

## UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 25 February 2021.

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**PRESENT:** Professor John Senior (Chair)

Dr Susan Grey	Professor Wendy Wills	Susan Akhtar
Dr Lindsay Bottoms	Dr Rowland Hughes	Dr Philip Fiddaman
Professor Farshid Amirabdollahian	Dr Barbara Henry	Catherine Manthorpe
Professor Constantine Sandis	Professor Mike Page	Annalisa Jones
Dr Steven Adams	Professor Pandelis Kourtessis	Sarah Goler Solecki
	Dr David Ford	

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Lisa Uttley	Dr Bill Worthington	Leire Caselles Vallejo
Professor Ljubomir Jankovic (minute 46 refers)		

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Roger Levy	Professor Julia Williams	Professor Stephen Page
Jo Stuart	Vesna Manasieva	Dr Elizabeth White
Ellie Hubbard		

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31 **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS (IF ANY)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

32 **NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST, IF ANY**

There were no new declarations of interest.

33 **MEMBERSHIP**

33.1 The Committee **received** a report regarding its membership.

33.2 **Category 3: Three (3) Research Theme Champions, nominated by the Research Theme Champions for terms of office of three (3) years (or named alternates who shall also be Research Theme Champions)**

33.2.1 The Committee noted that Dr Lindsay Bottoms, who had been appointed Research Theme Champion (Health and Wellbeing) for 12 months to cover for Professor Frances Bunn's extended absence, had joined the Committee in this category as a named alternate for Professor David Barling.

33.2.2 Professor Constantine Sandis, who had been appointed Research Theme Champion (Heritage, Cultures and Communities) for 30 months following Dr Sylvie Magerstädt's departure from the University, had joined the Committee in this membership category and was welcomed to his first meeting.

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

33.3.1 The Committee noted that work to fill these two vacancies was in progress.

- 33.3.2 The Committee **considered and approved** a proposal that the term of office be reduced from 3 years to 2 to ensure that early career researchers remained so for the duration of their appointment.

(Agenda Paper 4, refers.)

#### 34 **IN ATTENDANCE**

The Committee noted that Professor Ljubomir Jankovic would be in attendance for item 17.

#### 35 **MINUTES - 15 OCTOBER 2020**

The Minutes of the meeting of 15 October 2020 were **confirmed** as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 6, refers.)

#### 36 **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**

#### 37 **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021**

- 37.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Chair on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

- 37.2 The Committee noted the details of the REF2021 submission as set out in the report.

- 37.3 The submission was due to be made on 31 March 2021. However, as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic, there was an opportunity to ask for a slight delay to the submission of the impact case studies and environment statements. There were 12 environment statements, one for each unit of assessment.

- 37.4 It had been decided that an extension for some of the environment statements and all of the impact case studies would be sought. The main part of the submission would be done by the deadline of the 31 March, however, it was anticipated that some of the environment statements and the full suite of impact statements would be submitted in mid-May. This would allow the relatively small central team supporting the REF submission to ensure the best submission possible.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 8, refers.)

### **RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT**

#### 38 **REPORT FROM THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RDG)**

- 38.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair on the activities of the Researcher Development Group (RDG).

- 38.2 The Committee noted that the University had submitted its application for renewal of the HR Excellence in Research Award in December 2020.

- 38.3 Regarding the new Researcher Development Concordat, the University was now officially a signatory. A letter in this respect had been prepared, signed by the Vice-Chancellor and submitted to Vitae.

- 38.4 The Researcher Development Conference 2021 was due to take place on 30 March. Further details were available from HertsHub. Members were encouraged to attend.

- 38.5 The Researcher Development Conference would also be taken as an opportunity to promote the new Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), which opened on 1 April 2021 for one month.

### **DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

#### **39 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PRES)**

- 39.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
- 39.2 The Committee noted that the University participated in the PRES every second year and was reminded of the excellent results achieved during the last one. The campaign for this year's PRES would commence on 18 March 2021 with a formal campaign from Marketing and Communications and an informal campaign from the Doctoral College.
- 39.3 This year, the PRES would include an additional section on Covid-19 with questions that mirrored those of the recent pulse surveys conducted by the Doctoral College.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 10, refers.)

#### **40 UKRI PHASE 2 COVID RELIEF AND SANTANDER FUNDING**

- 40.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on available funding opportunities for research students.
- 40.2 The Committee noted there was a modest amount of funding available to final year research council students. Associate Deans (Research) were encouraged to promote that opportunity in their Schools, as the application deadline was looming and less than 80% of the eligible population had applied.
- 40.3 The Office for Students had included postgraduate research students in the latest round of hardship funding. Students could bid for the modest amount of £300.
- 40.4 The Committee further noted that some funding for research students had become available through Santander Bank and a call for bids would be made at the beginning of April 2021.

#### **41 UKRI DOCTORAL STIPEND LEVELS AND INDICATIVE FEES FOR 2020/21**

- 41.1 The Committee noted that the National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2021/22 was £15,609 and the UK Research and Innovation's Indicative Fee Level for 2021/22 was £4,500.
- 41.2 Further information could be found at the following web address:

<https://www.ukri.org/skills/funding-for-research-training/>

#### **42 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) CONFERENCE 2021**

- 42.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Conference 2021.
- 42.2 The Committee noted that the PGR Conference 2021 was held virtually for the first time on 11 February 2021. Over 160 people registered their attendance.
- 42.3 The PGR Conference 2021 had gone very well with highlights such as a marketing and communications session, a presentation from the UK Research Integrity Office Chief Executive, James Parry, and the always popular three-minute thesis competition.
- 42.4 A recording of the event was available to those unable to attend at the following link:

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/5e9a12bd-92f3-4417-ae35-51232a31ab7f>

#### 43 **PHASE B OF RESEARCH STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (RSMS) IMPLEMENTATION**

- 43.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Assistant Registrar (Academic Services), Lisa Uttley, on Phase B of the Research Student Management System (RSMS) implementation.
- 43.2 The Committee noted that there were currently 721 Post-graduate Research Students enrolled on the RSMS. This number included 'dormant' students who had suspended their studies. There continued to be good engagement with the system with both students and staff.
- 43.3 At the previous meeting, the Committee had received a presentation about progress with the next phase of the development of the RSMS, which related to the processes of Submission and Final Examination. These new processes had gone 'live' on 25 January 2021.
- 43.4 Staff (mainly supervisors) and students had been invited to briefing sessions where the new changes had been demonstrated. This presentation along with other information to support staff and students with the new process was available via the Doctoral College StudyNet site.
- 43.5 The Committee acknowledged the contribution of and thanked Doctoral College staff Kathy Lee and Nikki Hogg, who had been key in implementing the new functionality, as well as colleagues from Library and Computing Services and volunteers from the research community, who had assisted with testing the functionality and enabled the resolution of any issues identified.

#### **RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

##### 44 **REPORT FROM THE RESEARCH INTEGRITY WORKING GROUP - MINUTE 14.3, REFERS**

- 44.1 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.
- 44.2 The Committee noted that the Working Group had been waiting for UKRIO's guidance to conduct the gap analysis in respect of the new Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- 44.3 The Group was formed by Dr Susan Grey, Professor Wendy Wills, Dr Rowland Hughes and Ellie Hubbard. Some group members were heavily involved with the REF submission and would not be able to meet until April 2021. Preliminary work showed, in any case, that the gap would not be significant.

##### 45 **RESEARCH INTEGRITY ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20**

The Committee noted the Research Integrity Annual Report 2019/20.

(Agenda Paper 16, refers.)

#### **RESEARCH CENTRE STATUS APPLICATIONS**

##### 46 **CENTRE FOR FUTURE SOCIETIES RESEARCH**

- 46.1 The Committee **considered** an application for Research Centre status for the Centre for Future Societies Research from Professor Ljubomir Jankovic.
- 46.2 The Committee noted the rationale and business case for the proposal as set out in the application submitted.

- 46.3 Some members expressed concerns about how the new Research Centre would intersect with current projects and about the ability of staff to contribute, given their current commitments with other research centres. It was highlighted, however, that Professor Jankovic had demonstrated the new Centre's capacity to attract interest and funding and that the initiative did not intend to detract people from their core activities but to provide opportunities for people to engage with it in a different way. The Centre would be used as an outward entity that would create gravitational pull for the University.
- 46.4 The new Centre would welcome opportunities that fell outside the remit of other centres and would be multidisciplinary. As other multidisciplinary centres, it would have a set of objectives but not financial targets. The Centre presented a good chance for the University to gain reputation externally.
- 46.5 The Committee **agreed** that there would be benefit in further detailing how the Centre would operate. In the interim, Professor Jankovic suggested that he would set up meetings to talk to Committee members regarding their concerns, which was also agreed as a positive development to take place before the next meeting.
- 46.6 The Committee resolved that the proposal to grant Research Centre status to the Centre for Future Societies Research be **approved, subject to** the Committee receiving and approving a further report on how the Centre would operate.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 17, refers.)

## **RESEARCH OFFICE**

### **47 REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE**

- 47.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Head of the Research Office, Catherine Manthorpe.
- 47.2 The Committee noted recruitment matters were being resolved and the Research Office expected to have a full complement of staff again by May 2021.
- 47.3 The Research Office had been very busy with the upcoming REF2021 submission and other core activities.
- 47.4 The deadline for UKRI grants was 11 March 2021 and staff were asked to complete their submissions before that date.

### **48 RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS**

- 48.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Head of Research Grants, Annalisa Jones, on research grants applications and awards.
- 48.2 The report covered the period between 1 August 2020 and 31st January 2021 and included a breakdown by School.
- 48.3 The Committee noted that the number of applications and their value had increased, as well as conversion rates. At this point, the outlook was optimistic as a lot of activity tended to happen in the last three months of the year.
- 48.4 The Committee agreed that the best way forward was ensuring that the value of the awards increased.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)

**UPDATE REPORTS****49 BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

*Minute 49 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 20, refers.)

**50 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

50.1 The Committee **received** a report from Sarah Goler Solecki on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion matters.

50.2 The Committee noted Sarah Goler Solecki's impending departure from the University, wished her well with her future endeavours and thanked her for her contribution to the Committee and the University.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 21, refers.)

**51 RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS**

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

51.2 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.

51.3 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.

*Minute 51.4 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 22, refers.)

**52 LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

52.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chief Information Officer, Dr David Ford.

52.2 The Committee noted that the University was going into the Annual Business Planning Round and discussions with Schools around subscriptions and learning resources would commence shortly.

**OTHER BUSINESS****53 CLERK'S REPORT****53.1 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, 25 February 2021

Thursday, 20 May 2021

**53.2 List of Research Centres**

The Committee noted a current list of Research Centres.

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

The Minutes of the Ethics Committee meeting of 21 October 2020 would be noted at the next meeting.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 24, refers.)

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

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

**55 PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT**

There were no people development needs identified to refer to Human Resources.

**56 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.

**57 EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

There was no emergency business.

**58 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Research Committee would be held on Thursday, 20 May 2021 from 09:30 hours via MS Teams - Online.

Items for the Agenda should be notified to the Clerk, Leire Caselles Vallejo ('e'-mail [l.caselles-vallejo@herts.ac.uk](mailto:l.caselles-vallejo@herts.ac.uk)) by 29 April 2021 and reports submitted by 6 May 2021.