

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2021

- Present:** Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor M Ruth (Chair)
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Social Sciences,
Professor Y Birks
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Arts & Humanities,
Professor R Ogden
Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Sciences,
Professor S Thompson
Professor K Bloor
Professor L Carpenter
Professor S Carroll
Professor M Fairclough
Professor A Manca
Professor J Richards (M21-21/27-33 only)
Professor S Smith (M.21-22/29 on)
Professor J Thijssen
Dr Merran Toerien
Acting Director of Research & Enterprise, Ms J Gilmartin
- In attendance:** Ms Z Clarke (Secretary)
Ms J Mayne
Professor P Ketikidis, Vice-President for Research and Innovation, CITY
College, Thessaloniki (M.21-22/27-39 only)
Mr I Larmour (M.21-22/35 only)
Ms A Selvaratnam (M.21-22/36 only)
Ms K Lingstadt (M.21-22/37 only)
Ms M Howarth (M.21-22/38 only)
Mr M Clark (M.21-22/40 only)
Ms A McManus (M.21-22/39-41 only)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor K Trehan and Professor K Arnold.

21-22/27 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.

21-22/28 Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2021

The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on **23 June 2021** (RC.21-22/21), subject to minor changes:

- The attendance list should be updated to accurately reflect the absence of Professor K Bloor, who had sent apologies.
- M.21-22/11: Discussion of the Interdisciplinary Institute for Mental Health Research (IIMHRY) would be amended to ensure the name of the institute was correct.
- It was **noted** that the inclusion of impact in departmental workload models and provision for post-award administrative support had been mentioned in the previous meeting, but that these were not reflected in the committee action log at this time. This would be amended as necessary to ensure the minutes accurately reflected the content of the meeting.

ACTION: ZC to review

It was **emphasised** that post-award administrative support was part of the ongoing change programme within professional services, which would be taken forward in terms of communication and strategy after Christmas. The change programme was an important means through which to increase resources for research support. It was **suggested** that conversations around the inclusion of impact in departmental workload models were picked up as part of the ADRR.

21-22/29 Research Committee action log

The Committee **received** a progress report against its action log for 2021/22 (RC.21-22/22). Further to the information provided, the Committee **noted** the following:

- (a) M.20-21/110: work continued on the development of a policy for the payment of individuals involved with or contributing to research, and the final version of the policy would be made available shortly. Further work was needed in order to present the work in the most effective manner, and URC would be notified when the full set of online resources were in place.
- (b) M.20-21/111: a meeting of the re-established UPEC was in the calendar for January. Both URC and UPEC would be informed of activity at each committee as relevant.
- (c) M.21-22/15: conversation had been initiated with both HR and Finance regarding the issue of expenses for the attendance of conferences and memberships of learned societies. This work would be taken forward following the completion of the participant payments policy mentioned above, most likely in the new year.

21-22/30 Report from the Chair

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

- Industrial action would take place on 1-3 December 2021.
- Recruitment was underway for the Director of the IIMHRY, and this process was taking place alongside the development of a paper for final UEB sign-off on the establishment of the entity.

- The process through which members of the University community could nominate a successor to Professor Sir Malcolm Grant as Chancellor would close on 6 December. The Committee **noted** that importance of the role, and were encouraged to nominate individuals of eminent stature for the position.
- The success of the Streetlife Project was **noted**. The project had received almost £0.5M from the Community Renewal Fund and was in partnership with a range of University and external partners (including Heritage360, the Departments of Music and English, the York Civic Trust, and York Museums Trust). The project would involve developing a series of community and heritage spaces to rejuvenate the area of Coney Street in the centre of York, combining the expertise of academic research and city partners and generating new research in the process.
- Bob Hide, Chief Electronics Technician from the Department of Physics, had been awarded the Professor Lord Bhattacharyya Lifetime Achievement Award at the Higher Education Technician Summit, which is part of the Papin Prizes for technical excellence and innovation in higher education and research. Further, University of York technicians were shortlisted for 'Team of the Year', in part due to their role in the national response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Committee **recognised** these achievements and **congratulated** colleagues for their success.

21-22/31 Oral Report from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School

This item was withdrawn. Written notes from the Dean of YGRS would be circulated along with the minutes in the place of the oral report. Questions should be directed to the Dean of YGRS via email or during the oral report at the next meeting of the Committee.

ACTION: ZC to circulate

21-22/32 Reports from the Associate Deans (Research)

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

Social Sciences

- (a) Activity was taking place within the Faculty in support of the ESRC White Rose DTP application, and a positive result was hoped for.
- (b) Faculty-level plans for the upcoming planning process were in development. This would involve a faculty away day on Monday 29 November, at which departmental and Faculty aims would be discussed.

Sciences

- (a) Strategy meetings were taking place across the Faculty. The tight timeline for the planning process was **noted**, as was the question as to how feedback arising from the process might be best communicated back to URC. A predominant theme noted thus far was the strength of research ambition shown by departments. The reflection taking place concerning the development of research strategies was insightful, particularly in the departments of Chemistry, Biology and Computer Science.

ACTION: Chair, AD(R)s to consider how conversations can be fed back to URC

- (b) Industrial income ambitions were noted across the Faculty. This was an active area of consideration in terms of leadership and the support available. The newly-established School of PET, in particular, had articulated aims for a combination of research and industrial income. This creative and ambitious thinking was **appreciated**.
- (c) A need for investment in staffing and resource was **recognised**, particularly in terms of capital projects.
- (d) Activity continued on the environmental sustainability aspects of research within the Faculty, particularly in Chemistry, Biology and Environment & Geography. Time would be allocated for a discussion of this at the FRG meeting in January.

Arts & Humanities

- (a) As with the other faculties, work was underway to define research strategies. There was also a focus on EDI initiatives and collaborative work. The University emphasis on 'public good' was prominent, and had energised conversations around the social and cultural contribution the Faculty was able to make.
- (b) The Faculty 'From Researcher to Research Leader' process would begin in January, supporting a cohort of academics within the Faculty in developing larger grant applications. Thanks were extended to colleagues across the Faculty for sharing their experiences and insights in support of other researchers.
- (c) A launch event for the Place and Community KE fund would take place on 14 December, involving a variety of external partners. The recent impact fortnight had been successful and had generated interesting discussions.

It was **clarified** that interdisciplinary research and the work of Research Theme Champions was embedded within Faculty business, even where this was not explicit. It was **recognised** that Faculty- and department-level strategy was bound to some extent by financial planning, but that this did not diminish the appetite for working across multiple units where appropriate. Faculty approaches to research would continue to evolve.

21-22/33 Report from the Director of Research & Enterprise (Fol Exempt)

The Committee **received** a report on recent activity in the Research & Enterprise Directorate, **noting** the following in particular:

- (a) A number of staffing changes were announced. Andrew Jackson would join York as Director of Research, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (RIKE, formerly R&E) from 4 January 2022. Andrew Taylor had been recruited as the Head of Policy, Impact and Performance (PIP, formerly RSPO), and he would be in post for the release of REF results in May. Plans were progressing for a 12-month graduate scheme in collaboration with York Law School, which would provide two graduates per year into the Research and KE Contract team, starting from September 2022.
- (b) Progress was being made in the regional and business engagement space, and this was noted in regards to corporate training agreements and a raised profile for the BioYorkshire initiative. A number of grant applications were under preparation, including

the UKRI Impact Acceleration Account (£2.9M) and the ESRC Interdisciplinary Environmental Social Science Leadership Team bid (£6.2M).

21-22/34 Relationship between CITY College, Thessaloniki, and the University of York (*Confidential & FoI Exempt*)

[Redacted for reasons of confidentiality and commercial sensitivity]

21-22/35 Institutional Statement on Responsible Research and Innovation

The Committee **approved** a draft Institutional Statement on Responsible Research and Innovation, subject to minor revisions (RC.21-22/24). The Research Development Manager (Physical Sciences) attended to speak to this item. The following was **noted**:

- (a) Work on the topic of Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) had been underway for the previous 18 months, led largely by the University Theme Champions, however a stronger emphasis on this area had been noted in recent funder requirements. The Institutional Statement presented to the Committee was intended to provide a base text for researchers to respond to such requirements. Variation across faculties and disciplines was noted, however the Statement was in alignment with goals arising from the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC) and University values as articulated by the University Strategy.
- (b) The importance of developing supporting case studies and training opportunities in the area was **emphasised**, however the current priority was to make the Statement available online. Examples for use as case studies would be sought from faculties in due course. It was **recognised** that further work was needed to ensure RRI was embedded within the culture of the University. Some small changes to the text were **requested**, which would be fed back individually to the paper author outside the meeting. The Chair would also review the final version of the Statement.

ACTION: members to notify the Research Development Manager (Physical Sciences) of changes as necessary

The Committee **approved** the Statement, subject to the above comments. Further developments would be brought to the Committee as necessary.

21-22/36 University feedback on the Knowledge Exchange Concordat submission

The Committee **considered** a paper outlining feedback received on the University Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC) submission (RC.21-22/25). The Head of Enterprise Services attended to speak to this item.

The University KEC submission had received positive feedback, with a few areas for improvement noted. There was scope to develop plans for engaging the local community and students, as well as better defining the interactions between teaching and Knowledge Exchange activity. Input would be sought from colleagues as appropriate, with involvement from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Students. The timescale given for

completion of goals set out in the KEC submission was commented on in the feedback, however it was **clarified** that a longer timescale had been chosen in consideration of the workload faced by colleagues. This was **endorsed** by the Committee.

The Committee **thanked** the Head of Enterprise Services and all colleagues involved in the development of the KEC submission for their hard work.

21-22/37 Update from the new Director of Library and Archives

The Committee **received** an oral update on matters pertaining to research from the new Director of Library and Archives. The Director of Library and Archives attended to speak to this item. The following points were **noted**:

- (a) The Library was an integral part of the research infrastructure of York. The Committee **welcomed** the Director of Library and Archives and **thanked** her for her input.
- (b) Progress continued in regards to Open Access requirements, and it was heartening to see the cultural change within the research community. York remained an outlier within the Russell Group due to the lack of a central fund for Open Access publishing at the University; the potential risk of this was **noted**. The Open Access team continued to work with Departmental Research Committees to prepare for the launch of the UKRI Open Access policy in April 2022, and were developing resources in this area. National publisher negotiations remained underway, and York had been involved in the consultation on the most recent offer from Elsevier.
- (c) A paper would be prepared concerning the background to current discussions around the UK Scholarship Communications Licence, which would involve outlining possible options for committee consideration. The approach in question, which involved reforming copyright licencing to give universities the ability to assert copyright in order to make publications open access, was prevalent in US institutions, and it was **further** noted that the UKRI Open Access policy seemed to be moving in this direction. A shift in the sector was **acknowledged**, although further community engagement would be potentially useful.

ACTION: Director of Library and Archives

- (d) The research infrastructure was limited in comparison to other institutions, and the Committee would engage further with the Library on this count. Digital scholarship was to be a focus area for the Library going forwards, and it was intended that further engagement with researchers (particularly ECRs) would take place in this area in order to ensure collections were made available in an optimal fashion. A SafePod was now available in the Library (previously discussed by the Committee, M.18-19/153), and members were encouraged to highlight this potential resource to colleagues.

21-22/38 Update from the Office of Philanthropic Partnerships and Alumni (OPPA)

[Redacted due to commercial sensitivity]

21-22/39 Recent updates to European funding (Confidential)

The Committee **consider** a report on recent changes to European funding (RC.21-22/27). The Research Strategy and Policy Officer (Information) attended to speak to this item. Further to the information provided in the paper, the following points were **noted**:

(a) *[Paragraph redacted due to commercial sensitivity]*

(b) The non-monetary value of European funding was **emphasised**, for example the loss of the wider academic community and mobility this provided.

(c) The Committee **recommended** that a named contact be identified to enable access to European collaboration and funding. This could be further supported by the establishment of links between professional services colleagues at York and in Europe. A focus on reconnecting with former partners could also kickstart further work.

ACTION: JG to consider

(d) Regarding the questions posed as part of the coversheet, it was **acknowledged** that such insight is from best sought from departments themselves, due to the fluctuation in experience across the University.

ACTION: JG, AD(R)s

(e) It was **noted** that a grant for the Department of Politics was erroneously tabled under the Faculty of Arts & Humanities – this would be amended.

ACTION: AMc

21-22/40 Five-year forecast procedure from 2022/23 (Confidential & FoI Exempt)

[Redacted due to commercial sensitivity]

21-22/41 Draft of the 2021-2022 PURE development plan (Confidential)

The Committee **approved** the draft version of the 2021-2022 PURE development plan (RC.21-22/29) (*Confidential & FoI Exempt*). The Research Strategy and Policy Officer (Management Information) attended to speak to this item. The following points were **noted**:

(a) The RSPO (now PIP) and Research Systems Hub had previously submitted annual PURE development plans to URC, but these had been put to the side during preparations for REF. It was now appropriate to restart this annual process, however it was **clarified** that the plan presented to the Committee focused on priorities of operational necessity. This was due to the imminent arrival of Andrew Taylor (incoming-Head of PIP), who would likely wish to review this area once in post. Concerns about the usability of PURE, raised by the Committee, were to be considered also as part of the post-REF review.

(b) It was **recognised** that stronger representation of the research community was needed on the Enterprise Systems Support Group, in order to best articulate the case for more dedicated resource for research support. Currently, the York Research Database needed to be prioritised as the platform would be unsupported from December 2022. Resource and ambition were needed to drive forward the development of research support systems.

(c) It was acknowledged that there was not enough expertise on such systems within the sector to meet the demand for it at a national level. An example was the issue of colleagues on Teaching & Scholarship contracts being listed as ‘former’ colleagues;

extending membership in PURE would be a project-sized piece of work requiring full business analysis and developer support and there was no available resource until 2023. The issue could be pushed by URC, but it was not included on the PURE development plan as it would not be achievable within the year. Such efforts would also need to be aligned with work on research culture.

The Committee **approved** the draft 2021-2022 PURE development plan, with the acknowledgement that further work was needed in this area to ensure key aspects were fully developed and supported.

CATEGORY II BUSINESS

20-21/42 Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee held on 14 September 2021.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee held on 14 September 2021 (RC.21-22/30).

20-21/43 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 7 October 2021.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Sciences held on 7 October 2021 (RC.21-22/31).

20-21/44 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 19 October 2021.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Social Sciences held on 19 October 2021 (RC.21-22/32).

20-21/45 Minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities held on 29 September 2021.

The Committee **received** for information the minutes of the meeting of the Faculty Research Group for the Arts & Humanities held on 29 September 2021 (RC.18-19/33).

20-21/47 Next meeting

The Committee noted details of the next meeting: Wednesday 2nd February at 2.00pm, held via Zoom.

zc/zc

December 2021