

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith (Chair)
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Professor J Buchanan
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences, Professor C Brown
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,
Professor M Festenstein
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Professor R Ogden
Professor D Barnett
Professor M Evans
Professor S Smith (M18-19/129 onwards)
Professor J Thijssen
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 (M18-19/133 and 134 only)
Dr R Curwen (M18-19/128 only)
Professor T Krauss (M18-19/128 only)
Dr K Allen (M18-19/128 only)
Dr A Wakely (M18-19/131 and 132 only)
Dr L Ko-Ferrigno (M18-19/129 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Bell, Professor B Fulton, Professor T Stoneham, Professor J Timmis, Professor E Tyler, Professor P White, and Professor J Buchanan.

18-19/119 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.

18-19/120 Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019 (RC.18-19/95).

18-19/121 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2018/19 (RC.18-19/96).

Further to the information provided, the Committee **noted** the following:

- A date for the review of ReCCS had not yet been selected due to the time pressure of the Mock REF; however it would be initiated in due course.
- The action log item regarding workload for grants under £25k needed to be clarified to better reflect the situation and future steps for this area.

ACTION: ZC

- The final version of the Vitae Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers was due to be published in late-Spring, and would be brought to the Committee when available.

ACTION: ZC to follow up with Dr K Clegg

- A meeting to discuss further the position of R-coded work and the potential resource that was required to support this area was scheduled for next week. Developments would be brought to the Committee when available.
- Progress had been made in the logging of previously-unreported clinical trials on the EU Clinical Trials Register. Supporting documentation for one of the three had been submitted and accepted, and the process would be repeated for a second trial. The third trial in question was not a regulated clinical trial and so did not need to be reported. The Contracts and Sponsorship Manager had sought advice from MHRA regarding tagging the project as such.

ACTION: ZC to follow up

18-19/122 Report from the Chair

The Committee **received** an oral report on recent developments from the Chair, noting the following:

- (a) The next Vice-Chancellor and President of the University, Professor Charlie Jeffery, had been appointed. Professor Jeffery would formally begin his position on 1 September, and had begun to visit some areas of the University. The Committee noted this would be a very positive development for the University.
- (b) The University had received a number of high-value grants recently, including one cross-Faculty grant involving £1M from the Wellcome Trust over two years, as an extension of the existing ISSF award for the Centre for Future Health. A meeting to plan the budget and spend for this grant would be scheduled shortly.

18-19/123 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

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

Sciences

- (a) The University had received a £4.2M grant to support the JEOL Nanocentre Field Emission Scanning Electron Microscopy. This was a significant achievement and considerable benefit to the University.
- (b) Information was provided on two further embargoed grants.
- (c) The appointment of Professor Sarah Thompson as the next Associate Dean (Research) for the Sciences was formally noted. A comprehensive handover process was planned, which entailed Professor Thompson shadowing Professor Brown for one day a week in his duties. Professor Brown will step down on 24 October.
- (d) The Faculty would be initiating some work to improve coordination at a strategic level across larger research facilities, partly prompted by ADRR 2018. In the first instance, a forum would be created for Directors of these facilities to look at commonalities in threats and opportunities and to share good practice.

Social Sciences

- (a) Policy initiatives relating to the Cabinet Office Collaboration had been signed off and the next step would be a formal launch over the summer. A number of meetings had been held across campus involving colleagues from various fields and representatives of the Cabinet Office.
- (b) The next URC meeting would include updates on the University's Policy Institute.

Arts & Humanities

- (a) There were positive developments regarding fellowships, in particular one Senior and two standard Fellowships with the Leverhulme Trust.
- (b) Professor Dyas of the Centre for Christianity and Culture had been awarded a grant for a project working with Churches regarding volunteer policy and management.
- (c) This autumn would be the 10th anniversary of the Humanities Research Centre. An event was planned for 18 October to which all were invited. This would provide an opportunity to forge connections across the University.

18-19/124 Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School

In the absence of the Dean of York Graduate Research School, the Committee **noted**:

- (a) The Research Student administrative and support structure had been restructured and was now lead by an Assistant Registrar (Research and Financial Support) with responsibility for the Student Finance Unit. Co-ordinator roles were divided by funder

rather than Faculty. A new role had been created to cover student progress and Leaves of Absence, extensions, and transfers. Appeals would be handled by the Special Cases Team, although the academic role of Appeals Chair for Research Students remained. All Departments had been informed of the changes.

- (b) A paper proposing a long-term PGRO Strategy will be presented to International Committee in June. The strategy will focus on improving quality without sacrificing PGRO numbers, and targeted areas for increasing numbers. This process will include changes to the admissions process and management of funding by overseas organisations.
- (c) Work was being undertaken to locate useful measures for assessing the Widening Participation initiative in the PGRH student body. This has become a focus for UKRI and OfS. The University was working with Professor Wakeling from the Education Department.
- (d) The University was in the process of approving four-year PhDs. This was in response to the funding period from several funders being extended beyond three years, and was common practice across the sector.

18-19/125 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise

The Committee **received** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate (RC.18-19/97) (*FOI Exempt*), noting the following in particular:

- (a) A preferred candidate had recently been identified for the position of Research Grants and Contract Operations Manager. An offer would be made shortly.
- (b) The MTP process was ongoing. The R&E request for restructuring the University Ethics Committee remained under consideration. The MTP proposal for RGC was not about growing capacity, but about assuring longer term capacity in the department.
- (c) The RETT 1.5 day 'Preparing for Fellowship Success' event had been successful, and had received positive feedback. It was **noted** that the event aligned well with goals stated in the University Research Strategy 2015-2020 regarding fellowships, which had not yet been met due to financial constraints. A paper had been presented to the Committee previously (M.17-18/70) proposing ways to support Fellowships through a University-wide scheme and the Committee noted that this goal remained important to achieve.

ACTION: JG

18-19/126 Research grant applications and awards

The Committee **considered** a report on research grant applications and awards: year to date March 2019 and previous four year comparisons (RC.18-19/98) (*FOI Exempt*). The following points were **noted**:

- (a) The Committee expressed appreciation for the now-familiar format, particularly noting its usefulness in identifying long-term trends.
- (b) **Paragraph redacted –SENSITVE INFORMATION**
- (c) **Paragraph redacted – SENSITIVE INFORMATION**

18-19/127 Research grant income to March 2019 and previous 4 year comparisons (FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/128 Champion Reporting Template and the further iteration of Theme plans. (CONFIDENTIAL & FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/129 Report on the Research Impact Conference held on 22 March 2019

The Committee **considered** a report on the 2019 Centre for Future Health and University of York Impact Conference held on 22 March 2019 (RC.18-19/101). Dr Ko Ferrigno attended the meeting for this item. The Committee **noted** that:

- (a) Whilst the event was less focused on impact than previous Impact Conferences, it was engaging and effective, attracting a large and varied audience. The Committee **considered** the questions raised in the report regarding the future of the Impact Conference, namely whether it should take the form of a larger event *showcasing* research and impact results or a more process oriented training session about *how to deliver* impact. This would determine whether future Conferences were internally- or externally-facing.
- (b) The Committee **noted** there were other routes to training throughout the University, and that what was needed was a means to inspire staff. There was a need to consider the labelling of the Conference, particularly the suggestion that, were it to be labelled as ‘training’, attendance would suffer.
- (c) It was **noted** that there was an underrepresentation from Arts and Humanities at the event in terms of speakers and attendees; however many of the questions asked focused on ethical issues that broadened the event beyond solely Sciences. The issue was raised about the difficulty of designing an event accessible to all Faculties whilst ensuring quality, and it was suggested that the Conference be rotated around the three Faculties to ensure inclusion but retaining specificity. It was further noted that it was possible to be inclusive of all disciplines without sacrificing quality.
- (d) The Committee **noted** that Policy Impacts would be a timely theme for the next Impact Conference in 2020 with the establishment of the new Policy Institute and the Cabinet Office Collaboration.

ACTION: LKF, MF

The University Impact Manager would follow-up the above points with Research Impact Advisory Group. The Committee thanked Dr Ko Ferrigno and the team for organising the event. **ACTION: LKF**

18-19/130 Consider guidance on performance expectations.

The Committee **considered** guidance on performance expectations (RC.18-19/102), and in the course of discussion **noted** the following:

- (a) It was clarified that the aim of the performance expectations document was to clarify the University focus on quality without infringing on the autonomy of departments in setting their own disciplinary expectations. The guidance was designed with the expectation that departments would adapt this for their own use and disciplinary norms. The tweaks presented to the Committee aimed to make this process easier. The guidance had been prompted by external changes, such as open access, the increased impact agenda and changes to REF.
- (b) The Committee **noted** there was a parallel statement on teaching expectations, and as such wholesale change to the performance expectations policy could necessitate change for teaching expectations also.
- (c) A review of departmental performance expectations was part of the ADRR process; however there was a variation in quality and as such a University-level document was necessary. The guidance had been useful for departments when setting their expectations, and had allowed for greater clarity in cross-departmental work, for example in Faculty promotion groups. There were concerns raised about the template offered, and its potential to impose too much codification upon departments, and leave little room for discipline-specific variation. The Committee decided to replace the template.
ACTION: AG
- (d) The Committee **recommended** the removal of the reference to the REF*rating to determine quality, noting that the use of the REF system may undermine the message that REF is an audit rather than the primary measure of performance. Further, REF grade descriptors did change and hence it was not a useful marker.
ACTION: AG
- (e) It was noted that the expectation for staff to meet the Open Access Policy was difficult to follow due to the lack of clear information provided.

The policy would be taken to the next FRG for each Faculty, and would return to the June URC for further consideration.

ACTION: AG

18-19/131 University response to the UUK consultation on the Concordat on Research Integrity.

The Committee **received** for information the University response to the UUK consultation on the Concordat on Research Integrity (RC.18-19/103). Dr Wakely attended the meeting for this item. Further to the information provided in the paper, the Committee **noted** that:

- (a) The response submitted by the University drew upon RSPO commentary, comments from RETT, and the discussion of the draft response at the March URC (RC.18-19/102). No further responses were received. The response was signed off by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Research, the Associate Deans (Research), and the Associate Director of Research and Enterprise, and submitted on 4 April 2019. The revised version is expected to be released in June or July to coincide with a planned follow-up House of Commons Science and Technology Committee evidence session.
- (b) The mandatory training requirement included in the Concordat was potentially problematic. It was felt the current proposal would produce a box-ticking approach, and that the practical implications would require consideration. In addition, more information was needed from UUK as to how compliance might be internally monitored.
- (c) The University had been involved in developing the joint Russell Group response. The responses submitted by the Russell Group and the University respectively were well-aligned, both requesting greater direction regarding mandatory training and regarding compliance. The Russell Group response emphasised the need for greater consistency across funders, particularly with definitions of misconduct.
- (d) The Concordat currently lacked leadership. UKRI and UUK were both involved, but neither seemed willing to take full ownership of it. This was particularly evident regarding the National Integrity Committee proposed in the draft Concordat, which would only be relevant for UKRI projects. It was unclear how such a Committee would maintain oversight, as well as to what extent it would have regulatory control.

The Committee thanked Dr Wakely and RSPO for the work done on the Concordat.

18-19/132 Report on the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum held on April 30

The Committee **received** for information an oral report on the Russell Group Research Integrity Forum held on 30 April 2019 (RC.18-19/104). Dr Wakely spoke to this item, and the Committee **noted** that:

- (a) The Forum was developing a research integrity training framework, aiming for a flexible outline of the least counter-productive and resource intensive approach to the 'mandatory training' requirement. This centred on the need for more advanced, specialist provision based around a nuanced face-to-face model. This would be pursued with UUK and funders once signed off by the Russell Group Research Directors.

- (b) The Forum collated ideas as to how the proposed National Integrity Committee (NIC) might operate. The following issues were outlined:
- i. The suggested National Integrity Committee had arisen from a Science and Technology Committee report (July 2018) which had identified a gap in the UK system for such a body. The NIC would champion research integrity and drive compliance with the Concordat, and would publish an annual report on national research integrity.
 - ii. The NIC proposal drew upon similar bodies in Canada and Australia. These bodies have legal bases which give them greater regulatory power, unlike the proposed NIC.
 - iii. The proposed NIC would need to be cohesive and independent, with a focus beyond UKRI projects. This would entail anonymised reviews of procedure, as well as being a co-ordinated body for the review of the annual statements required under the Concordat. The Committee would recommend changes, feedback across the sector, and take leadership on new, high risk areas of research.
 - iv. Membership was suggested to include academic and legal experts, professional support representatives, funders, publishers (as relevant stakeholders), and potentially representatives from the civil service as a link to the government.
 - v. The NIC proposals developed at the Forum were to be developed with the help of RSPO as part of a Russell Group working group, and signed off by the Russell Group Research Directors before presentation to UKRI.

ACTION: ZC

- (c) The current lack of cohesiveness between definitions of misconduct was highlighted by the Forum, and was raised as a potential topic for a future Russell Group Research Integrity Forum, alongside reproducibility, and promoting an 'airline culture' in relation to research integrity where reporting of errors is encouraged to avoid future issues.

The Committee was pleased to note the leadership role taken by the University as part of the Russell Group Forum.

18-19/133 REF Strategy Group (CONFIDENTIAL AND FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/134 Draft REF Code of Practice (CONFIDENTIAL AND FOI EXEMPT)

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

18-19/135 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 19 February 2019 (RC.17-18/107).

18-19/136 HEFCE Open Access requirements for REF

The Committee **received** for information a quarterly report on rates of deposit in PURE (RC.18-19/108).

18-19/137 Updated Human Tissue Act Standard Operating Procedures for the University.

The Committee **received** for information updated Human Tissue Act Standard Operating Procedures for the University (RC.18-19/109).

18-19/138 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Wednesday 19 June 2019 at 9:30am in H/G17, Heslington Hall.

zc/zc

May 2019