UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 15 October 2020.

PRESENT: Professor John Senior (Chair)

Dr Susan Grey Professor Stephen Page Susan Akhtar
Professor David Barling Dr Rowland Hughes Dr Philip Fiddaman
Professor Farshid Amirabdollahian Dr Barbara Henry Catherine Manthorpe
Dr Chamu Kuppuswamy Professor Mike Page Annalisa Jones
Dr Roger Levy Professor Pandelis Kourtessis Sarah Goler Solecki
Professor Julia Williams Jo Stuart Dr Elizabeth White

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisa Uttley Dr Bill Worthington Ellie Hubbard
Jeff Hughes

APOLOGIES:

Dr Steven Adams Professor Wendy Wills Bethan Adams
Vesna Manasieva

1 IN ATTENDANCE

1.1 The Committee noted that Kathy Lee and Ranjeet Sokhi would be in attendance for items 14 and 16, respectively.

1.2 Jeffrey Hughes was also in attendance in the absence of the usual Clerk.

2 CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS (IF ANY)

2.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2.2 The Chair informed members that the next periodic research update would be on 28 October 2020, where he would talk about broader aspects of research activities, including REF.

3 NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY

There were no new declarations of interest.

4 ACADEMIC BOARD STANDING ORDERS

The Committee noted the Academic Board Standing Orders, effective from 1 December 2018, which could be found at the following link:


5 TERMS OF REFERENCE AND COMPOSITION - Minute 59, 21 May 2020, refers

The Committee noted its Terms of Reference and Composition, including changes to Membership Category 13.

(Agenda Paper 6, refers.)
6 MEMBERSHIP
The Committee noted vacancies in Category 9 and welcomed Sarah Goler Solecki as the new member in Category 13.

(Agenda Paper 7, refers.)

7 MINUTES - 21 MAY 2020
The Minutes of the meeting of 21 May 2020 were confirmed as an accurate record of the business conducted, subject to recording Professor David Barling’s attendance at the meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 8, refers.)

8 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
There were not any matters arising from the Minutes that were not being taken elsewhere on the agenda.

RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY

9 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021

9.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Chair regarding the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

9.2 The Committee noted that a series of meetings had taken place with the Associate Deans and the Unit Assessment Coordinators in June and July to consider the feedback in relation to outputs. A pool of outputs had been selected, with good quality ones identified in all units of assessment.

9.3 There would be a subsequent set of meetings scheduled in January 2021 where the decisions on outputs and the other elements of the submission would be finalised.

Minute 9.4 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

9.5 The next set of meetings coming up would be focusing on environment statements and impact case studies.

9.6 The University was on target to submit as required by the 31 March 2021 deadline.

10 UKRI COVID-19 GRANT EXTENSION ALLOCATION

10.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Chair regarding the UKRI Covid-19 grant extension allocation.

Minute 10.2 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.

10.3 This allocation was to be distributed according to a set of specific rules between projects delayed by the Covid-19 lockdown, particularly in respect of experimental work or research that required access to facilities.

10.4 A governance plan to manage the allocation was produced, submitted and approved by UKRI. Eligible grant holders were then invited to submit applications. Provisional decisions had been made and it was hoped the allocations would be made very shortly. The maximum extension of funding was six months.

10.5 Projects funded by organisations other than UKRI were encouraged to request similar extensions from those organisations. The Research Office was happy to provide support and guidance for any grant holders that may be struggling.
10.6 The Committee agreed a communication would be sent to researchers providing clarifications as to which research councils were providing extensions. There was a proforma available where researchers could make their case for an extension individually.

10.7 The Committee noted that the majority of Postgraduate Research (PGR) students were self-funded and were able to apply for extensions with the Doctoral College. Fee waivers could also be considered on a case by case basis. Schools had been given discretion to support, if appropriate, PGR students on studentships.

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT

11 REPORT FROM THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RDG)

11.1 The Committee received a report from Dr Liz White on the activities of the Researcher Development Group (RDG).

11.2 The Committee noted the information contained within the report, which included confirmation that the Vice-Chancellor would sign a letter of commitment to the new Researcher Development Concordat for the beginning of December 2020.

11.3 The Committee considered a recommendation from RDG that the University run the new Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), which had replaced the former Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) and Principal Investigators & Research Leaders Survey (PIRLS) as of March 2020, in 2021. CEDARS would provide data for the HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award action plan and report.

11.4 The Committee resolved that the recommendation from RDG that the University run CEDARS in 2021 be approved.

11.5 The report also covered Vitae Connections Week 2020, ResDev 2021, the RDG Guidance 2020 and instances of best practice.

11.6 The Committee noted that it would be advantageous to run CEDARS at the same time as the Researcher Development (ResDev) Conference to help promoting the survey and improve response rates. The ResDev Conference would be held virtually and was scheduled for 30 March 2021.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 12, refers.)

DOCTORAL COLLEGE

12 DOCTORAL COLLEGE ACTIVITIES UPDATE

12.1 The Committee received a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the activities of the Doctoral College.

12.2 The Committee noted the information contained within the report, which included the deadline for submission of photographs for the PGR photo competition in November 2020, this year named ‘2020 Vision’. This was a great opportunity for PGR students to showcase their work and Associate Deans (Research) were asked to encourage students to participate.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 13, refers.)

13 RESEARCH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE

13.1 The Committee received a presentation from Kathy Lee, Senior Academic Services Officer (Research), on the Research Management System (RSMS).

13.2 The presentation included a project timeline and highlighted the key functionality the system offered. Examples of how the system provided further clarity to students were also shown.
13.3 The Committee noted that future implementations may include functionality for members of the Research Degrees Board (RDB) to access assessment papers directly through RSMS. However, this was yet to be tested. Currently, final assessment papers were being downloaded from RSMS and uploaded to ModGov for RDB meetings, which was working well.

13.4 Associate Deans (Research) were asked to encourage relevant colleagues to volunteer to test the system. Any volunteers should contact the Senior Officer, Kathy Lee.

(Tabled Confidential Agenda Paper 14, refers.)

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

14 REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH INTEGRITY WORKING GROUP (RIWG)

14.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Institutional Lead on Research Integrity, Dr Susan Grey, on the activities of the Research Integrity Working Group (RIWG).

14.2 The Committee noted that the Research Integrity Working Group had now been constituted and was composed by Dr Susan Grey, Ellie Hubbard, Dr Rowland Hughes and Professor Wendy Wills.

14.3 The Group had started re-looking at the gap analysis conducted previously in the context of the new Concordat to Support Research Integrity. Initial reports were positive about the gap analysis, however, it was anticipated that there would be a need to be even more specific about accountability across the institution. It was expected that a final report on this would be available for the February 2021 meeting.

RESEARCH CENTRES

15 APPLICATION FOR RESEARCH CENTRE STATUS - CENTRE FOR CLIMATE CHANGE RESEARCH

15.1 The Committee considered an application from Professor Ranjeet Sokhi, School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science, for Research Centre status for the Centre for Climate Change Research.

15.2 The Committee noted the rationale and business case for the proposal as detailed in the application form and supporting documentation submitted.

15.3 A number of areas across the University had been conducting research on different aspects of climate change for several years. Members agreed that the Centre for Climate Change Research would bring together the scientific, technological and societal dimensions and provide impact driven research on climate. The Centre would work across Schools, would support the Research Themes, with particular reference to the Space and Food Themes and be truly multidisciplinary in nature. It would put the University in a strong position in a field that presented a global challenge and would help make the University’s contribution to it more visible.

15.4 The Committee resolved that the proposal for Research Centre status for the Centre for Climate Change Research be approved.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 16, refers.)

RESEARCH OFFICE

16 REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

16.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Head of the Research Office, Catherine Manthorpe, on the activities of the Research Office.
The Committee noted that the Research Office was continuing to work mainly from home successfully, however, there was a skeleton presence on campus now as well. Microsoft Teams was still the best way to contact them.

Currently, the three key areas of activity for the Research Office were research grants, preparations for the last stages of REF 2021 and support of the NHS research sponsorship process, including the Advisory Group for Research Governance of Clinical Studies.

The Research Office had also been keeping a database of Covid related research at the University. Researchers were encouraged to let them know of any such research they were involved in for both internal and external communications purposes.

The Committee also noted that the uncertainty caused by Brexit in relation to European funding would remain until the Brexit negotiations concluded.

**RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS**

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

The Committee noted that the report looked back at activity from August 2019 until July 2020. The report also showed a comparison to the year before.

The good results achieved were more significant in the context of the challenges faced this year.

Applications had dipped in number and overall value. This was beneficial, as a smaller number of higher quality applications had been encouraged and, as desired, this had translated into a dip in research award numbers but a dramatic increase in value.

The Committee also noted applications and awards by School as detailed in the report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 18, refers.)

**UPDATE REPORTS**

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Director of Business Development, Phil Fiddaman, on business development and knowledge transfer.

The Committee noted the progress against business development targets for 2020/21 and key business development activities as set out in the report.

*Minute 18.3 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

In addition, many activities over the summer period had been focused on business support services to respond to the challenges Covid-19 had presented particularly for local businesses. New business support programmes had been launched in collaboration with other organisations, such as the Hertfordshire Growth Hub, including a volunteer business support scheme with well over 100 mentors to support start-ups and other businesses.

The Committee also noted that the University had just been awarded two peer to peer network contracts through the Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEP) network to support the creative arts in the fashion industry locally.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)
19 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION UPDATE**

19.1 The Committee received a report from Sarah Goler Solecki from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Office.

19.2 The Committee noted progress on the different initiatives in respect of EDI as set out in the report, including Athena Swan and the Race Equality Charter.

19.3 In relation to Athena Swan, the Committee noted that the Hertfordshire Law School had just received their Athena Swan Award and now all Schools at the University held either a Bronze or Silver Award.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 20, refers.)

20 **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS**

20.1 The Committee received a report from the Research and Scholarly Communications Manager, Dr Bill Worthington, on research and scholarly communications.

20.2 The Committee noted the latest figures on the RIS portal, which presented work via research staff profiles, and UHRA, which was the repository for open access and long term preservation of research outputs.

20.3 The report also showed the latest levels of compliance with the HEFCE REF Open Access Policy and the progress towards achieving the University Research KPI target.

20.4 The Committee was pleased to note the good return on the investment made to date on ‘Read and Publish’ deals, expressed by the number of Article Processing Charges (APCs) for papers by University of Hertfordshire authors. It was acknowledged, however, that publishers may seek to alter the conditions of deals in subsequent years.

*Minute 20.5 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 21, refers.)

21 **LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

There were no matters to report from Library and Computing Services.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

22 **CLERK’S REPORT**

Minutes 23-25 and Agenda Paper 23, refer.

23 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2020/21**

All meetings were scheduled to be held at 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room or online via MS Teams as confirmed by the Clerk at the time of issuing the agenda:

- Thursday, 15 October 2020
- Thursday, 25 February 2021
- Thursday, 20 May 2021.

24 **ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS IN JULY 2020**

The Committee noted appointments to Associate Professorships, Readerships and Professorships made in July 2020.

(Part 2, Agenda Paper 23, refers.)
The Committee noted that the Ethics Committee meeting of 29 April 2020 had been cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown.

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

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.

There was no emergency business.

The next meeting of the Research Committee would be held on Thursday, 25 February 2021 from 09:30 hours via MS Teams unless advised otherwise, in which case, would be held 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 4 February 2021 and reports submitted by 11 February 2021.