UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 17 October 2019.

PRESENT: Professor John Senior (Chair)

Dr Susan Grey        Dr Pandelis Kourtessis        Dr Philip Fiddaman
Professor David Barling        Professor Jameel Inal        Catherine Manthorpe
Dr Sylvie Magerstadt        Professor Elias Brinks        Annalisa Jones
Dr Steven Adams        Dr Melanie Handley        Dr Elizabeth White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Uttley        Dr Bill Worthington        Ellie Hubbard
Leire Caseles Vallejo

APOLOGIES:

Professor Frances Bunn        Dr Farshid Amirabdollahian        Professor Philip Lucas
Dr Chamu Kuppuswamy        Dr Roger Levy        Professor Wendy Wills
Professor Julia Williams        Professor Stephen Page        Dr Rowland Hughes
Julie Newlan        Dr David Ford        David Combes
Susan Akhtar        Alaa Al-Sarraf        Dr Finlay Malcolm
Jeff Hughes

1  NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

No new declarations of interest were submitted.

2  TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership, effective 1 September 2019.

(Agenda Paper 4, refers.)

3  MINUTES - 23 MAY 2019

The Minutes of the meeting on 23 May 2019 were confirmed and signed.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 5, refers.)

4  SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS/MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The were no matters arising from the Minutes that were not taken elsewhere on the agenda.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

5  EXISTING KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER PROGRAMMES AND THEIR PROGRESS, FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND THE NATIONAL POSITION AND UPDATE ON COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

5.1 The Committee received a report compiled by Enterprise and Business Development on existing Knowledge Transfer programmes, commercial activity and Intellectual Property pipeline to October 2019.

Minutes 5.2 to 5.6 are confidential and available to Members and Officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 7, refers.)
RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY

6  RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021

6.1 The Committee received a report from the Chair and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Professor John Senior, detailing the changes to the Code of Practice for determining staff submission and submission of outputs.

6.2 The Committee noted that, following submission of the Code to Research England in June 2019, the University had received feedback regarding a few areas of minor concern. About 50 per cent of codes submitted had received feedback. Changes had been made accordingly as per the report, and a response from Research England was expected by 8 November 2019.

6.3 The delay in getting the Code approved had, in turn, delayed notifications to staff about their status in relation to significant responsibility for research. However, research allocations had already been incorporated into timetables and were therefore providing an indication to staff that they had significant responsibility for research.

6.4 A report on the progress of next mock REF exercise would be submitted at the next meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 9, refers.)

CHAIR

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RDG)

7  TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP OF THE RDG

7.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Chair regarding the Terms of Reference and Membership of the RDG.

7.2 The Committee noted that the Terms of Reference and Membership of the Group would be the subject of review in the near future. The review would consider the recent changes to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers.

8  UPDATE ON THE ACTIVITIES OF THE RDG

8.1 The Committee received a report from Dr Elizabeth White, who had recently taken over as Chair of the Researcher Development Group from Professor Grace Lees-Maffei.

8.2 Both Dr White and Professor Lees-Maffei had attended the Vitae Conference 2019 on 16 and 17 September. Vitae was the national organisation for researcher development in the UK and administered the HR Excellence in Research award process on behalf of the European Union. Key themes at the Conference had been wellbeing, inclusion and interdisciplinarity. Areas of good practice had also been discussed, as well as a new paradigm of accountability to society and tax-payers while preserving freedom of thought and expression in research. More detail on the conference was available in Professor Lees-Maffei’s blog:


8.3 The Committee noted that a new Researcher Development Concordat had been launched by Vitae at Universities UK Annual Members’ Conference on 12 September 2019. The new concordat diversified from the previous one and set out three clear principles – environment and culture, employment and professional and career development – underpinned by obligations for the four key stakeholder groups: funders, researchers, their managers and the institution. The new concordat would be a ‘living document’ that would be reviewed and updated annually and all funders and institutions with an interest were encouraged to become signatories.
8.4 The Committee further noted that signatories to the new concordat would be required to undertake an annual review and produce an annual report to their governing body publicly available.

8.5 The Committee agreed that further work and discussion was required before a decision could be made on whether to recommend that the University become a signatory to the new concordat.

8.6 The implications of signing up to the new Concordat on Researcher Development would be considered further at the next meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers.)

**DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

9 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES) 2019

9.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the recent Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2019 results for the University.

9.2 The University’s response rate for PRES 2019 had been 62%, which was much higher than the national average of 42% where over 50,000 students had participated. Levels of satisfaction for UH students were high with 84% responding positively to the question on overall satisfaction. This was 3% above the Russell Group benchmark and additionally represented an increase of 2% on the University’s results in 2017.

9.3 The Benchmark Comparison showed an excellent performance against all the core measures, with the University’s results outperforming all benchmark groups for all of them excepting Resources in which the University equalled the Russell Group benchmark thus reflecting an overall performance in the first quartile (Figure 2, Confidential Agenda Paper 12, refers). Although Resources was the only score positioned in the second quartile, it was nonetheless still above the other benchmark comparisons. The Committee noted that these were excellent results and congratulated Dr Grey on this outstanding performance.

9.4 The Board noted the results of the wellbeing related questions asked as part of the PRES (Figure 3, Confidential Agenda Paper 13, refers). While the University’s results showed that students at the University were less anxious and happier than the benchmark, only 80% had said that life was worthwhile and only 41% had indicated low anxiety levels. This clearly indicated that, in general, levels of anxiety among research students were quite high, and the University must continue to address this issue.

Dr Grey advised that the next Research Student Conference, scheduled for 24 January 2020, would include two key notes in the area of wellbeing.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 12, refers.)

10 RESEARCH SUPERVISION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

10.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Assistant Registrar (Academic Services), Lisa Uttley, on the Research Supervision Management System (RSMS).

10.2 The Committee noted that the system had been operating for 7 months. There were 657 active students, 83% (545) of which had engaged with the system, 87% of principal supervisors and 74% of secondary supervisors. The 100 or so students who had not yet engaged with the system were being contacted to provide support as required. An increase of engagement between now and January, linked to the Annual Monitoring process, was expected.

10.3 Using the system had been extremely beneficial at the point the student records had been progressed at the end of July. Improved access to accurate information had enabled the team to manage the recording of data in a much more efficient way.
More licences for the Yellow-fin product were required to provide the administrators with access to information to support the flow of work, however, the financial implications of obtaining more licences needed to be considered.

There had been some operational issues but had been relatively minor and responded to swiftly (e.g. changes due to the merger of the School of Engineering and Computer Science).

Phase B – the Submission and Examination Workflow - was being developed and tests were being planned for the end of December.

The first meeting of a User Forum will be held on 18th November, with representation from a range of stakeholders.

The Committee further noted the benefits the RSMS system had brought in terms of general transparency, as it enabled a clear audit trail of supervision related milestones.

**RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

**RESEARCH MISCONDUCT**

The Committee noted that there had been no cases of research misconduct during 2018-2019.

**PROGRESS OF CONCORDAT TO SUPPORT RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

12.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Institutional Lead Research Integrity, Dr Susan Grey.

12.2 The Committee noted that Universities UK’s report on the concordat to support research integrity had not yet been published. Once available, adjustments would be made accordingly. It was expected that the revised concordat would be more detailed so compliance with the requirements of the concordat could be better audited.

12.3 The UK Research Integrity Office, together with UNESCO, was working on an EU-funded responsible research and innovation project looking at how good practices were established in different research and innovation contexts across the world. All those involved in research and innovation were invited to participate in the Responsible Research and Innovation Networking Globally survey. The link to the survey would be circulated electronically to Members.

12.4 A survey of researchers’ perceptions of incentives and disincentives in the research system on research integrity was also taking place as part of a study on research integrity landscape commissioned by Research England. Dr Grey would participate in the survey as part of the University’s institutional response but others could participate as well if they so wished. The link to the survey would be circulated electronically to Members.

**ANNUAL REPORT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY 2017/18**

The Committee noted that the Annual Report on Research Integrity 2017-2018 had been published and was available at the following link:

https://www.herts.ac.uk/research/research-management/ethics-and-research-integrity

**GLOBAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH IN RESOURCE-POOR SETTINGS**

14.1 The Committee considered a proposal by the Chair to adopt the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings.

14.2 The Committee noted the Code proposed a framework based on the values of fairness, respect, care and honesty, and set out expectations of behaviour that were consistent with how the University already conducted research.
The Committee decided to recommend the adoption by the University of the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings. Approval by the Academic Board would now be sought.

Once formally adopted, a developmental approach would be taken to disseminate the Code. Part of this approach would include adding information to the staff intranet: HertsHub, and a session in the Researcher Development Programme.

(Agenda Paper 17, refers.)

ATHENA SWAN

15 UPDATE REPORT

15.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on behalf of the Athena SWAN Officer, Sarah Goler Solecki.

15.2 The Committee noted that five Schools, along with the University as a whole, now held Athena SWAN bronze awards (Engineering and Computer Science; Life and Medical Sciences; Humanities; Creative Arts and Education). In addition, two Schools had been awarded Silver status: Physics, Astronomy and Maths and Health and Social Work. The Schools of Business and Law were currently developing applications.

15.3 The Committee further noted that the results of the University’s Race Equality Charter Mark application would be known at the end of November, and that a new Head of Equality would join the University in January 2020.

RESEARCH OFFICE

16 RESEARCH OFFICE REPORT

16.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Head of the Research Office, Dr Catherine Manthorpe.

16.2 The Committee noted that activity at the Research Office was heavily focused on REF 2021, which was being more demanding than the previous REF exercise. The requirement to identify staff with significant responsibility for research was additional this time around.

16.3 The Committee further noted that Professor Jonathan Morris, Professor of Modern History, had joined the Research Office as part of the team working on REF 2021. Professor Morris brought with him the experience of having been a member of the REF panel previously and would be again in 2021.

RESEARCH INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS AND OPEN ACCESS TO RESEARCH OUTPUTS

17.1 The Committee received a report from the Research and Scholarly Communications (RSC) Manager, Library and Computing Services, Dr Bill Worthington.

17.2 The Committee noted current and historical numbers for items available through the University’s public facing systems for presenting research, RIS and UHRA. The RSC Manager explained that the decrease in number of unlocked user accounts was due to housekeeping of unused accounts. There where circumstances in which user end dates did not feed through to RIS and manual intervention was required.

17.3 The Committee further noted that UHRA had passed the significant milestone of 10,000 full-text items on 18 September 2019. There was also a positive trend in the Open Access ratio of full text to total items in UHRA, which was now at 51 per cent, due to changes in the UHRA editorial policy.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 20, refers.)

OTHER BUSINESS
18 RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

18.1 The Committee received a report from the Head of Research Grants, Annalisa Jones, on research grant applications and awards.

Minutes 18.2 to 18.6 are confidential and available to Members and Officers in attendance only.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 21, refers.)

19 LEARNING AND COMPUTING SERVICES - UPDATE REPORT

19.1 The Committee received a report from the Head of IT Services, David Combes, regarding Learning and Computing Services projects that had a bearing on research related activities.

19.2 The report included updates on the IT standardisation project and IT maintenance weekends.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 22, refers.)

20 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD 2018/19

The Committee received and approved the Annual Report to the Academic Board 2018-2019.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 23, refers.)

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

21 CLERK’S REPORT

The Committee noted the following items included in the Clerk’s report:

21.1 Schedule of Meetings 2019-2020

All meetings were scheduled to be held at 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room:

Thursday, 27 February 2020
Thursday, 21 May 2020

21.2 Postgraduate Research Student Conference 2020

The Committee noted that the Postgraduate Research Student Conference would be held on 24 January 2020 in Room A161 Lindop Building.

21.3 Professorships

The Committee noted the following Professorship appointments:

(A) School of Life and Medical Sciences with effect from 1 June 2019 – Dr Naomi Fineberg – Professor of Psychiatry;

(B) School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics with effect from 1 September 2019 - Dr James Geach – Professor of Astrophysics;

(C) School of Health and Social Work with effect from 1 October 2019 – Dr Shulamit Ramon – Professor of Social Inclusion and Wellbeing.
21.4 **Readerships**

The Committee noted the appointment of Dr Chiaki Kobayashi, from the School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, as Reader in Astrophysics with effect from 1 August 2019.

21.5 **Associate Professorships in Research**

The Committee noted the following appointments:

(A) Dr Steven Adams - School of Creative Arts
(B) Dr Mohammad Herfatmanesh - School of Engineering and Computer Science
(C) Dr Victoria Hutter - School of Life and Medical Sciences
(D) Dr Martin Krause - School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics
(E) Dr Lisa Lione - School of Life and Medical Sciences

21.6 **Ethics Committee for Studies Involving Human Participants**

The Committee noted the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting held on 1 May 2019.

(Part 2, Confidential Agenda Paper 24, refers.)

22 **COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY ACT 2015 (PREVENT)**

There were no matters relevant to the Act not dealt with earlier in the meeting.

23 **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT**

There were no people development needs to be referred to Human Resources.

24 **RISK**

There were no risks inherent in matters dealt with by the Committee during the meeting not discussed when the items concerned were taken.

25 **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

There was no emergency business.

26 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday, 27 February 2020, to be held at 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room.