

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith (Chair)
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences, Professor S Thompson
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,
Professor M Festenstein
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Professor R Ogden
Dean, York Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham
Professor D Barnett
Professor J Thijssen
Professor S Carroll
Professor J Steele
Professor P White
Director of Research & Enterprise, Dr D McBeth
Associate Director of Research & Enterprise, Ms J Gilmartin
Research Strategy and Policy Manager, Ms A Grey

In attendance: Ms Z Clarke (Secretary)
Emma Montgomery (M19-20/37 and 43 only)
Ms H Foster (M19-20/43 only)
Dr R Curwen (M19-20/44 only)
Mr E Kirby (M19-20/45 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Evans, Professor A Field, Professor S Smith, and Professor E Tyler.

19-20/29 Declaration of conflicts of interest

Members of the Committee were reminded of the procedure for declaring potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting.

19-20/30 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2019

It was **agreed** that M19-20/09 would be edited to better reflect the nuance of the discussion. *[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2019 subject to the above change (RC.19-20/23).

19-20/31 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2019/20 (RC.19-20/24). Further to the information provided, the Committee **noted** the following:

- (a) Regarding RC.18-19/150, it was noted that a report on PGR spend would be produced annually. This would take place later in the year so as to include benchmarking data.
- (b) Changes to the Committee Terms of Reference had been approved by Chair's Action and would be sent to Senate in due course.
- (c) The Committee sub-panel established for the review of annual ethical returns was due to meet on 17 December. A report would be presented to the Committee in January.

ACTION: RSPO

19-20/32 Report from the Chair

The Committee **received** a report from the Chair, which was accompanied by the Executive Summary of the report *Changes and Choices: Advice on future frameworks for international collaboration on research and innovation*, authored by Professor Sir Adrian Smith and Professor Graeme Reid (RC.19-20/25). The following points were **noted**:

- The report was of particular importance to the Committee as Professor Reid was to visit the University in January. All members were encouraged to attend. A link to the full report would be circulated separately.

ACTION: ZC

- The Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) had recently produced guidance on 'Trusted Research', concerning integrity and security in international research. The Committee **agreed** the importance of a proportionate response to such guidance, in order to ensure appropriate processes were in place. An update on the guidance would be presented to the Committee in January.
- **ACTION: RSPO**
- Professor Matthias Ruth, currently Vice-President (Research and Innovation) at the University of Alberta, would succeed Professor Smith as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research in May 2020, and the Committee **expressed** appreciation for the international expertise he would bring to the role. Professor Smith would step down in March 2020, and the Committee **thanked** her for her work as Pro-Vice-Chancellor.
- Professor Festenstein would step down as Associate Dean (Research) for the Social Sciences in January. The Committee **thanked** Professor Festenstein for his work.

19-20/33 Oral Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School

The Committee **received** an oral report on recent developments from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School, in which the following points were **noted**:

- *[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*
- The Director of Research and Enterprise had been made an *ex officio* member of the York Graduate Research School Board.
- The University had been successful in a BBSRC DTP3 round, with a reduction of student numbers and studentships. *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality.]*

- Work was ongoing with the Commonwealth Scholarships Commission regarding funding for distance learning PhD programmes.
- York Talks would take place on 8 January 2020, and the Dean of the York Graduate School drew particular attention to the PhD Spotlight competition included in the programme. Committee members were **encouraged** to attend.

19-20/34 Annual report from the York Graduate Research School

[Item redacted due to FOI exemption].

19-20/35 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **received** oral reports from the Associate Deans for Research, as follows:

Arts & Humanities

- The 10th Anniversary event for the HRC had been successful. Recordings of the talks were available on YouTube, accessible via the Centre's webpage.
- A review of centres within the Faculty had been completed and was currently with the Faculty Dean prior to distribution to Heads of Departments. A report would come to URC in due course.
- Staffing changes within the Faculty had been prompted by maternity leave, and the Associate Dean (Research) **welcomed** the start of two new staff members.

Social Sciences

- The ESRC Festival of Social Science Ideas had been successful, and featured a wide range of themes.
- The second round of interviews for the ESRC White Rose DTP had been held last month, with the outcome expected on 19 December. A further round of NPIF funding was expected via the IAA together with the WRDTP.
- Gareth Millington from the Department of Sociology had been granted a Leverhulme Research Leadership grant. This was the University's second successive award of this type from this prestigious scheme, which attests both to the quality of research and the robustness of the triage and research support offered. The Committee **thanked** those involved in Sociology, the Research Development Team, and elsewhere in the University for supporting the bid.

Sciences

- The EPSRC IAA grant had been renewed as expected. It is anticipated that IAA accounts from the different research councils will be brought together in due course. Furthermore, the University had been granted every request on first ask in a recent EPSRC Core Capital Call.
- A number of Faculty successes were reported. The Department of Biology and the BDC had been granted two stands at the Royal Society Exhibition taking place in summer 2020, and the Strategy for the Global Initiative in Safe Autonomy was making good progress.
- Research income meetings had been initiated in the Faculty as part of the MTP process.

19-20/36 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (FOI Exempt)

The Committee **received** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate (RC.19-20/27) (FOI Exempt), **noting** the following in particular:

- (a) *[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*
- (b) Workshops with outside organisations were well-received, and teams continue to work well together. EPSRC representatives on a recent visit were impressed with the range and number of interactions with outside organisations.
- (c) It was **clarified** that the incoming University Governance Ethics Committee would be well-placed to take a position on recurring ethical issues that fall outside of research, such as corporate partnerships.

19-20/37 Research grant applications and awards: Year to date October 2019 and previous 4 year comparisons (FOI Exempt)

The Committee **considered** a report on research grant applications and awards: Year to date October 2019 and previous four year comparisons (RC.19-20/28) (FOI Exempt). The Research Grants and Contracts Manager attended to speak to this item. The following points were **noted**:

- (a) There were some limitations in the data used to compile the report, specifically difficulty in identifying interdisciplinary research; this can be done manually but is time-intensive, and so an automated process would be useful. Work on data collection was ongoing.
- (b) Variations in research applications were expected, particularly during the last year of the REF cycle, when priorities may be elsewhere.
- (c) A report on EU grants would be prepared for the January meeting.

ACTION: JG, EM

19-20/38 Departmental Research Income Aspirations (Confidential)

[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].

19-20/39 Revisions to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The Committee **considered** a report a report on the revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity (RC.19-20/30). The following points were noted:

- (a) New requirements had been introduced for the Annual Statement on Research Integrity prepared by RSPO and these could be accommodated. The Concordat also required that employers of research take part in an “annual monitoring exercise”, but the exact nature of this had yet to be made clear. RSPO would continue to seek clarity on this and on the proposed National Committee on Research Integrity.
- (b) Conversations with HR were ongoing concerning misconduct reporting.

RSPO would continue to work towards the implementation deadline of October 2020, corresponding with relevant colleagues throughout. URC would be updated as appropriate.

ACTION: ZC

19-20/40 Draft Guidelines for the Use of Social Media Data in Research

The Committee **considered** draft guidelines on the use of social media data in research (RC.19-20/31), and **noted** the following:

- (a) The draft guidelines had been prompted by requests from academics and ethics committees, and both groups had been consulted in developing the draft.
- (b) The Committee **agreed** that the draft guidelines should be restructured into a high-level document outlining core principles, accompanied by a series of case studies exploring issues in more depth.
- (c) It was **noted** that changes or clarifications to research policy had the potential to result in a greater workload for the IP & Legal and Data Protection teams. However, such changes were standard for these teams; the example of GDPR was raised. The Committee **registered** confidence in the ability of colleagues to absorb a higher workload.
- (d) The Committee **endorsed** the addition of a checklist outlining questions and areas to consider when conducting research using social media data. The guidelines would be considered by FRGs prior to final consideration at URC in March.

The Committee **approved** the proposal to restructure the document, including the addition of a checklist to aid researchers.

ACTION: ZC

19-20/41 Departmental Statements on Research Performance Expectations

The Committee **received** a report on departmental statements on research performance expectations (RC.19-20/32). The Committee **noted** the following:

- (a) Statements of research performance expectations were frequently referred to in REF Environment Statements, indicating that they were now embedded in departmental processes, and so it was appropriate to ensure they were fit for purpose. Requiring major changes at this point in the REF cycle was unhelpful.
- (b) Statements had been updated where relevant; those departments that had not yet responded to the request for updates would be followed up. The Committee recognised that departments were in the process of updating their Statements due to the upcoming REF deadline. *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.

ACTION: AG, AD(R)s

The Committee **agreed** that a formal review should take place following the REF submission, in the first quarter of 2021.

19-20/42 Review of the Research Centre for Social Sciences (ReCSS) (Confidential)

[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality]

19-20/43 Oral update on the Wellcome Trust Bullying & Harassment Policy

The Committee **received** an oral report on the implementation plan for the Wellcome Trust Bullying & Harassment Policy. Ms Helen Foster, the HR Partner co-ordinating the policy implementation, spoke to this item. The following points were **noted**:

- (a) *[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.

- (b) A link to the Bullying & Harassment Policy would be included in the confirmation of grant letter where relevant, in order to demonstrate proactive engagement. Although the University did not encounter many issues of this type, it was important to have a robust process in place to handle such problems when necessary. The implementation process would be confirmed at the next URC meeting.
- (c) The Committee **noted** that, whilst the Wellcome Trust policy has prompted the initial work, other funders had begun to and would continue to develop similar policies. Similar provisions were expected to be introduced with regards to research misconduct.

19-20/44 Report on the Academics Assemble Conference and Interdisciplinary Research at York

The Committee **received** a report on the Academics Assemble Conference held on 11 October 2019 and interdisciplinary research at York (RC.19-20/34). The following points were **noted**:

- (a) The promotion of the event by senior members of staff was valuable. It would be useful for staff to have access to a central calendar listing upcoming events (including the intended audience) to better enable planning.
- (b) The problem of non-attendance was **noted**. It was felt the only practicable solution was to overbook events. It was recognised that the event was still well-attended, with many Heads of Departments and senior staff present.
- (c) The Committee was enthusiastic about the potential of similar events to allow the Centres to showcase their work, and for another such event to be repeated in future years.

19-20/45 Minutes of the REF Strategy Group meetings on 4 October 2019 and 4 November 2019

[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality.]

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

19-20/43 Minutes of the Research Communications Strategy Group meeting held on 2 October 2019.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Communications Strategy Group held on 2 October 2019 (RC.19-20/36).

19-20/44 Minutes of the Research Excellence Training Steering Group meeting held on 18 November 2019.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Excellence Training Steering Group held on 18 November 2019 (RC.19-20/37).

19-20/44 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences meeting held on 13 November 2019.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 13 November 2019 (RC.19-20/38).

19-20/45 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities meeting held on 5 November 2019.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 5 November 2019 (RC.19-20/39).

19-20/45 Minutes of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee meeting held on 21 June 2019.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Clinical Trials Sponsorship Committee held on 21 June 2019 (RC.19-20/40).

19-20/49 Next meeting

The Committee noted details of the next meeting: Wednesday 29 January 2020 at 2.00pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall.

zc/zc

December 2019