

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2019

Present: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith (Chair)
Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor S Bell
Dean, Faculty of Arts and Humanities, Professor A Field
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences, Professor C Brown (M18-19/92 – 98 and M18-19/109 only)
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,
Professor M Festenstein (excluding M18-19/102)
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Professor R Ogden
Professor D Barnett
Professor M Evans
Professor S Smith
Professor J Thijssen
Professor E Tyler
Professor P White
Acting Director of Research & Enterprise, Ms J Gilmartin
Research Strategy and Policy Manager, Ms A Grey

In attendance: Ms Z Clarke (Secretary)
Dr A Wakely
Mr E Kirby (M18-19/106 and 109 only)
Ms E Brown (M18-19/103 only)
Professor J Southgate (M18-19/106 only)
Miss Rebecca Chalkley (M18-19/106 only)
Dr C Fonge (M18-19/108 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Carroll, Professor B Fulton, Professor M Goddard, Professor J Steele, Professor T Stoneham, Professor J Timmis and Dr D McBeth.

18-19/92 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.

18-19/93 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2019

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2019 (RC.18-19/73).

18-19/94 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2018/19 (RC.18-19/74). Further to the information provided, the Committee **noted** the following:

- The paper on workload associated with grants under £25k was now to be presented as an oral report.
- The policy on staff acting as PI on a research grant would be ready shortly, and would clarify the University's position and outline where exceptions were possible. It was noted that the decision regarding Teaching & Scholarship staff not having a PURE account had the potential to be contentious.

18-19/95 Report from the Chair

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

- a) Prior to the meeting, the Chair had made the decision to withdraw a large paper from the second circulation due to insufficient time for members to read and fully consider its content. The paper in question would be discussed at the next URC meeting instead. Members had registered a concern about the number of items in the second circulation to read at short notice. A decision was made for the future to move the second circulation deadline from the Monday prior to the meeting to the Friday, and try to minimise its size as far as possible. The preference was for one circulation of papers but it was recognised a second circulation could be useful for short, critically important papers. The RSP Manager and Research Integrity & Compliance Manager noted good practice guidance was available on the URC webpages, and that this would be updated to reflect these decisions.

ACTION: RSPO

- b) Concerns raised in the previous meeting regarding the WEAVR project had been resolved, and the project was in a good situation. The Associate Director of Research & Enterprise had recently met with project leads at a kick-off meeting, and was due to meet with them again prior to the project starting. An administrative post had been recruited to support the project, and would begin a month prior to the project start date to ensure effective support. The delay noted at the previous meeting was due to a grant award letter being delayed. There were no further concerns at this time.
- c) The RSP Manager updated the Committee on recent developments with Clinical Trials. Colleagues in IP & Legal needed to upload the details of three trials not currently on the national database; it was expected these would be done by the

end of the month. The RSP Manager would follow up on this to ensure appropriate completion.

ACTION: AG

- d) The Committee **noted** the Mock REF was due for submission in two weeks.
- e) The previously-delayed UEC meeting, postponed from December, had now been held. UEC went through the returns submitted by Departmental Ethics Committees and identified good practice. The Committee further thanked the Chair of Council for her help in identifying appropriate lay members for DEC's who are currently without one. The Secretary was to work with the Chair of Council to align potential members with committees. The Research Integrity & Compliance Manager updated the Committee on the situation regarding new ethical governance structures at the University, and it was noted that the resource to support this would be prioritised in MTP. The Committee noted that the risk associated with the lack of a top-level ethical committee was soon to be resolved.

ACTION: ZC

18-19/96 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

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

The Associate Dean (Research) for the Sciences **reported** questions arising from the FRG regarding the lack of procedures for non-R coded work, noting in particular the risk to Departments that arises when these are not managed centrally. The following points were **noted** in the discussion that followed:

- (a) A review of activity and possible ways to incorporate research-related activity into RGC processes was being conducted.
- (b) Resource was an issue, and the investment of time when developing new resources to tackle this area was acknowledged. There was potential to use some existing resources within RGC which would become available when the new Worktribe contracts module is implemented in late summer, but this would need to be supplemented to ensure sufficient staff time for the likely volume of non-R coded activity.

ACTION: JG to discuss further with RGC and Associate Deans (Research)

- (c) Paragraph redacted - SENSITIVE INFORMATION
- (d) Paragraph redacted - SENSITIVE INFORMATION
- (e) Paragraph redacted - SENSITIVE INFORMATION

18-19/97 Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School

In the absence of the Dean of York Graduate Research School, the Committee **noted** that a paper outlining the relationship between the length of the PhD and the length of the funding period had been included as a Category 2 item (RC.18-19/115).

18-19/98 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/99 Research grant applications and awards (CONFIDENTIAL AND FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/100 Quarter 2 Research Income (CONFIDENTIAL & FOI EXEMPT)

This item was **withdrawn** prior to the meeting.

18-19/101 Policy Unit and Cabinet Office Open Innovation Team

The Committee **considered** an update on developments relating to establishment of a Policy Unit, and collaboration with the Cabinet Office Open Innovation Team (RC.18-19/78). These initiatives were cross-University, and not limited to the Social Sciences, as implied by the title of the paper.

In the course of discussion, the Committee **noted** the following:

- a) Substantial discussions had taken place with stakeholders, and currently the Policy Institute (the preferred term for the body) was expected to go partially live in April, with a hard launch following in August.
- b) It was expected that the formal agreement with the Cabinet Office Team would be signed imminently. The team had already visited York and was planning a further series of visits: they were particularly keen to meet colleagues across disciplines.
- c) Governance arrangements were presented as a broad outline and needed further development. It was important to ensure the management committee for the new Institute had sufficient experience and was able to provide effective support for the Director. It was noted the management team outlined in the paper had a number of individuals in place *ex officio*, and the need for a broader input and membership specific to the Institute was noted, including from the Business Development Team.
ACTION: MF
- d) It was acknowledged that the appointment of the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange might have to wait until the new Vice-Chancellor was in post. However, developing the work of the Institute should continue in the interim.
- e) There was also a need to develop a timeline for communications in order to keep colleagues across campus informed of progress.
ACTION: MF

The proposals and direction of the paper were approved, and it would be taken to UPEC in July.

ACTION: MF

18-19/102 UUK consultation on proposed revisions to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity

The Committee **considered** a proposed approach to the UUK consultation on proposed revisions to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (RC.18-19/79).

Further to the information provided in the paper, the Committee noted the following:

- a) The University was in a good place with regards to the requirements of the existing Concordat, and it was not expected that a significant amount of work was needed to reach compliance with the proposed revisions.
- b) Responses to the proposed internal consultation to inform the University's response might be limited, as the consultation period overlapped with that of the Mock REF. However, there was no option to delay either of these processes. In light of this, the internal request for comments would need to focus on specific issues.
- c) The University would need to take steps to ensure compliance with the proposed requirement for mandatory research integrity training for all researchers. The Committee noted that training was already mandatory for PGR students via an online tutorial which covered baseline information. For staff, however, the view of the Russell Group Research Integrity Group Forum – of which York was a member – was that online training was not sufficiently nuanced and risked reducing ethics and integrity to a 'box-ticking' exercise. Group discussion of specific tailored examples was considered to be the most effective approach; however, offering face-to-face sessions to all research-active staff raised practical issues. The Committee agreed that any further training introduced should be researcher-centric and discipline-appropriate, and focused on developing a culture of integrity, rather than measurability of compliance. Appropriate supporting resources would need to be identified. It was noted that University MoUs with partners did not currently make reference to Concordat requirements. However, this aspect of partnerships was reviewed as part of due diligence processes to ensure that appropriate practice would be agreed and followed on the ground. The Committee further noted that the Concordat's statement on overseas collaboration was very broad and greater clarity was needed regarding the detailed implications in terms of articulating responsibilities.
- d) Questions were raised regarding the definition of research data.
- e) It was noted that the University needed to review its policy in relation to the management of IP, and the extent to which it applied to relationships beyond formal agreements. Regarding lab books in particular, the RSP Manager reported that this was the subject of ongoing discussions across the sector. The Committee noted that this area could potentially be addressed by the incoming Head of Governance and Assurance.

The Committee **approved** the proposed approach to formulating the University's response, noting that the latter would be approved by Chair's action, due to the short timeline, and brought to the next meeting for information.

18-19/103 Champion Reporting Template and the further iteration of Theme plans. (CONFIDENTIAL & FOI EXEMPT)

This item was **withdrawn** prior to the meeting and would be considered at the May URC meeting.

18-19/104 Draft proposal for the Committee's review of ReCSS. (CONFIDENTIAL)

18-19/105 Mechanisms to support the distribution of Priming Funds.

The Committee **considered** the mechanisms to support the distribution of Priming Funds. (RC.18-19/81). Ms E Brown attended the meeting to speak to this item.

Further to the points contained in the paper, the Committee **noted** that:

- (a) The proposals had been received by FRGs after the January URC, and had been met with positive feedback.
- (b) The procedure described in the paper would be ready to roll out by the June call for GCRF and RPF applications, and it was expected remaining issues would be addressed as they arose from this point.
- (c) The Committee noted the need to be aware of the size of departments in terms of the numbers of available staff when deciding on the composition of panels given the associated workload. It was recommended that ECR involvement should be encouraged, and suggested that one ECR could be recruited from each department. The Committee agreed that an open ECR application process would be appropriate, filtered by the relevant departmental management team, rather than inviting the latter to make nominations.
- (d) It was clarified that a third of the total funding amount would nominally be available for each of the three funding rounds; however this balance would be flexible according to the level of demand. The Committee felt there was no need to limit the number of applications allowable per person at this point in the interest of avoiding overcomplicating the process, however the potential issue was **noted**.
- (e) The Committee felt the discipline-based as opposed to Theme-based panel names were reassuring to researchers in that they explicitly showed a member from their field would be involved in the assessment. It was noted, however, that it was important to encourage and support interdisciplinarity.
ACTION: EB to work with Associate Deans (Research) to ensure interdisciplinarity
- (f) The Committee agreed that further changes regarding 'top-down priorities' in funding should wait until the new mechanisms were in place and any resulting adjustments in application behaviour were better understood. The University Research Development Fund was an existing mechanism, managed by the PVC-R and senior colleagues, through which top-down priorities were supported. Arrangements for HEIF funding were still under discussion. It was agreed that priming funds not under the sole control of the University would not be included in this process.
- (g) The Committee **approved** the overall framework and plans to implement the desired changes.

The Committee **approved** the proposals subject to the above comments.

18-19/106 REF Strategy Group (CONFIDENTIAL AND FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/107 Report concerning the disbandment of CII.

The Committee **approved** proposals for the disbandment of CII (RC.18-19/84) with current members now aligned to the YBRI. It was **noted** that HYMS would be refining the online communication of its research strengths, with work likely to proceed over the summer alongside establishment of a Departmental Research Committee. The timeline for the process was clarified.

18-19/108 Approve the establishment of the York Biomedical Research Institute (YBRI).

The Committee considered the establishment of the York Biomedical Research Institute (YBRI) (RC.18-19/85). Professor Southgate and Miss Chalkley attended the meeting to speak to this item.

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

- (a) Strategy and recruitment had already been started, with the advertisement of two lectureships in Biology working in key areas, and further key areas to recruit into identified.
- (b) Although the Institute would not be included as part of ADRR until 2020, it would be helpful for URC to see a copy of the Institute's strategy once approved. It was important that the Institute's strategy aligned with those of the contributing departments. It was noted that the relevant Heads of Departments were represented on the Institute Steering Group and were to meet with the Dean of HYMS regarding the new posts and alignment with the proposed expansion of the Medical School.

The Committee **approved** the YBRI as a Type 5 research entity, noting the importance of biomedical research to the University and the potential for high-quality research associated with the Institute.

18-19/109 Outlining the key lessons of the final REF guidance. (CONFIDENTIAL & FOI EXEMPT)

18-19/110 Conclusions and final recommendations of the GDPR working group.

The Committee **considered** a report on the conclusions and final recommendations of the GDPR working group (RC.18-19/87). Dr Fonge attended the meeting to speak to this item.

The Committee **noted** the following points:

- (a) The working group had taken as its focus the research life-cycle as a whole, and had put in place many of the fundamentals needed to comply with GDPR requirements.
- (b) It is important that the University approach to GDPR does not become a 'box-ticking' exercise, and as such there should be effort made to stay on top of monitoring data activity and compliance. The emphasis should be placed on dialogue, and the

potential role of Departmental Ethics Committees in communicating such issues was **noted**.

- (c) FRGs provided a possible avenue through which awareness of GDPR could be maintained. The University Records Manager clarified this was envisaged as a mechanism through which to gather feedback, with a recognition that priorities and boundaries would shift over time.
- (d) A question/s focusing on GDPR compliance or understanding could be inserted in the ADRR question set in order to monitor this area. This could begin in the 2019/20 academic year. It was also noted that this was not enough on its own, as the University approach to GDPR must be joined up and in tandem with other aspects of governance and integrity.

ACTION: RSPO

- (e) Some concerns regarding the characterisation of data and the associated practices this necessitates were raised. It was **noted** that priorities, boundaries and categorisations would change over time, particularly in relation to Brexit. Eurostats was raised as an example of this.

The Committee expressed gratitude for the progress made by the working group.

18-19/111 Workload associated with low-value applications

The Committee **received** an oral report from the Associate Director of Research and Enterprise on the workload associated with low-value applications. In the course of the discussion, the Committee **noted** the following:

- (a) The potential need for such a change was noted initially in 2017, but was delayed further until August that year to allow a dataset to be obtained and Worktribe launched.
- (b) An analysis was conducted on low-value and low-risk grant applications, to understand the volume of time that could be saved if these were subject to a lighter-touch check than high-value applications. Such a process would still require data to be entered manually and would save approximately 80 hours for RGC.
- (c) This proposal received mixed responses from FRGs.
- (d) The need for a consistent and joined-up approach was central, alongside a recognition of training issues and the potential production of guidance and checklists to aid the process. There was value in informing departments of practices and success rates, in the interest of improving quality-measures in departments themselves. Each of the FRGs recognised these issues and are keen to find a solution.

ACTION: JG and CB to develop further and bring back to URC in June if necessary

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

18-19/112 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities held on 19 February 2019 (RC.17-18/88).

18-19/113 Minutes of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 18 February 2019 (RC.18-19/90).

18-19/114 Minutes of the Research Priming Fund Committee

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Priming Fund Committee held on 15 February 2019 (RC.18-19/91).

18-19/115 Minutes of the York Graduate Research School Board

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the York Graduate Research School Board held on 26 November 2018 (RC.18-19/92).

18-19/116 Minutes of the Research Excellence Training Steering Group

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Research Excellence Training Steering Group held on 18 February 2019 (RC.18-19/93).

18-19/117 Clarification on the length of the PhD vs the length of the funded period.

The Committee **received** for information a memo regarding the clarification on the length of the PhD vs the length of the funded period (RC.18-19/94).

18-19/118 Next meeting

The Committee **noted** details of the next meeting: Wednesday 1 May 2019 at 2:15pm in H/G17, Heslington Hall.

zc/zc

March 2019