

**UNIVERSITY OF YORK**

**Senate**

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020**

**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  
Professor M Evans  
Professor E Tyler  
Director of Research & Enterprise, Dr D McBeth (M19-20/50 – 63 only)  
Associate Director of Research & Enterprise, Ms J Gilmartin  
Research Strategy and Policy Manager, Ms A Grey

**In attendance:** Ms Z Clarke (Secretary)  
Ms E Montgomery (M19-20/57 only)  
Ms A McManus (M19-20/59 only)  
Dr K Clegg (M19-20/64 and 65 only)  
Dr K Allen (M19-20/66 only)  
Mr E Kirby (M19-20/68 and 69 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Goddard, Professor S Smith, Professor B Fulton, and Professor A Field.

**19-20/50 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.

**19-20/51 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019**

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2019 (RC.19-20/41).

## 19-20/52 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2019/20 (RC.19-20/42). The number of outstanding items was noted, but these were ongoing actions that would be picked up in due course.

## 19-20/53 Report from the Chair

The Committee **received** a report from the Chair. The following points were **noted**:

- Details of the process for developing a new University Strategy had been circulated prior to the meeting at the instruction of the Vice-Chancellor. Of particular interest to the Committee was the first theme of the Strategy (World Leading Research), which would be led by Professor Deborah Smith and Dr David McBeth. Other supporting themes would be relevant to the Committee also, such as International Commitment. The University Strategy would be finalised for approval by Council at the end of July, with a relevant paper to be presented to URC in March.
- A recent publication from the Wellcome Trust concerning research culture indicated that further work would be initiated across the sector in the coming months, involving other agencies. York is ahead of the curve in various aspects of its approach to research culture, particularly in relation to interdisciplinary research, but it was important to be vigilant and engage with the ongoing discussion.
- Two recent visits to the University had been a success. Professor Graeme Reid, author of a government report outlining research funding post-Brexit, had delivered a well-received and wide-ranging talk on 22 January. The Government Minister for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation also visited the University in January as part of his recent tour of the North; his visit focused on the vision for the bio-economy work taking place at York and included conversations with local partners. The chance to demonstrate York's progress in enterprise was welcomed; this was an area of growth for the University, including the work of XR Stories with the creative industries. It was noted that details presented in the Minister's visit were reflected in a speech given at Durham University the following day.
- It was announced that Professor Yvonne Birks would take up the post of Associate Dean (Research) for the Social Sciences on 1 February. The Committee looked forward to welcoming Professor Birks, who is based in the Department for Social Policy and Social Work. The Committee **thanked** Professor Festenstein for his many contributions as Associate Dean (Research).

## 19-20/54 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**:

- Professor Nicky Milner, from the Department of Archaeology, had been highly commended in the very competitive 'Outstanding Research Supervisor of the Year' category at the Times Higher Education Awards, having been nominated by her students. Such awards were good opportunities for University staff and students to communicate the success of York.

- Richard Middleton, Chair of the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission, will visit the University on 4th February and meet with the International Global Development Centre and Professor Bob Doherty from the N8 Agrifood project, as well as current scholars.
- Paul Wakeling and Sally Hancock had been successful in an ESRC bid concerning the future of the Social Sciences doctorate; this work would be delivered by November. The EPSRC was also reviewing its doctorate programme.
- Progress was being made with the Leverhulme Doctoral Studentships competition with an internal selection process currently ongoing.
- *[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

## 19-20/55 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

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

### *Social Sciences*

The ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership had been renewed as expected.

### *Arts and Humanities*

- Centre Directors and Heads of Departments were currently being consulted as part of the ongoing review of research centres within the Faculty. The aim of the review was to enable the Faculty research centres to work strategically and effectively, to make the most of their in-built interdisciplinarity, and to align their work with other University structures.
- A number of events within the Faculty were reported. There had been a visit from Frances Morris, Director of the Tate, and other high-level lectures are planned for the spring; a series called 'Humanities Labs' was planned for the summer, which will allow individuals to explore equipment available within the Faculty; it was noted that this would be useful for members of staff from Research and Enterprise who were involved in pump priming decisions. A Digital Humanities day was planned for 26 May.
- The HRC has been supporting a new writing group of postgraduate students.

### *Sciences*

- The REF dominated activity within the Faculty.
- The Faculty had recently been visited by representatives from the Medical Research Council and the Natural Environment Research Council.
- Work regarding research support was moving forward under the supervision of Jamie Holliday, Operations Manager (Faculty of Arts and Humanities). The result of road-mapping had been clarification of the need for support for managing GR code work. Proposals for this support would be included in the MTP process via the Faculty and R&E respectively.
- The 2020 Cantor Nanoscience lecture would focus on molecular motors, and would be delivered by Professor Petra Rudolf, President of the European Physics Society.
- The institution-wide Capital Replacement process, led by the Dean of the Faculty of Sciences, was ongoing. Whilst the process is not just for research equipment, it is particularly appropriate for the replacement of large items of outdated research equipment. The Committee agreed that it would be helpful for URC to see the report on

this process that would go to Planning Committee, the Capital Management Group and UEB, for cross-referencing against other funding schemes.

**ACTION: URC to receive this report in due course**

**19-20/56 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (FOI Exempt)**

The Committee **received** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate (RC.19-20/43) (FOI Exempt), **noting** the following in particular:

- (a) The progress made in RGC was **noted**. The Directorate would be bidding for additional support from the MTP process and would make the best possible case.
- (b) There had been recent success in regards to staffing, and it was expected that RGC would have a full team by the end of April. An internal funding team was in development to support cross-coordination. *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.
- (c) *[Sentence redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.

**19-20/57 Research grant applications and awards: Year to date December 2019 and previous 4 year comparisons (FOI Exempt)**

*[Section redacted due to FOI exemption]*.

**19-20/58 EU grants after Brexit**

The Committee **considered** a report on EU grants (RC.19-20/45), and **noted** the following:

*[Section redacted for reasons of confidentiality]*.

**19-20/59 Update on Research Income Reporting**

*[Item redacted due to FOI exemption]*

**19-20/60 New Process for Supporting Major Bids**

The Committee **received** for information a report on the new process for supporting major bids (RC.19-20/47). The following points were **noted**:

- (a) The paper was presented primarily for information, and would be taken to Faculty Research Groups for comment. Good feedback had been received thus far, including from Professor Maria Goddard (absent from the meeting); these would be forwarded to the relevant contributors.

**ACTION: Chair**

- (b) It was important that the final version of the process was able to balance both agility and thoroughness; concerns that the form as presented in the current paper had the potential to be off-putting were **noted**. It was clarified that the team developing the new process was aware of the need to manage the scope of the process in order to ensure effectiveness.
- (c) The development of this process was **welcomed** by the Committee, and it was **emphasised** that the current form used for such bids was not fit for purpose. The introduction of greater structure and clarity surrounding support for major bids was

commended, in particular the appointment of a Project Manager for each large bid funded and key stakeholder meetings early in the post-award process.

- (d) Research administrators provided a potential route for effective communication, to ensure that those supporting a bid were aware of what is required.

The Committee agreed that the final version of the paper should be presented for information once ready. The process was intended to go live in March.

**ACTION: JG**

#### **19-20/61 Departmental Risk Registers**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

#### **19-20/62 Draft Statement on Safeguarding in Research**

The Committee **considered** a draft Statement on Safeguarding in Research (RC.19-20/49). Further to the information provided in the paper, the following was **noted**:

- (a) It was **recognised** that elements of the Statement would be edited as the University Safeguarding Strategy was developed. Conversation was ongoing regarding a specific lead for safeguarding in research. Clarity was needed as to who owned the document institutionally.

**ACTION: ZC**

- (b) The Committee **requested** further clarity as to the intended audience of the document, and detail as to how reporting routes might look operationally. It was **noted** that readers might struggle to identify relevant sections, and the Committee agreed that an executive summary should be included to outline the content and key points.

**ACTION: ZC**

The Committee **agreed** that the tone of the Statement should be revised in line with the above recommendations, and that the final Statement should be presented for information to URC once changes had been made.

**ACTION: ZC**

#### **19-20/63 Trusted Research Guidance from the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure**

The Committee **considered** a report on the recent Trusted Research Guidance from the Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) (RC.19-20/50), as **requested** by the Committee at its meeting on 10 December 2019 (M.19-20/32). The Committee **noted** that the University was in a good position relative to the expectations of the CPNI, but that consideration of the guidance, and compliance, where relevant, was good practice. More clarity was sought as to position of the CPNI and its role in the production of the guidance.

**ACTION: RSPO to follow up**

#### **19-20/64 Update on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

The Committee **received** an update on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (RC.19-20/51). The Head of the Research Excellence Training Team spoke to this item. The following points were **noted**:

(a) The Committee **approved** the recommendation that the University become a signatory to the revised Concordat. A letter would be drafted for the PVC-Research to review prior to requesting signature by the Vice-Chancellor and submission

**ACTION: KC**

(b) The creation of a time-bound working group to develop an action plan for implementation of the Concordat was **approved**. A list of the proposed membership would be circulated to members so that further additions could be suggested.

**ACTION: KC**

(c) The Committee **approved** in principle the creation of a list of potential training activities that 'count' towards the 10 days required for Professional and Career Development, and specified that the Concordat working group would work further on this area with a view towards producing a flexible development checklist. It was important that the implementation of the Concordat was not approached in a 'tick-box' manner, and that York remained open and agile in its response.

**ACTION: KC**

(d) Further consideration was needed as to how disputes could be managed, for example if a researcher claimed they have not been given their allotted 10 days. It was **suggested** that Performance Review could be a mechanism to manage this; HR would be contacted for further discussion.

**ACTION: KC**

#### **19-20/65 Report on the Dissolution of the RET Steering Group and new reporting routes**

The Committee **received** a report on the dissolution of the RET Steering group and new reporting routes (RC.19-20/52). The Head of the Research Excellence Training Team spoke to this item. The following points were **noted**:

(a) The Committee **approved** the proposed reporting routes for the continued review of training.

(b) Regular communication between the RET Team and Faculty Research Groups was **approved**, however further discussion was needed as to the specifics of this communication in order to ensure alignment and strong communication in both directions.

**ACTION: KC to contact AD(R)s**

(c) Communication between the RET Team and the Research Champions would be addressed as the new reporting routes developed.

The Committee **approved** the dissolution of the RET Steering Group, emphasising the importance of streamlining committee structures where possible.

#### **19-20/66 Report on the Sub-Panel for the Review of Annual Ethical Returns (*Confidential*)**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

**19-20/67 Oral report on proposals for the Committee review of ReCSS (Confidential)**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

**19-29/68 Report on the December REF Check (FOI Exempt & Confidential)**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

**19-20/69 REF Strategy Group minutes for the meeting of 9 December 2019 and an oral report for the meeting of 10 January 2020**

*[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].*

**CATEGORY II BUSINESS**

**19-20/70 Annual Ethical Conduct Audit for ESRC-funded projects undertaken for 2018-19.**

The Committee **received** for information a summary of the annual ethical conduct audit for ESRC-funded projects undertaken for 2018-19 (RC.19-20/56).

**19-20/71 Minutes of the Research Communications Strategy Group meeting held on 6 December 2019.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Communications Steering Group held on 6 December 2019 (RC.19-20/57).

**19-20/72 Minutes of the Research Priming Funds Committee meeting held on 1 August 2019.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Priming Funds Committee held on 1 August 2019 (RC.19-20/58).

**19-20/73 Minutes of the GCRF Steering Group meeting held on 2 December 2019.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the GCRF Steering Group held on 2 December 2019 (RC.19-20/59).

**19-20/74 Minutes of the York Graduate Research School Board meeting held on 2 December 2019.**

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the York Graduate Research School Board held on 2 December 2019 (RC.19-20/60).

**19-20/75 Next meeting**

The Committee noted details of the next meeting: Wednesday 25 March 2020 at 2.15pm in H/G21, Heslington Hall.

zc/zc  
January 2020