

UNIVERSITY OF YORK

Senate

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Matters for note by Senate arising from the meeting of Research Committee on 30 April 2025

1. Policy on Research Leave

The Committee considered a report on policy on research leave and approved the draft policy. The following was reported:

1. The variation across departments in current practices for research leave was acknowledged, and the policy sought to retain this flexibility. It was clarified that research leave could be used in different ways by departments, and its potential for incentivising research and meeting strategic goals was recognised. There was no push for standardisation beyond the reporting elements, for example via the ARR.
2. Some departments did not currently offer research leave. Gaps in provision would be addressed once the policy was live.

The Committee **noted** the following:

1. It was requested that the wording under point 8 regarding PGR supervision be amended to clarify that supervision “should” remain with the academic during a period of research leave.
Secretary’s Note: Following the meeting the document was amended to read “PGR supervision should normally remain with the academic during a period of Research Leave, but if not then alternative supervision arrangements need to be put in place.”
2. The draft policy was helpful in allowing for greater transparency around practices and setting expectations.
3. There was a need for effective communications around the implementation of the policy. This would be coordinated with the PIP Team and would make use of the available email channels.

2. Report and Reflections from the Dean of York Graduate Research School

The Committee considered a report and reflections from the Dean of the York Graduate Research School (YGRS). The Dean of YGRS reported the following:

1. It was important to be clear that research students were an investment for the institution. Currently the PGR community at York was the third smallest amongst the Russell Group, however it was roughly as expected for the size of the institution.
2. It was emphasised that the capacity for support within YGRS was limited due to the size of the team.

The Committee **noted** the following:

1. Work to develop the strategy for YGRS ought to include consideration of the fee structure, including the differential between Home and Overseas students. The current student finance system, and the debt accrued by students studying for undergraduate degrees, should be considered as a threat for PGR recruitment.
2. PGRs were essential for research and impact, particularly within the Sciences; it was important that this was strongly emphasised in discussions.
3. Some harmonisation of support for PGRs was necessary in the form of a centralised YGRS, for example elements of operational support, however it was recognised that the principal focus of activity and identity for PGRs at York was often localised in the form of their school, department or research group. It was important to understand variations in experience at this local level, and enable flexibility based on the individual and discipline.

3. Philanthropic Support for Research Funding

The Committee considered a report on philanthropic support for research funding. The Head of OPPA reported the following:

1. The strength of York's approach to philanthropic funding lay in the building of relationships with donors and the ability to identify wants and needed. It was **noted** that understandings of research funding varied between donors, and that open discussion concerning the funding structure for research was helpful.

The Committee noted the following:

1. There was interest in identifying research-specific approaches to and sources of funding. The difference between restricted and unrestricted funding was noted. Greater awareness of the opportunities offered by OPPA was an area of work, and it was suggested that a representative from OPPA attend the Faculty Executive Board for the Sciences.
2. It was clarified that approaches to funding seen in the USA, namely contacting parents of students, were not culturally embedded in the UK and would not be pursued. Students were encouraged to fundraise for their own activities, for example as part of Global Giving Day or Challenge Week.
3. The upcoming URC Away Day would involve discussion of data concerning philanthropic funding as part of the review of the Research Strategy Implementation Plan.

4. Sustainability Lab Accreditation

The Committee **considered** a report on the sustainability lab accreditation process. The University Sustainability Manager **reported** the following:

1. The preferred route of compliance with upcoming Wellcome Trust and Cancer Research UK grant requirements for university laboratories was the completion of the Green Impact Laboratory Accreditation (GILA). Project laboratories were expected to have external Laboratory Sustainability Accreditation in place as of 1st January 2026.
2. The potential difficulty in the requirement to publicise null or negative results was noted, however it was emphasised that such publicisation could be internal.
3. The accreditation audit of laboratories would take place on 14 October 2025, and the deadline for group submissions would be at the start of October.
4. Although support was available from DTEF, Biology Operations Team and ESAY, it was emphasised that responsibility for compliance lay with the PI.

The Committee **noted** the following:

1. The requirements applied only to 'wet' labs.
2. The University Code of Practice for Sustainability in Research provided a basis for the required actions, however further work was needed to meet requirements in terms of monitoring activity and compliance.
3. Identifying relevant projects and labs remained a challenge, as was ensuring information was communicated effectively. It was suggested that the post-award teams within the University could assist with this.
4. At the moment the requirements were not expected to be adopted by other funders, but it was anticipated that others would follow in the future, as well as commercial business partners.

5. Other Business

- (a) The Committee extended thanks to Professor Ruth for his valuable input and thoughtful chairing of URC during his time as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research.
- (b) Following on from recent discussions concerning the Library content cuts to journals, activity was underway to manage the situation and monitor reception, with further information to be presented to URC at a future meeting. Mitigation measures, such as the ability to purchase individual articles

immediately for an average cost of £30, were in place, however it was necessary to consider the messaging around these to encourage responsible and sensible usage.

- (c) The launch of the most recent round of the VS/VER scheme was noted. Although some consideration of the impact on research was necessary, it was importance that ambition and activity continued. The potential impact of the VS/VER on PGR supervision was noted.
- (d) The Committee considered a report on activity and future plans from Involvement@York. The Head of Public Involvement and Participatory Research and the Academic Director for the programme attended the meeting to speak to this item. The report outlined the major aims of Involvement@York for 2025/2026, with these identified as (i) cost recovery (ii) policy development and compliance and (iii) building capacity within the team and across the institution. Solutions to the financial situation faced by Involvement@York were under consideration, including alternative forms of income generation such as working with OPPA or offering CPD opportunities. It was important to raise awareness across the institution of the services offered by Involvement@York, particularly in light of the broadened remit of the team.
- (e) The Committee considered a report on activity from The York Policy Engine (TYPE). The core activity of TYPE was funded through the Research England Policy Support Fund (PSF), however the current wave of funding was due to end of July. There was potential for further funding from the PSF for 2025/2026, however this had not yet been confirmed, creating some uncertainty about TYPE's future.
- (f) The Committee considered a report on activity and future plans from the Valuing Voices Project. The Valuing Voices project brought together work on a range of topics including Responsible Research and Innovation, decolonisation and research impact. The core of the project was the development of an online tool which would support the research community to develop research projects in an equitable manner. It was noted that the tool, although previewed during the meeting, was not yet ready to be shared more widely.
- (g) The Committee considered a report on revisions to the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity. The revisions to the Concordat reflected the degree to which the document had become embedded within the sector. The University remained broadly compliant the requirements of the Concordat, however a gap analysis would be completed to ensure all expectations were met.

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27/06/2025

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