

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2017

- Present:**
- Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair)
 - Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange) (MM17-18/01 – 22 only)
 - Dean, York Graduate Research School (MM17-18/01 – 14 only)
 - Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
 - Acting Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities (MM17-18/01 – 12 only)
 - Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences
 - Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences
 - Acting Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts and Humanities
 - Professor David Barnett
 - Professor Nik Brown
 - Professor Mathew Evans
 - Dr Mary Leng (MM17-18/01 – 14 only)
 - Professor Jenny Steele
 - Professor Elizabeth Tyler
 - Professor Piran White
 - Director of Research & Enterprise
 - Associate Director: Research & Enterprise and Head of Research Services
 - Research Strategy and Policy Manager
- In attendance:**
- Dr Nicola Meenan (MM17-18/15 & 16 only)
 - Ms Kirsty Dillingham (MM17-18/17 - 19 only)
 - Dr Alice Wakely (Secretary)

Apologies for absence were received from Professors Goddard and McGuire.

17-18/01 Membership and terms of reference

The Chair welcomed members to the first meeting of the academic year, including new members Professor Timmis, joining as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange, and Professor Barnett, joining as an academic member for the Arts & Humanities.

The Committee **received** details of its membership and terms of reference for 2017/18 (RC.17-18/01). It **noted** that:

- (a) Following approval in principle by Senate, five members originally due to step down in September 2019 had agreed to extend their terms of office on a staggered basis in support of the REF2021 submission.
- (b) The amendment to Term of Reference 5 to include 'cultural institutions', proposed at the Committee's previous meeting, had been approved by Senate.
- (c) The vacancy for an academic member for the Sciences would be addressed through a nomination/election process overseen by Senate.

17-18/02 Declaration of conflicts of interest

The Chair outlined the Committee's procedures for handling potential/actual conflicts of interest. Members were reminded to return their annual statement of interests forms to the RSPO, and invited to step out of discussions during the meeting if appropriate.

17-18/03 Minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2017

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2017 (RC.17-18/02).

17-18/04 Research Committee action log

The Committee **noted** a progress report in relation to actions carried over from 2016/17 (RC.17-18/03). In relation to M16-17/97, it further **noted** that meetings had been held with departments across all three Faculties to scope out and share current practices in relation to funding in support of Open Access.

17-18/05 Report from the Chair

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

- (a) The House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee enquiry on research integrity had been relaunched, following suspension in the run-up to the general election. The Russell Group's submission to the original enquiry would be taken forward, and the University would continue to keep abreast of developments.
- (b) The Worktribe research grants management system had been launched on 1 August, and a celebration event would take place on 29 September, to which all members were invited.
- (c) The PGR Research Integrity online tutorial had been updated in the light of changes to the University's policies on ethics and research misconduct approved at the Committee's June 2017 meeting. Updates were signed off by Chair's action on behalf of URC and YGRSB.
- (d) Key developments regarding REF2021 and HEIF funding were addressed elsewhere on the agenda.

17-18/06 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

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

Social Sciences: Proposals for a Faculty Research Manager were under development and had been discussed by the Faculty Executive Group.

Arts & Humanities: Interviews for a Research Development Manager had taken place and a positive outcome was expected.

17-18/07 Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School (FOI EXEMPT)

17-18/08 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) Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION
- (b) Industrial Strategy: a White Paper was expected in early November. Six areas of R&D focus associated with the Industrial Strategy had already been earmarked for funding. A further wave of funding was expected this calendar year, and a list of 11 areas under consideration had been circulated, of which possibly half were expected to feed into Challenge funding. A third wave of funding was expected early in 2018.
- (c) The Science and Innovation Audits had been published the previous week, including the Leeds City Region Medtech Audit led by Leeds, in which the University had participated, and the York-led Audit into the Bioeconomy of the North of England. This would provide a potential evidence base to support bids to the Industrial Strategy Fund.
- (d) Paragraph redacted - SENSITIVE INFORMATION**
- (e) A Knowledge Exchange workshop was to be held the following week, to feed into development of a University Industrial Strategy. A group of around 20 colleagues would be led by an external facilitator, ViaDynamics.
- (f) The University was now required to demonstrate that a new stream of QR funding hypothecated against the Global Challenges Research Fund was ODA compliant. A paper to address this issue was going to UEB in October.

The Committee **agreed** that work relating to the Industrial Strategy Research Fund would need to be reported through URC, given the former's strong alignment with key University research areas. A summary of the White Paper would be expected in the first instance.

ACTION: MM

17-18/09 Social Media Guidelines for Researchers.

The Committee **considered** proposed Social Media Guidelines for Researchers (RC.17-18/11). It **noted** that guidance in this area would be very helpful for all researchers. In the course of discussion, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) Guidelines point 1: it would be helpful to clarify what 'it' referred to in the first sentence.
- (b) Guidelines point 5: it would be helpful to provide a link to where to go for further advice on legal issues.
- (c) Guidelines point 7: 'an inappropriate route' was more accurate wording than 'a poor route'.
- (d) More explicit guidance was needed regarding the extent to which certain forms of social media could be considered 'private', e.g. where further sharing could not be controlled by the author of the original post. It was important to emphasise what was risky to the individual researcher as well as to the institution, bearing in mind that a student's relationship with the institution differed from that of a member of staff.
- (e) It would be worth exploring the effect of restructuring the document so that points relating variously to opportunities, responsibilities and protection were each clustered together.
- (f) University guidelines on safe use of social media and digital citizenship already existed for further reference.
- (g) It was proposed that the guidelines should be made available online. Given the overall length of the text, it might be helpful to present the information in the form of headlines from which users could click through to further detail.

The Committee **agreed** that the guidelines should be revised in the light of its comments, liaising as necessary with the individual members concerned. Feedback on a final draft should also be sought from PGR representatives, prior to final approval via Chair's action.

ACTION: TS & AG, working with JB, KG & PW

17-18/10 University Research Strategy: report against KPIs for 2016/17 (SENSITIVE INFORMATION)

17-18/11 Strategic Framework for Impact evaluation: data indicator comparison, 2014/15 - 2015/16

The Committee **considered** a data indicator comparison for the Strategic Framework for Impact, 2014/15 – 2015/16 (RC.17-18/05) (*FOI exempt*). The Research Strategy and Policy Manager spoke to this item.

The Committee **noted** that the report would contribute towards strengthening Environment and Impact narratives for REF2021. It discussed the possibility of aligning the indicators with those used externally at national level e.g. by the ESRC. However, whilst this was desirable in principle, it was **noted** that there was a lack of alignment between the Impact indicators used across RCUK, ResearchFish, REF and HEBCIS.

The Committee further **noted** that it would be helpful to identify areas where additional information was available which could add value, and to report again to the Committee at an appropriate point. In particular, it was **noted** that data relating to PhD internships appeared to underestimate provision significantly: it would be helpful to approach DTP managers for further information. The importance of using PURE to capture external engagements in order to ensure comprehensive reporting was also **noted**.

ACTION: TD & AG to explore these points further with DS, JT & MM

17-18/12 Research Strategy objectives assigned to Research & Enterprise

The Committee **considered** a progress report on Research Strategy objectives assigned to Research & Enterprise (RC.17-18/06).

The Committee welcomed the synthesis provided by the report and **noted** that good progress had been made overall. Further to the information provided on the remaining priority objectives for 2017/18, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) Proposals for a Postdoctoral Fellowships programme would be considered at the Committee's next meeting on 15 November 2017.
- (b) Additional new business was anticipated in relation to Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange: these areas of the Research Strategy implementation plan would be revisited following the Knowledge Exchange workshop.
- (c) Regarding Strategic Partnerships, work had also been undertaken by the PVCR and Dr Curwen in relation to clinical areas.

The Committee **approved** the list of remaining priority objectives for 2017/18, subject to the addition of the scheduled review of the University's Research Themes.

The Committee further **noted** that it would be helpful to keep its second circulation of papers as brief as possible, both in terms of number and length, since members were not always able to engage with substantial amounts of information at short notice.

17-18/13 Priorities for 2017/18

The Committee **considered** a progress report on priorities for 2016/17 arising from the University Research Strategy and external developments, and proposed priorities for 2017/18 (RC.17-18/07). It **noted** that good progress had been made in relation to 2016/17 priorities, although actions relating to Capital Planning and TRAC data had not yet been progressed owing to recent changes to the MTP process. Proposed priorities for 2017/18 had been identified by the PVC in consultation with the Deans and Associate Deans (Research): in future years it was anticipated that the PVC for Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange would also be involved in this process.

Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION

In relation to priorities for 2017/18, the Committee **agreed** the proposed list, subject to the following:

- (a) Regarding doctoral research students and training, provision for PGR supervisors was a priority. There was a need to offer a competitive support package for overseas students in particular.
- (b) The list of priorities should also include:
 - i. work on ECR Fellowships and ECR training provision;
 - ii. ongoing work on research support structures. The Committee **noted** that the anticipated completion date for this work was summer 2018.

17-18/14 Report on the ADRR process for 2017

The Committee **considered** a report on the ADRR process for 2017 (RC.17-18/08) (*Confidential*). It **noted** that the exercise had been very constructive and had been conducted smoothly, with all reports and departmental responses to their 'points for further clarification' received in a timely fashion. This was commendable given the additional work involved for DRCs in the parallel REF Check exercise. The Committee further **noted** that overall the quality of departments' reports continued to improve. It thanked the panel members for the excellent and detailed feedback provided for departments, and further thanked the RSPO for the support it provided for the process.

Further to the report, the following points were **noted**:

- (a) ADRR provided an important opportunity to look at how departmental policies were being implemented in practice – a function also of the REF Check Exercise, specifically in relation to the assessment of outputs.
- (b) Many of the issues and instances of good practice raised in the course of the process were not Faculty-specific but occurred across a range of departments. It would be helpful to reflect this more strongly in future reports.

(c) Paragraph redacted – CONFIDENTIAL

The Committee **agreed** the following:

- i. Fewer problems had been experienced compared with previous years in relation to data completeness and accuracy, in particular for the Sciences. However, some CDRCs and panel members had experienced problems with accessing Tableau. It was **agreed** that the availability of key headline statistics for departments within Tableau could be better signposted for URC reviewers in future years.

ACTION: RSPO

- ii. Feedback mechanisms had worked well, and in particular, use of the REF Check Exercise meetings scheduled with departments to discuss the panel feedback face to face once departments had responded to their points for clarification.

- iii. It would be helpful for departments to receive a communication from URC as a whole regarding the progress they were making as revealed by the ADRR exercise.

ACTION: Chair, supported by RSPO

- iv. A number of departments were keen to share good practice arising from the reports. Faculty Research Groups would need to decide whether they wished to share panel feedback between departments.

ACTION: Associate Deans (Research)

- v. The value of ADRR would be maximised by integrating it more closely into planning processes. The ADRR exercise operated on a 12 month action and reporting cycle, which was appropriate for shorter term operational developments; however, a 3-5 year cycle was more appropriate when looking at the impact of strategic initiatives. Although the Planning Office currently had sight of ADRR reports and feedback, more structured integration was needed. The Committee **decided** that ADRR information should be included in the paperwork for departmental Strategic Planning Meetings, in order to help focus discussions about priorities.

ACTION: AG & JG to take forward with Planning

In particular, in order to ensure that the questions/issues raised by departments for the attention of URC were fully addressed, the paperwork should include the relevant extracts from the panel feedback forms, with a particular focus on resourcing issues.

ACTION: RSPO to compile for the Faculty Deans

The Committee further **noted** the usefulness of the ADRR archive to identify areas of continuing concern or interest.

ACTION: RSPO to ensure ADRR archive is maintained, with appropriate access

- vi. The outcomes of the ADRR2017 process and the Committee's subsequent discussions should be reported to UEB as a Category 1 item.

ACTION: Chair

Paragraph redacted – CONFIDENTIAL

17-18/15 Draft principles for research evaluation

The Committee **considered** a further iteration of the draft principles for research evaluation (RC.17-18/12) (*Confidential*). Dr Meenan attended the meeting for this item.

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

- (a) In relation to Principle 4, it was **noted** that two Social Science departments took the view that this was not necessarily an agreed principle: with reference to Principle 5, the view was that a combination of journal level indicators and peer review should be sufficient. The Committee **agreed** that the wording should be changed to read, 'Journal-level indicators should not be used *exclusively* to determine the quality of papers'.
- (b) Rewording of Principle 1 was needed to avoid the implication that peer review could not be relied upon solely as an indicator of quality.
- (c) It would be helpful to provide a definition of peer review as a footnote.
- (d) The need for clear information on how research evaluation data would be used by departments and the University was acknowledged.

The Committee **approved** the revised draft principles for research evaluation, towards wider consultation with departments, subject to changes in the light of the above comments to be signed off via Chair's action.

ACTION: NM

The Committee further **noted** the proposed timetable for consultation and further development of the policy, towards launch in December 2017.

17-18/16 PURE development plan 2017-18.

The Committee **received** for information an annual PURE development plan for 2017-18 (RC.17-18/13). Dr Meenan attended the meeting for this item.

It was clarified that rollout of the REF module was contingent upon release from HEFCE of finalised details of REF2021 regarding portability of outputs and staff eligibility. Basic functionality for grading and output selection as per REF2014 was already available in PURE. Release of this REF module for staff use, however, was felt to not be practical until the REF2021 changes were in place.

ACTION: Associate Deans (Research) to communicate this to departments via FRGs

It was further **noted** that it would be helpful to share Faculty level systems for gathering information (e.g. Impact) with the RSPO.

ACTION: Faculty Impact Managers & RSPO

In relation to ResearchFish, it was **noted** that the capacity to bulk upload specific types of outputs was expected to be made available for the next RCUK outcomes collection exercise (February-March 2018).

17-18/17 Applications and awards to end July 2017 (FOI EXEMPT)

17-18/18 Provisional figures relating to research income for 2016/17 (FOI EXEMPT)

17-18/19 Recommendations relating to post-award risk management

The Committee **considered** recommendations relating to post-award risk management (RC.17-18/17/*FOI Exempt*). Ms Dillingham attended the meeting for this item. The Associate Director: Research & Enterprise and Head of Research Services spoke to the paper.

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

- (a) The key element in determining whether a kick-off meeting was needed was the level of risk. It was suggested that further articulation of the grounds for eligibility would be helpful. The Committee further **noted** that kick-off meetings were already in place for EC awards.
- (b) It was clarified that kick-off meetings did not need to include Faculty Research Managers, and RDT members would only be included if they had made a significant contribution to a large award.
- (c) The list of agenda items would be a useful checklist for all staff, and would be made available on the web. The need to include licensing and approvals requirements on the list would be discussed further with the Research Strategy and Policy Manager.
- (d) Kick-off meetings might also be helpful for researchers leading on an award for the first time.

The Committee welcomed the proposals and **approved** the recommended actions. It **noted** that FRGs would be briefed on the new procedures once they had been rolled out.

ACTION: JG

17-18/20 Report on the Research Priming Fund

The Committee **considered** a report on the Research Priming Fund (RC.17-18/18). Dr Wakely spoke to this item.

The Committee **noted** the outcomes of the July 2017 RPF funding round, and further **noted** expenditure against awards allocated in 2016/17. Regarding the proposed approach for distributing RPF funds as yet unallocated for 2017/18, it **decided** that rather than actively advertising the existence of a relatively small amount, it would be preferable for the Associate Deans (Research) to refer potential projects for consideration as and when they arose. Decisions would be made by Chair's action in consultation with a representative sub-group of RPF committee members, against standard RPF criteria.

ACTION: Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **noted** that processes for the allocation of RPF funding exemplified good, robust practice. However, for future rounds, where Capital funding was requested on a

significant scale, there was a need for an augmented application process, involving additional expert input and the opportunity to interview applicants, in order to inform sound decision making.

ACTION: RDT

In relation to reporting on the outcomes of projects, the Committee **agreed** the following:

(a) For future reporting on internal priming grants, PIs should be encouraged to link to information on outputs and Impact case studies in PURE. This was of particular relevance to IAA reporting.

ACTION: RDT; Impact support officers

(b) In future, it would also be helpful to request more detailed reports on the return on Capital spend over an extended period, using historical data where available.

ACTION: RDT

(c) In relation to the two projects where reports had yet to be provided in PURE, the Committee **agreed** that this should be pursued by the Chair with the PIs concerned.

ACTION: Chair, supported by RSPO

The Committee further **noted** that it would be worth exploring integration of the management of internal funding into Worktribe.

The Committee thanked Mrs Dancer for her work on the report.

17-18/21 Diversifying research income (FOI EXEMPT)

17-18/22 Outcomes of the REF Check Exercise (CONFIDENTIAL AND FOI EXEMPT)

17-18/23 Update on REF2021 developments

The Committee **received** an update on REF2021 developments (RC.17-18/10). It was **noted** that the document for the REF Team included a further consultation on options for the non-portability of outputs and staff selection. In relation to the question of staff selection, the University would make the same points that had been made in previous consultations. In relation to non-portability, it was **agreed** that the preferred and most pragmatic option was the 'simplified model', whereby when staff left an institution, any outputs produced there could be returned by both the previous and the new institution.

It was **noted** that the weighting for Impact had been increased, but that this did not cause any great concern for the University.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

17-18/24 Internal priming fund allocations 1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017

The Committee **received** a report on internal priming fund allocations 1 August 2016 - 31 July 2017 (RC.17-18/19) (*Confidential*).

17-18/25 Report on the AHRC-aligned Impact Accelerator Fund

The Committee **received** for information a report on the AHRC-aligned Impact Accelerator Fund (RC.17-18/20) (*FOI Exempt*).

17-18/26 HEFCE Open Access requirements for REF: rates of deposit in PURE

Regarding HEFCE Open Access requirements for REF, the Committee **received** for information a quarterly report on rates of deposit in PURE (RC.17-18/21).

17-18/27 Minutes of the meetings of the GCRF Steering Group held on 26 June and 25 July 2017

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meetings of the GCRF Steering Group held on 26 June and 25 July 2017 (RC.17-18/22).

17-18/28 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 11 September 2017

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 11 September 2017 (RC.17-18/23).

17-18/29 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 14 September 2017

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 14 September 2017 (RC.17-18/24).

17-18/30 Minutes of the meetings of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 12 April and 19 July 2017

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meetings of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 12 April and 19 July 2017 (RC.17-18/25).

17-18/31 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Wednesday 15 November 2017 at 2.15pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall.

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October 2017

