

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2020

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith (Chair)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Partnerships and Engagement), Professor Kiran Trehan
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,
Professor Y Birks
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Professor R Ogden
Dean, York Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham (M.19-20/75 – M.19-20/87 only)
Professor D Barnett
Professor S Carroll
Professor J Steele
Professor P White
Professor M Evans
Professor E Tyler
Professor M Goddard
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)
Mr E Kirby (M19-20/78 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Thompson, Professor B Fulton, and Professor J Thijssen.

19-20/75 Declaration of conflicts of interest and meeting procedure

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

Changes to the procedure for the meeting, due to the ongoing COVID-19 disruption, were **noted**. It was clarified that items marked 'for information' were not to be discussed except where members had specific comments or issues. Members were reminded of the online etiquette guidance issued by the University AV team.

19-20/76 Minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2020

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on **29 January 2020** (RC.19-20/61).

19-20/77 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received for information** a progress report against its action log for 2019/20 (RC.19-20/62). Two updates provided by the Library regarding Open Access requirements (18-19/157) were **noted**, as follows:

- “Information on journal-specific open access policies, along with compliance information for major research funders, is expected to be maintained at a national level by Jisc, building on their existing [SHERPA services](#). The Library Research Support Team can also provide compliance information for specific journals and funders upon request. A revised UKRI open access policy is currently out for consultation, and the Library will consider what additional support may be needed in response to a revised policy. Research Libraries UK (RLUK) have recruited a consultancy (Research Consulting) to develop a tool for estimates of costs associated with Plan S, related policy changes, and changes in publisher funding models. The Library has been working with the consultancy to help develop this tool, and work is ongoing.”
- “Plan U is a proposal put forward in a perspective piece in the journal PLOS Biology (<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pbio.3000273>). The proposal is for research funders to mandate the sharing of preprints (pre-peer-review versions of articles) for all "scientific and medical" research. To date, no significant research funder in the UK has introduced such a mandate. Wellcome Trust encourage sharing of preprints but will only mandate this when there is a "significant public health benefit." UKRI are currently consulting on whether to introduce a mandate for the sharing of preprints but only "in cases of public emergency".”

19-20/78 Report from the Chair

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

- The impact of COVID-19 on research would be far-reaching, and the effect on colleagues would vary across field and discipline; this was particularly the case for those involved in clinical research, who were likely actively involved with NHS and medical research at this point. The timeline was currently undetermined, and the Committee agreed that it was key to support a transition to working from home. The Chair was involved in ongoing conversations with Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Research from across the Russell Group concerning the impact of the current situation on the research base, staff and grants. Work was also taking place within Research and Enterprise to understand the costs involved and ways in which to mitigate these, and Associate Deans (Research) had agreed to the establishment of a working group to explore the impact on the University. The Committee **agreed** that information should be presented at the next meeting to aid a wider discussion on the mitigation of disruption.

ACTION: Research & Enterprise Directorate

- The REF submission, originally scheduled for 27 November 2020, had been postponed in the light of the current COVID-19 disruption. The staff census date would remain the same. Conversation amongst the Russell Group and with Research England was ongoing to identify the best approach through which to manage the REF. The work completed thus far to determine the staff base would not be redundant, though some mitigation should be expected. RSPO was working to collect relevant information regarding the impact of the current situation on submission, and a report outlining the impact would be presented to the Committee in due course.

ACTION: REF Manager

- Professor Matthias Ruth would take up the post of Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research on 1 May 2020. Professor Smith would stay in post until that point, and a plan to enable a gradual transition was in place. Professor Ruth would be invited to attend the April meeting.

19-20/79 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**:

- York had made a successful bid for the EPSRC Mobility Pilot CDT, which would focus on green chemistry. The scheme would enable experienced scientists working in industry to undertake a full-time PhD while remaining in the workplace. Work was ongoing with the Royal Society of Chemistry and of Biology to enable accelerated PhDs for those with chartered status. It was clarified that recruitment would be conducted via industrial partners.
- The University had been included in a MRC DTP bid, which was led by Sheffield but included 5 Universities across the north. It was expected that the bid would be for 20 studentships across the Consortium, and the Committee was pleased to see the involvement of York in an existing strong partnership.
- The May deadline for Leverhulme Doctoral Scholarship bids has not changed. Eleven groups had submitted proposals, of which four had been interviewed and one ultimately chosen. *[Sentence redacted]*.
- PGR students were to be treated as staff for the purposes of communication about working from home and access to physical resources during the COVID-19 disruption. A streamlined progression process was to be introduced, which would take a risk-based approach aiming to reduce the number of meetings held. Vivas are being moved online unless the student asks to postpone; guidance was under development on how to hold an online viva. A PGR Academic Contingency Group, reporting to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, had been established and would meet daily for the time being.

19-20/80 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

The Committee **received** oral reports from the Associate Deans for Research for the Faculties of Arts & Humanities and Social Sciences, as follows:

Arts & Humanities

- (a) The Dean and Associate Dean (Research) for the Faculty had recently attended a meeting of the Russell Group Culture Network. The network enabled discussion on partnerships and external engagement, and was an interesting and useful way to make connections and identify potential new working patterns. The next meeting is planned for the end of June.
- (b) Professor Anthony Geraghty, of the Department of History of Art, had been granted a Senior Fellowship by the Paul Mellon Centre.
- (c) The HRC team is exploring ways to work more strategically across the Faculty, with the aim of raising the scope and ambition of grant capture.
- (d) HRC staff had transitioned successfully to working from home, and were able to provide research support remotely. Support for the wider community was a priority, and the HRC would dedicate resources for the promotion of York's research and work with partners. In the current situation, Arts and Humanities play an important role in social life. A Twitter campaign is planned, starting in the week commencing 30 March, to promote research in A&H at York, using the hashtag #HumanitiesAtHome.
- (e) Examples of community building across the Faculty were being collected in order to mitigate the potential risks of isolation. The establishment of online writing groups was particularly noted as an example of this; an unexpected benefit had been the forging of external and international connections. It was **noted** that YGRS was also exploring community building and ways to support interactions between supervisors and students, as well as online peer support meetings.
- (f) Some departments in the Faculty had initiated surveys of academic staff and PGR students to develop a full picture of the impact of the COVID-19 disruption.

Social Sciences

- (a) The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic was being assessed. The Social Policy Association conference, originally planned to take place in York over the summer, had been cancelled. The development of the Policy Institute and the review of ReCSS were still ongoing, however progress going forward would likely be disrupted. Researchers making use of public participation in their work were likely to be particularly affected, including PGR students collecting public data, and this was an area of focus for the Faculty.
- (b) Researchers involved in clinical research were also likely to access less support within their research networks, which would be largely focused on work related to COVID-19. Guidance was available from funding councils; however in some cases further clarity was desired.

19-20/81 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (FOI Exempt)

The Committee **received for information** and **approved** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate (RC.19-20/63) (FOI Exempt).

19-20/82 University Strategy for 2030 (Confidential & FOI Exempt)

[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].

19-20/83 Update on activities related to Open Research and draft Institutional Statement

The Committee **considered** an update on activities related to Open Research at the University and a draft Institutional Statement (RC.19-20/64). Further to the information provided in the paper, the following was **noted**:

- (a) It was important that communications concerning Open Research and the availability of research data emphasised the need to align with relevant terms and conditions. For example, it was often necessary that health data were 'closed' rather than 'open', and ensuring the clarity of this message was key. All colleagues had a role in driving the agenda forward and considering their working methods.
- (b) The Open Research Strategy Group was keen to aid a greater understanding, and the focus was on supporting and adapting, rather than imposing new rules and requirements. Further activity was planned, with a focus on encouraging communities of practice and allowing for the development of a 'bottom up' approach.

The Committee **approved** the draft Institutional Statement for publication on the University webpages.

19-20/84 Draft Statement on Safeguarding in Research

The Committee **approved** the draft Statement on Safeguarding in Research (RC.19-20/65). The Statement, which had been edited in line with Committee recommendations following the January meeting (M.19-20/62), would be published on the University webpages in due course.

19-20/85 Wellcome Trust Guidance on the implementation of DORA

The Committee **considered** a report on the recent Wellcome Trust Guidance on the implementation of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (RC.19-20/66). The following points were noted:

- (a) Although responding to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic was currently the priority for the University, it was important to demonstrate a commitment to the principles of DORA, of which the University had been a signatory since May 2018.
- (b) Whilst conversation was ongoing with HR regarding the use of metrics and target journal lists in hiring and promoting practices, the Committee **suggested** that discussion with departments such as Economics and Management would be useful. It was **noted** that further clarity was needed as to how quality could be assessed accurately without reference to such metrics. There was scope to reconsider how such processes worked, for example asking applicants to submit specific outputs rather than a standard CV.

The Committee **approved** the plan in place thus far, and **requested** that a revised response was presented in June.

ACTION: ZC, Thom Blake, Ali McManus

19-20/86 Impact Accelerator Funding in the Arts & Humanities

The Committee **received for information** a report on Impact Accelerator Funding in the Arts & Humanities (RC.19-20/67).

19-20/87 Minutes of the meetings of the REF Strategy Group held on 10 January 2020 and 6 February 2020

The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the meetings of the REF Strategy Group held on 10 January 2020 and 6 February 2020 (RC.19-20/68).

19-20/88 Research Grant Applications and Awards: Year to Date December 2019 and Previous 4 Year Comparisons

The Committee **received for information** a report on research grant applications and awards: year to date December 2019 and previous 4 year comparisons (RC.19-20/69).

19-20/89 Quarter 2 research income and update on the Research Committee Tableau Workbook

The Committee **received for information** a report on quarter 2 research income (RC.19-20/70). Due to the format of the meeting, an update on the Research Committee Tableau Workbook was not delivered. It was **noted** that the Q2 forecast presented in the report were currently in abeyance in light of the current situation, and that impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on research income and funding would need further consideration.

19-20/90 QR Funding

The Committee **received for information** a report on QR funding (RC.19-20/71). The Committee **approved** the report, and **commended** the usefulness of the paper.

19-20/91 Verbal update on the new process for supporting major bids

[Item redacted for reasons of confidentiality].

19-20/92 Wellcome Institutional Strategic Support Fund (ISSF) – 10 year review

The Committee **received for information** a report on funding received via the Wellcome ISSF (RC.19-20/72).

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

19-20/93 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 20 January 2020.

The Committee **received for information** the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 20 January 2020 (RC.19-20/73).

19-20/94 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 11 February 2020.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts and Humanities held on 11 February 2020 (RC.19-20/74).

19-20/95 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences meetings held on 16 January 2020 and 20 February 2020.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 16 January 2020 and 20 February 2020 (RC.19-20/75).

19-20/97 Next meeting

The Committee noted details of the next meeting: Wednesday 29 April 2020 at 9.30am. The location of the meeting was under consideration in light of the ongoing COVID-19 situation.

zc/zc

March 2020