paragraph redacted – COMERCIAALLY SENSITIVE

(d) **Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

(e) URC would need to consider how to manage the increased need for institutional oversight particularly in relation to the overarching

Environment Template and interdisciplinary Impact case studies. In particular, the latter would need to be identified and resourced.

The Committee **noted** that it was anticipated that HEFCE would consult on the proposed changes for REF2021 from November 2016. Although the Review was clear that the recommendations should be adopted as a whole, it remained to be seen what the consultation would focus upon. The Committee would be invited to feed in to the University's response, including the above points as appropriate. It was also intended that a paper on REF2021 and the implications for the University, including the resources required to support both the REF submission and 'research business as usual', would be prepared for UEB in December.

16-17/15 Post-REF Review - CONFIDENTIAL

16-17/16 Post-REF Review - CONFIDENTIAL

16-17/17 Common issues arising from Post-REF Reviews – CONFIDENTIAL

16-17/18 Applications and awards for full year to July 2016 - FOI EXEMPT

16-17/19 Provisional figures relating to research income for 2015/16 - FOI EXEMPT

16-17/20 Report on the Research Priming Fund

The Committee **considered** a report on the Research Priming Fund (RC.16-17/16), and **noted** the outcomes of the July 2016 round. In relation to the comparative data provided on applications and awards by Faculty 2014/15 – July 2016, it **noted** the increasing success of Arts and Humanities departments, particularly in the most recent round. This might in part be attributable to a briefing meeting organised by the HRC and the RSPO for potential applicants from these departments, clarifying the criteria for the Strategic Capital Fund and focusing on 'what makes a good application'. The RSPO planned to review the rubric for both the RPF and Strategic Capital to ensure that the above elements were explicit, and that the Strategic Capital application form in particular focused on the key information needed to inform decision-making.

The Committee **noted** that all RPF funding for 2017 had been allocated in the July 2016 round.

Paragraph redacted- Commercially Sensitive Information

In relation to reporting on project outcomes, the Committee **agreed** that PIs who failed to report on award outcomes should be precluded from applying to subsequent rounds: this should be made explicit within the award terms and conditions, and also at the time of requesting reports. It was further **agreed** that Heads of Department should be copied in to requests for reports.

The Committee **agreed** that it would be helpful to review awards made over the past five years to identify PIs or research areas which were overly dependent on internal funding.

ACTION: RSPO

16-17/21 Annual Departmental Research Reviews 2015/16

The Committee **considered** a report on the outcomes of the Annual Departmental Research Review process for 2015/16 (RC.16-17/12 - *Confidential*). The report included copies of the feedback provided to each department, which were **received for information**. The Committee endorsed the approach for providing feedback to departments via the Associate Deans (Research).

The Committee **noted** that the process had run effectively, with the quality of departmental returns improved to a level where no resubmissions were required, beyond some points of clarification. This was seen as evidence that the annual review of research was now embedded within departments, and valuable information had been received by URC. It was further **noted** that matters relating to Research Students had been collated and would be discussed by the Graduate Research School Board.

In the course of discussion, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) The feedback form provided by the RSPO had been helpful for reviewers but an additional section to log issues raised by the department would be beneficial.
- (b) The ADRR process should ask departments to comment on equality activities such as Athena Swan.
- (c) Clarification was sought relating to a comment in the report on reviewing the quality of outputs. It was **agreed** this should be reworded to note that discussions relating to the quality of outputs should not be confined solely

to the Annual Performance Review meeting but should be an additional process that took place throughout the year.

ACTION: RSPO

- (d) It was **noted** that whilst departments had become better at writing coherent policies, evidence relating to the implementation of their policies and strategies was less apparent.
- (e) It was **agreed** that the ADRR process would be an appropriate way to gather evidence of REF preparedness. However, rather than alter the existing format significantly for 2016/17, any additional REF specific information should be requested via a separate form.

It was **noted** that the URC feedback would be added to the Management Information Gateway, and that Faculties would share both the departmental reports and the feedback via Faculty Research Groups. Faculty Research Groups would also be asked to feed back (to the RSPO in the first instance) on their experiences of the process.

ACTION: Associate Deans (Research)

Proposals for ADRR 2016/17 would be presented to URC for consideration in due course, taking account of the comments from FRGs, the ADRR panels and URC as a whole, and in particular reviewing the timing of the exercise to ensure better alignment with MTP processes.

ACTION: RSPO

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

16-17/22 Global Challenges Research Fund Steering Group

The Committee **received** for information:

- (a) Details of the Global Challenges Research Fund Steering Group's membership and terms of reference;
- (b) Minutes of the meetings of the above Group held on 1 July, 26 July and 17 August 2016;
- (c) Interim report to EPSRC 1 August 2016 – Allocation of EPSRC GCRF Institutional Award. (RC.16-17/17).

16-17/23 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 10 June 2016

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 10 June 2016 (RC.16-17/18).

16-17/24 Minutes of the meetings of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 1 July and 7 September 2016

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meetings of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 1 July and 7 September 2016 (RC.16-17/19).

16-17/25 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 12 July 2016

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 12 July 2016 (RC.16-17/20).

16-17/26 Open Access requirements for REF: rates of deposit in PURE

The Committee **received** for information a quarterly report on rates of deposit in PURE relating to HEFCE Open Access requirements for REF (RC.16-17/21).

16-17/27 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Thursday 17 November 2016 at 2.15pm in H/G09, Heslington Hall.

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October 2016