UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 27 February 2020.

PRESENT: Professor John Senior (Chair)

Dr Susan Grey
Professor Frances Bunn
Professor Philip Lucas
Professor Pandelis Kourtessis

Dr Rowland Hughes
Dr Barbara Henry
Professor Elias Brinks
Bethan Adams

Susan Akhtar
Catherine Manthorpe
Dr Elizabeth White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Uttley
Leire Caselles Vallejo

Dr Bill Worthington
Ellie Hubbard

APOLOGIES:

Professor Farshid Amirabdollahian
Dr Roger Levy
Professor Stephen Page
Dr David Ford
Dr Melanie Handley

Dr Chamu Kuppuswamy
Professor Wendy Wills
Professor Jameel Inal
Vesna Manasieva

Dr Steven Adams
Professor Julia Williams
Jo Stuart
Dr Finlay Malcolm

Dr Philip Fiddaman
Annalisa Jones

27 NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No new declarations of interest were submitted.

28 MEMBERSHIP

The Committee noted the following changes to its membership:

28.1 Category 4: Associate Deans of School (Research)

Dr Barbara Henry, Hertfordshire Law School, had joined the Committee in this membership category.

28.2 Category 5: Director of Marketing and Communications (or named alternate)

Jo Stuart, Director of Marketing and Communications, had joined the Committee in this membership category.

28.3 Category 6: Chief Information Officer (or named alternate)

Beth Adams had formally joined the Committee in this membership category as the Chief Information Officer’s named alternate.

28.4 Category 8: A representative of the research students nominated by the Director of the Doctoral College

Vesna Manasieva had joined the Committee in this membership category following Alaa Al-sarraf’s resignation.

(Agenda Paper 3, refers.)

29 MINUTES - 17 OCTOBER 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of 17 October 2019 were confirmed and signed.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 5, refers.)
30 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

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

**RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY**

31 **DRAFT RESEARCH STRATEGY AND DELIVERY PLAN**

*(Minute 31 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)*

*(Confidential Agenda Paper 7, refers.)*

32 **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021 - MINUTE 6.4, REFERS**

32.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Chair on the preparations for REF 2021.

32.2 The third mock REF exercise was underway. Feedback from the assessors had been received and would be passed on to the authors at the end of March.

32.3 Decisions on outputs would be made in June and early July.

**RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT**

33 **REPORT FROM THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RDG) - MINUTE 8.6, REFERS**

*(Minute 33 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)*

*(Confidential Agenda Paper 9, refers.)*

**DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

34 **REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

34.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey.

34.2 The Committee noted that the Postgraduate Research Student Conference had taken place on Friday, 24 January 2020. Attendance had been good, although a greater number of students had registered than actually attended. Reasons for this mismatch would be analysed and student representatives consulted. Feedback from attendees had been positive and work was underway with Marketing and Communications to produce a video.

34.3 The Committee also noted that the new Research Council Doctoral stipend levels and indicative fees were as follows:

i the National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2020/21 was £15,285;

ii UK Research and Innovation's Indicative Fee Level for 2020/21 was £4,407.

35 **RESEARCH SUPERVISION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE**

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

35.2 The Assistant Registrar (Academic Services) reported 100 per cent student engagement with the system.

35.3 Additional licences for the reporting element of the system were being pursued.
35.4 Testing of the submission and examination workflow had commenced and was expected to be completed in the Autumn. The Senior Academic Services Officer (Research), Kathy Lee, and the Assistant Registrar (Academic Services), Lisa Uttley, would deliver a presentation to the Committee on this topic at the next meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers.)

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

36 RESEARCH INTEGRITY UPDATE

36.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College and Institutional Lead on Research Integrity, Dr Susan Grey, in respect of research integrity.

36.2 The Committee noted that a revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity had been published in October 2019 with a greater emphasis on monitoring and compliance.

36.3 A new Research Integrity Committee was being formed to monitor compliance with the Concordat at the University. Terms of reference would be formulated and brought to this Committee for consideration.

36.4 A Research Integrity Handbook was also being developed. The Handbook would be considered by PRMG prior to being brought to this Committee.

37 GLOBAL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR RESEARCH IN RESOURCE-POOR SETTINGS - Minute 14.3, refers

37.1 The Committee noted that the adoption of the Global Code of Conduct for Research in Resource-Poor Settings had been approved by the Academic Board on 20 November 2019.

37.2 Adoption of the Code would be publicised in the research pages of the University website.

38 AMENDMENTS TO UPR RE02 ‘RESEARCH MISCONDUCT’

38.1 The Committee considered and approved amendments to UPR RE02 ‘Research Misconduct’ to clarify that a breach of UPR RE01 ‘Studies Involving Human Participants’ could also be regarded as research misconduct.

38.2 The Committee noted that other minor amendments had also been made to bring the UPR up to date.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 14, refers.)

RESEARCH OFFICE

39 REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

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

39.2 Two new research coordinators had been appointed since January and further recruitment for an advisor position was in progress.

39.3 The Annual European Research Information Event was taking place on 11 March 2020. Sarah Ashwood, UKRO European Advisor, would be briefing the University on the latest news from Brussels, opportunities for funding and plans for the future.

39.4 The Research Office was otherwise busy with REF 2021 preparations and supporting research grant applications.
UPDATE REPORTS

40 RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

(Minute 40 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)

(Confidential Agenda Paper 16, refers.)

41 RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

41.1 The Committee received an update report from the Research and Scholarly Communications Manager, Dr Bill Worthington, on the Research Information (RIS) and UH Repository Archive (UHRA) systems, REF Open Access compliance and the research output metrics target.

41.2 The Committee noted a larger than normal volume of new RIS records since October 2019, which was partly due to new joiners who had been prolific in adding their portfolios.

41.3 Open Access compliance levels for outputs considered in the mock REF exercise were above the required threshold at 95.75 per cent.

41.4 RIS upgrades and maintenance would be prioritised to suit the key phases of REF.

41.5 The Committee further noted that research targets of the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 included a research output metric to improve Field-Weighted Citation Impact (FWCI) to sit in the top quartile of Post ‘92 universities. This relative target was more effective than an absolute value, as it allowed to benchmark the University against competitor institutions.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 17, refers.)

42 LEARNING AND COMPUTING SERVICES

42.1 The Committee received a report from Beth Adams, Head of Library and Academic Support Services, on the UKRI Open Access Review Consultation, subscription journals transformative agreements and the next University systems maintenance weekend.

42.2 The Committee acknowledged the importance of post-1992 universities responding to the Open Access Consultation. It was proposed that the Research and Scholarly Communications Team and the Research Office coordinated a University response through PRMG. The Open Access Consultation process would run until 17 April 2020.

42.3 The Committee noted the complex nature of transformative agreements for journal content brought about by Open Access policies. Jisc was negotiating on behalf of the sector, as individual universities lacked the resources to analyse every deal, however, the resulting deals were still highly complex. These changes could have a significant impact on research fields such as Humanities, where publications were not funded by UKRI.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 18, refers.)

43 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

(Minute 43 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)

44 ATHENA SWAN

44.1 The Committee received an oral report from Dr Susan Grey in respect of Athena Swan initiatives at the University.
The Committee noted that one of the key targets in the Strategic Plan 2020-2025 was to apply for Athena SWAN (AS) Institutional Silver when the current Bronze award expired in April 2022. More work involving the professional and support staff across the University would be needed to achieve this.

All academic Schools had established Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) teams to broaden the focus of AS Self-Assessment Teams (SATs) to encompass other areas of equality (race, disability etc.). These would also be rolled out across the professional SBUs.

The Hertfordshire Law School would be re-submitting for their initial AS Bronze award in April 2020.

The School of Engineering and Computer Science had submitted a joint application for AS Bronze in November 2019. The result was expected in March or April 2020.

The School of Life and Medical Science would be submitting for AS Silver in November 2020.

The Committee also noted that Advance HE had revised the renewal process for AS awards. The new process had significantly reduced the word limit and burden of preparing submissions and focused more on demonstrating progress against the action plan. The School of Education would be the first School to submit for a renewal under the revised system in November 2020.

The University had been unsuccessful in renewing its Race Equality Charter Bronze award and would be re-submitting in February 2021. A Project Management Plan was now in place and working groups had been formed within the SAT to respond to panel feedback, improve the submission and advance race equality across the institution. It was agreed that a new membership category for a Race Equality Charter Champion would be added to the Committee’s composition so the Committee could receive updates on this topic.

The Committee further noted that the new Head of EDI, Mohammed Ilyas, had started his post in January 2020 and was currently developing an EDI strategy for the institution, which would be presented to CEG.

The Women+ Professors Network had become the 7th officially recognised staff network at the University and now received support from the Equality Office. The Academic Women’s Advancement Group (AWAG) had also become active across the institution. It was worth highlighting their activities to colleagues as their work aligned with AS in terms of focusing on women’s progression and advancing gender equality.

OTHER BUSINESS

ROLE OF THE ANIMAL WELFARE AND ETHICAL REVIEW BODY

Committee members were reminded that any research involving animals should be reported to the University’s Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body (AWERB).

Whilst the AWERB was primarily concerned with animal research under the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act (ASPA), it covered all research involving animals, including ASPA-like research taking place outside the UK.

CLERK’S REPORT

No indications that Members wished to comment on any item in the Clerk’s report had been received and therefore the report was taken as noted and approved.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 22 and Minutes 47 to 53, refer.)
ACADEMIC BOARD STANDING ORDERS

The Committee noted the Academic Board Standing Orders, which could be found at the following link:


PROFESSORSHIPS

The Committee noted that:

48.1 Dr Kristen Coppin, from the School of Physics, Astronomy and Mathematics, had been appointed Professor of Astrophysics with effect from 1 January 2020;

48.2 Dr Pandelis Kourtessis, from the School of Engineering and Computer Science, had been appointed Professor of Cognitive Networks with effect from 1 February 2020.

READERSHIPS

The Committee noted that Dr Lindsay Bottoms, from the School of Life and Medical Sciences, had been appointed Reader in Exercise and Health Psychology with effect from 1 December 2019.

RESEARCH DEGREES BOARD MINUTES

The Committee noted that Minutes of the following meetings of the Research Degrees Board had been placed in the Research Committee Minute Book and were available for inspection on request:

27 June 2019;
3 October 2019; and

ETHICS COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Ethics Committee meeting held on 23 October 2019.

(Part 2, Confidential Agenda Paper 22, refers.)

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2019-2020

Thursday 21 May 2020, at 09.30 hours, in the Central Committee Room, MacLaurin Building.

SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020-2021

The Committee noted that all meetings were scheduled at 09.30 hours, in the Central Committee Room, MacLaurin Building:

Thursday 15 October 2020;
Thursday 25 February 2021;
Thursday 20 May 2021.

COUNTER TERRORISM AND SECURITY ACT 2015 (PREVENT)

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

PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT

There were no people development needs identified to refer to Human Resources.
There were no risks inherent in matters dealt with by the Committee during the meeting that were not discussed when the items concerned were taken.

**EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

**57.1 Nominations for REF panel appointments**

57.1.1 The Chair advised the Committee that the four UK higher education funding bodies, the Department for the Economy, Northern Ireland (DfE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), Research England; and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), were seeking diverse nominations for further members and assessors to join the REF sub-panels and staff were encouraged to seek nomination through one of the Research England approved nominating bodies.

57.1.2 The deadline for submitting nominations was noon, 3 April 2020.

(Tabled Agenda Paper 26 and [https://ref.ac.uk/news/nominations-invited-for-further-ref-panel-appointments/](https://ref.ac.uk/news/nominations-invited-for-further-ref-panel-appointments/), refer.)

**DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 21 May 2020, at 09.30 hours, in the Central Committee Room, MacLaurin Building.