The Committee considered a request from the Chair to reconsider the decision, made at the previous meeting, to create a new membership category for a Race Equality Charter Champion.

The Committee noted the importance of receiving updates on the Race Equality Charter, however, it was agreed that it would be more efficient to have a single member reporting on all Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) matters.

The Committee decided that the EDI Office would be asked to identify an individual to join the Committee to provide updates on all EDI matters, including Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter.

Subject to approval from the Academic Board, the definition of membership category 13: ‘A member representing the Athena SWAN initiative’ would be amended to reflect the role of its new member as set out at Minute 59.3.

(Agent Paper 3, refers)

The Committee noted its current membership.

Category 9: Two (2) representatives of the contract/early career research staff

The Committee noted that this was the last meeting for Dr Finlay Malcolm and Dr Melanie Handley, as their terms of office were ending on 31 August 2020. Both members were thanked for their contribution to the Committee.

Category 13: A member representing the Athena SWAN initiative

The vacancy in category 13 would be addressed as set out in Minute 59.

(Agent Paper 4, refers.)
The Minutes were confirmed as an accurate record of the previous meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 5, refers.)

There were no matters arising from the meeting not taken elsewhere in the agenda.

RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair in respect of the Research Strategy and Delivery Plan 2020-2025.

The Committee noted that the Research Strategy 2020-2025 had now been published on the website on a temporary page. The Research Office was working together with the Web Support Team on a permanent location for the Research Strategy within the research pages.

The Delivery Plan was an internal document listing the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that would be used to measure the University’s performance against its strategic Research aims.

RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021

The Committee received an oral report from the Chair in respect of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

The Committee noted that Research England had delayed the submission date for REF 2021 and conducted a consultation regarding a new submission date.

Three options had been given for a new submission date:

- option 1: 31 March 2021, which would constitute a four-month delay to the original submission date;
- option 2: 31 March 2021 for the submission of staff and outputs only, with a second later submission date, probably in June or July, for research impact and environment statement;
- option 3: September/October 2021 or later.

Since research impact was dependent on events, option 2 would allow more compensation than option 1 for the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Both options 1 and 2 would allow the assessment phase to take place during the calendar year of 2021 and funding would still come into the stream of 2022-2023. Research England had expressed a preference for either of these two options.

Option 3 would mean QR funding would come later in 2023-2024.

Due to the limited time to participate in the consultation process, the Committee had had no opportunity to ponder the options. However, these had been considered by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Management Group (PRMG) and, after considerable discussion, it had been decided that option 2 would be put forward as the University’s preferred.

Confirmation from Research England of the new submission dates for REF 2021 was still awaited.
CAFEM RESEARCH CENTRE APPLICATION

65.1 The Committee *considered* an application for Research Centre Designation in respect of the Centre for Agriculture, Food and Environmental Management Research (CAFEM Research).

65.2 The Committee noted that CAFEM was already a centre approved by the University. It had been established a few years before in partnership with the Royal Veterinary College (RVC) as a centre for both teaching and learning and for research collaboration. In particular, CAFEM had been established to develop a degree in agriculture in collaboration with RVC and Rothamsted Research. However, recruitment to the programme, and to subsequent modifications, had not been successful and it was now proposed that the partnership continued in the form of a research centre.

65.3 The Committee resolved that the application for Research Centre Designation in respect of the Centre for Agriculture, Food and Environmental Management Research (CAFEM Research) be *approved*.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 9, refers.)

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT

66 NEW RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT CONCORDAT - MINUTE 33.5, REFERS

66.1 The Committee *considered* a report from Dr Liz White for submission to the Chief’s Executive Group (CEG) in respect of the new Researcher Development Concordat.

66.2 The purpose of the report was to obtain CEG’s support for the signing of the new Concordat by the University.

66.3 The Committee noted that previous concerns regarding an additional reporting burden associated with the new Concordat had now been addressed. Upon signing the new Concordat, compliance monitoring would need to take place annually. However, it was only every two years that this report needed to be submitted externally, which was in line with current processes.

66.4 The Committee *resolved* that the submission of the report to CEG be *supported*.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 10, refers.)

67 UPDATE FROM THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP

67.1 The Committee *received* a report from Dr Liz White in respect of the Researcher Development Group (RDG).

67.2 The Committee noted the proposal to create and publish an RDG Handbook. Concerns were raised that the Researcher Development Group Handbook could be confused with the Researcher Development Programme Handbook, which was already in existence, and it was *agreed* that the RDG Handbook would be renamed. The draft document would be submitted to this Committee for consideration before being published in HertsHub.

67.3 The Committee *discussed* who was best placed to be a contact person at each School for researcher mentoring. After considering different options, it was *agreed* that the current RDG representatives would act as conduits, or links, for this and would collate updates for the RDG Annual Report. It was important to clarify that RDG representatives would not be responsible for setting up or conducting mentoring but for ensuring that mentoring was taking place and reporting as appropriate.

67.4 The Committee also noted that Shori Thakur, Principal Lecturer in Pharmacology and Deputy Associate Director (Doctoral College), had taken over as Researcher Development Programme Manager.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers.)
68 REMOTE INTERIM ASSESSMENT AND VIVAS

68.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, in respect of assessments and vivas conducted remotely during the COVID-19 outbreak.

68.2 The Director reported that assessments and vivas conducted remotely had gone well and no negative feedback had been received. The Doctoral College was working directly with one student who had expressed concerns so any issues could be addressed.

68.3 Associate Deans of School (Research) were asked to remind research students that an examination was not passed until any required amendments, as set by the examiners after a viva, had been completed.

69 PGR COVID-19 SURVEY

69.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the results of the Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) COVID-19 survey.

69.2 The Committee noted that survey respondents were overwhelmingly satisfied with the guidance and support they had received since the COVID-19 restrictions had been introduced (92 per cent) and with the contact they had had with their supervisors (97 per cent). As expected, students’ perception had been that they would make less progress in the following two or three months of no or limited access to the University than if they had had normal access.

69.3 The Committee congratulated the Director on these very positive results and acknowledged the good work by the Doctoral College and research supervisors in supporting research students.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 13, refers.)

70 RESEARCH SUPERVISION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE - MINUTE 35.4, REFERS

70.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, regarding the Research Supervision Management System (RSMS).

70.2 The Committee noted that, originally, this update had meant to be a presentation. However, as the meeting was being held online for the first time because of the COVID-19 restrictions, a decision had been made to delay the presentation and give an oral report instead.

70.3 In respect of the RSMS, the Committee noted that 96 per cent of students were engaged and active within the system. The small remaining percentage represented students who either had suspended their studies or were very near completion. Supervisor engagement with the system was also high at 93 per cent.

70.4 One of three upcoming software updates included changes to enable the tailoring of email reminders, which had been a source of frustration for some users.

70.5 The introduction of the examination workflow had no firm date yet, although it was hoped that it would be completed in the Autumn. Support from the Library and Computing Services (LCS) had been obtained for this phase.

70.6 The Committee further noted that the RSMS working group was working on issues raised by users, such as, for example, the ability to provide research tutors with a monthly list of student milestones to assist the management of their students.
RESEARCH INTEGRITY

71 RESEARCH ETHICS, SUPPORT AND REVIEW IN RESEARCH ORGANISATIONS FROM UKRIO

The Committee noted the ‘Research Ethics – Support and Review in Research Organisations document’ issued by the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) and available through the following link:


RESEARCH OFFICE

72 REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

72.1 The Committee received a report from the Head of Research Grants, Annalisa Jones, on the activities of the Research Office since the previous meeting.

72.2 The Committee noted that the Research Office had adapted well to working remotely and were still providing support to staff via MS Teams.

72.3 Preparations for REF 2021 were also still underway. Third mock exercise meetings were set to take place in July, probably via MS Teams. Since there would be a delay on the submission date for REF 2021, an extra and final round of meetings would take place before submission. These were likely to take place in mid-January if the new submission date was confirmed for 31 March 2021. However, it was hoped that the majority of decisions on outputs would be made during the July round of meetings.

72.4 On the research grants side, the Research Office had been collating information from across the University regarding COVID-19 related research. The intention was to publicise this through HertsHub and raise awareness of the proactive research going on at the University. This would be for internal purposes only, however, should anything be publicised externally, the Research Office would work conjunctively with the Marketing and Communications team.

72.5 It was also worth noting that the number of queries received by the Research Office regarding research sponsorship had gone up considerably due to the COVID-19 situation.

73 RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

(Minute 73 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)

(Confidential Agenda Paper 17, refers.)

UPDATE REPORTS

74 RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS

(Minute 74 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)

(Confidential Agenda Paper 18, refers.)

75 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

(Minute 75 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.)

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)
76  **ATHENA SWAN**

76.1 The Committee received an oral report from Dr Susan Grey in respect of Athena Swan activities at the University since the previous meeting.

76.2 The Committee noted that the School of Engineering and Computer Science had been successful in their bid for an Athena Swan Bronze Award.

76.3 The Committee further noted that Athena Swan had extended their award validity to five years from four. Both the Schools of Life and Medical Sciences and Education had been due to resubmit for their awards in November 2020 and would now consider, given the current circumstances, whether to resubmit or wait until the end of the five-year period.

77  **LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

77.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Head of Library and Academic Support Services, Beth Adams.

77.2 The Committee noted that the next IT maintenance weekend was scheduled for 30 May 2020.

77.3 Also to note was that HMRC had brought forward the zero VAT rating for e-books, e-newspapers and academic e-journals with effect from 1 May 2020. This was relevant for any ongoing read and publish negotiations.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

78  **CLERK’S REPORT**

(Confidential Agenda Paper 22 and Minutes 79 to 82, refer.)

79  **THE NAGOYA PROTOCOL ON ACCESS TO GENETIC RESOURCES AND THE FAIR AND EQUITABLE SHARING OF BENEFITS**

The Committee noted that a communication to all staff was sent via UHQ email on 26 February 2020 highlighting to University researchers the requirement to exercise due diligence when wishing to use a genetic resource and/or associated traditional knowledge (ATK) from a country that was a party to the Nagoya Protocol.

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

80  **RESEARCH DEGREES BOARD MINUTES**

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

- 16 January 2020;
- 5 March 2020.

81  **ETHICS COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee noted the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2020.

(Part 3, Confidential Agenda Paper 22, refers.)

82  **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020-2021**

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 other 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.

RISK
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
There was no emergency business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING
The next meeting of the Research Committee would be held on Thursday, 15 October 2020 from 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room - MacLaurin Building.

Items for the Agenda should be notified to the Clerk, Leire Caselles Vallejo ('e'-mail l.caselles-vallejo@herts.ac.uk) by 24 September 2020 and reports submitted by 1 October 2020.