

**UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION****RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 24 May 2022.

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

Dr Susan Grey	Professor Wendy Wills	Samantha Kelly
Professor David Barling	Professor Stephen Page	Dr Laura Hamilton
Professor Philip Lucas	Dr Rowland Hughes	Elizabeth Nolan
Dr Steven Adams	Professor Mike Page	Mohammed Ilyas
Dr Roger Levy	Professor Pandelis Kourtessis	

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

Dr Lindsay Bottoms	Lisa Uttley	Dr Bill Worthington
Annah Whyton	Leire Caselles Vallejo	

**APOLOGIES:**

Professor Constantine Sandis	Dr Barbara Henry	David Gillard
Bethan Adams	Susan Akhtar	Vesna Manasieva
Dr Kate Asante	Janice Sablitzky	Dr Elizabeth White

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

There were no new declarations of interest.

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

47 **MEMBERSHIP**

47.1 The Committee noted its membership.

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

The Committee noted a vacancy under category 9. Members were asked to nominate colleagues for membership via the Clerk.

47.3 **Category 13 'A member from the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Office'**

The Committee noted a vacancy under category 13 following the previous member's departure from the University. The Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Mohammed Ilyas, was in attendance under this membership category until another member of the EDI team was assigned to the Committee.

(Agenda Paper 4, refers.)

48 **MINUTES - 22 FEBRUARY 2022**

The Minutes of the meeting of 22 February 2022 were **confirmed and signed** as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 5, refers.)

49 **SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS/MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

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

**RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY**50 **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)****Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 results**

50.1 The Committee **received** a presentation from the Chair on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 results.

50.2 Information on the REF 2021 results was accessible to all staff via the following HertsHub link:

<https://herts365.sharepoint.com/sites/UHResearch/SitePages/REF-2021-Celebrating-Research-Success.aspx>

50.3 The Committee noted the information contained in the presentation, which showed the excellent REF 2021 results and a comparison to REF 2014 data. Results from the different elements of the assessment were not yet available.

50.4 The University was now at the top of post-92 universities and above some other significant institutions, having gone up the research excellence rankings by 21 places to position 62 of 129 institutions.

50.5 The Chair had provided feedback during a meeting involving REF panel Chairs and Deputy Chairs that the environment statements had not been taken into sufficient consideration. This had been taken on board.

50.6 Information on how the REF scores would translate into QR funding would not be available until at least mid-July 2022. The funding algorithm was at the moment entirely secret.

50.7 The Committee **agreed** that there would be benefit in organising a celebration of the REF 2021 results with the wider University community and would support any such arrangements being made.

**Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) consultation**

50.8 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Chair on the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) consultation.

50.9 Details of the FRAP consultation could be found at the following link:

<https://www.ukri.org/news/funding-bodies-launch-consultation-on-future-research-assessment/>

50.10 The Committee noted that the University had submitted a response to the FRAP consultation earlier that month.

50.11 A working party had formulated the University's response to the FRAP consultation alongside the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Management Group (PRMG). The view submitted had supported sustainability and continuity through a similar process instead of having an entirely new one. A slight change in scoring was proposed whereby weight percentages would be changed slightly.

50.12 UKRI was expected to provide a steer regarding changes to research assessment by the end of the year. The sector needed to know as soon as possible to set new strategies and make changes accordingly.

(Tabled Agenda Paper 7, refers.)

## 51 **UKRI STRATEGY 2022–2027**

The Committee noted the newly published UKRI strategy 2022-2027, which could be found at the following link:

<https://www.ukri.org/publications/ukri-strategy-2022-to-2027>

## **RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT**

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

52.1 The Committee **received** and noted a report from the Researcher Development Group (RDG).

52.2 The Committee acknowledged that development activity was going well, which clearly had come through in the environment statements in the REF results.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 9, refers.)

## **DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

### 53 **PGR PULSE SURVEY RESULTS - MINUTE 30.2, REFERS**

53.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the results of the latest PGR Pulse Survey.

53.2 The results had been very positive this time as well, with satisfaction even higher in a number of areas since the previous survey. As the University only took part in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) every second year, it had been useful to conduct a pulse survey, particularly as the University came out of the effects of lockdown.

53.3 A further pulse survey would be conducted around September/October 2022 before launching into the PRES campaign in early 2023.

53.4 The Doctoral College would be working on smoothing out issues stemmed from hybrid working, e.g. available spaces, staff working from home, hybrid training sessions, etc. with the objective of getting the balance right.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 10, refers.)

### 54 **POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH CONFERENCE**

54.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the Postgraduate Research (PGR) Conference.

54.2 The Committee noted that the PGR Conference had had over 130 attendees, with the majority of them attending in person rather than online.

54.3 As in previous occasions, around 40% of individuals who had registered did not end up attending. It had been a great turnout nonetheless.

54.4 Content from the Conference would be posted in HertsHub shortly and would also feature in the HertsHub Weekly communications the following week.

### 55 **ETHNIC MINORITY ADVOCATES**

55.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the new Ethnic Minority Advocates.

55.2 The Committee noted that three excellent candidates had been appointed and introduced at the PGR Conference. The EM Advocates had not yet started in post due to some outstanding HR compliance requirements. The initiative had been possible due to funding by UKRI, which needed to be spent as soon as possible. There were also plans to extend the initiative by putting a bid through the University's planning round.

- 55.3 The objective was for the EM Advocates to assist the University in enabling access and participation in postgraduate research. Feedback gathering activities, such as focus groups with students and liaison with the Schools, were some of the expected activities that Advocates would be undertaking.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 12, refers.)

## 56 **NEW DEAL FOR POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (UKRI CONSULTATION)**

- 56.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of the Doctoral College, Dr Susan Grey, on the UKRI consultation on the New Deal for Postgraduate Research.

- 56.2 The New Deal aimed to improve the experience and quality of postgraduate research training in the UK. Details of the consultation, which focused primarily on doctoral training, could be found at the following link:

<https://engagementhub.ukri.org/skills/new-deal-for-postgraduate-research-call-for-input/consultation/subpage.2022-02-15.9330029715/>

- 56.3 The Committee noted that a working group had formulated and submitted a response on behalf of the University by the due date of 17 May 2022. The submission had addressed issues such as greater flexibility for part time provision, greater emphasis on predoctoral training, more promulgation about the value added by research students, etc.
- 56.4 Members acknowledged that research culture was a current priority for UKRI and that funding for interdisciplinary research should be expanded.

## 57 **RESEARCH STUDENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE**

- 57.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of Academic Services, Lisa Uttley, on the Research Student Management System (RSMS).

- 57.2 The Committee noted that there were currently 810 post graduate research students currently enrolled on the RSMS, the breakdown of which was as follows:

- a 416 Full-Time students, of which 282 were taking PhDs, and 115 professional doctorates; and
- b 393 Part-Time students (slight increase from the 379 reported at the previous meeting), of which 204 were taking PhDs and 170 professional doctorates.
- c The difference was made up by those undertaking Masters by Research either Full or Part Time.

- 57.3 Work with the software house had taken place to address some urgent operational issues that had now been resolved. These related to managing students with multiple enrolments and removing approval roles from Assessment workflows.

- 57.4 The team was now moving onto working through a list of functional enhancements which had been prioritised in liaison with the Director and Associate Directors of the Doctoral College. There were currently 19 improvements to be developed within RSMS. These enhancements were varied and ranged from improving workflow, amending checklists, reviewing forms and improving instructions on screens.

## 58 **MINIMUM DOCTORAL STIPEND RATE**

The Committee noted the UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Research Council Doctoral stipend levels and indicative fees for 2022/23:

- The National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for **2022/23 was £16,062.**
- UK Research and Innovation's Indicative Fee Level for **2022/23 was £4,596.**

**RESEARCH INTEGRITY****59 RESEARCH INTEGRITY UPDATE**

- 59.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Institutional Lead on Research Integrity, Dr Susan Grey, on the work undertaken in relation to the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- 59.2 Following from the previous meeting, a working group composed by Dr Susan Grey, Professor Wendy Wills, Dr Rowland Hughes and Annah Whyton had identified three main areas for further development:
- a Research Integrity Stakeholder Forum;
  - b Research Integrity Champions; and
  - c Reporting of research misconduct.

**59.3 Research Integrity Stakeholder Forum**

The working group was proposing to hold the first forum in the autumn and invite James Parry, Chief Executive of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), as a guest speaker. The existing Q&A sessions hosted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Professor John Senior, could accommodate this within its format.

**59.4 Research Integrity Champions**

Some elements of the Research Integrity Champion role were already embedded in the Associate Dean (Research) role. However, the Champion role needed to be more clearly defined. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) Management Group (PRMG) would consider this issue further.

**59.5 Reporting of research misconduct**

The new Concordat was more explicit about the reporting of any misconduct. It was acknowledged that more consistency around centralised recording was required. The number of misconduct cases at the University was low, however, it was important to record these, including the informal cases that could be handled in a developmental fashion. PRMG would consider this issue as well and present some recommendations to the Committee at a future meeting.

**RESEARCH OFFICE****60 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE**

- 60.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Director of the Research Office, Liz Nolan, on the activities of the Research Office.
- 60.2 **Research Information and Governance**
- 60.2.1 The Director reported on the excellent work by the Research Information and Governance Team, lead by Annah Whyton. Projects were being reviewed due to challenges brought on by the pandemic, recruitment, etc.
- Minute 60.2.2 was confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*
- 60.2.3 The Manager (Research Information And Governance), Annah Whyton, was also in contact with members of the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) group to explore what the University needed to do to sign up to the Declaration.
- 60.3 **Research Office Newsletter**

The Office had been reviewing the structure of the newsletter and more information would follow soon.

#### 60.4 **Research Impact**

Meetings with academics had taken place on impact audit and impact cases for the next REF exercise. A number of research grant applications with a significant amount of impact were being supported. It was important for researchers to contact the Research Office before starting to put together grant applications. The Office could also provide guidance for CVs, the new template from funders, impact training and more. The team was also supporting an application for an Economic and Social Sciences Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Award (IAA).

#### 60.5 **Staffing**

The Research Office continued to experience staffing issues due to health issues and leave provisions. Permission had been granted to recruit temporary staff. It was important for researchers to give the Office as much notice as possible so they could continue to help enhance the bids.

#### 60.6 **Research data**

60.6.1 The Committee noted that the Office was working on improving data consistency and accuracy to enhance reporting.

60.6.2 The Committee noted that a number of things could be done internally to improve data reporting. For example, using standardised names for funders, improving the guidance for staff inputting data and doing the costings, automating reporting, etc. A new system module to provide automated reporting was in development, however, it was not expected to be ready until the middle of the following year.

#### 60.7 **Other activities**

The Research Office was also currently supporting the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Professor John Senior, with the REF results and consultation submissions.

### 61 **RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS**

61.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Head of Research Grants, Jan Sablitzky, on research grant applications and awards.

61.2 The Committee noted the information contained in the report, which included the percentage of current achievement/activity against full year target for the University and per School.

*Minute 61.3 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*

(Confidential Agenda Paper 18, refers.)

### **UPDATE REPORTS**

#### 62 **BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER**

The Committee **received** and noted a report authored by the Director of Enterprise and Business Development, Dr Kate Asante, on the activities of the different strands of Enterprise and Business Development:

- a Entrepreneurship, local growth and regeneration;
- b Innovation;
- c Skills and workforce development; and
- d Careers and employment.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers.)

## 63 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

- 63.1 The Committee **received** an oral report from the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), Mohammed Ilyas, on the activities of the EDI Office.
- 63.2 The Committee noted that the EDI Office had now recruited new members of staff and would be producing a written report for the Committee in the future. Julia Ratcliffe had been appointed as EDI Charters Manager and would likely be the Committee's EDI representative.
- 63.3 Some of the activities currently taken place were:
- a organisation of an EDI away day to formulate action plans for EDI Teams in each Strategic Business Unit (SBU);
  - b discussions regarding BAME applicants to postgraduate research programmes, including identifying barriers BAME applicants experience and training for supervisors;
  - c training with SBUs on the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) toolkit launched earlier in the year so EIAs was embedded in decision making processes and decisions were ethical and evidence-based;
  - d publication of EDI newsletters every six weeks with news from around the sector;
  - e the University's application to the Disability Confidence Charter Mark, which was submitted in April 2022. A comprehensive action plan was in place and progress was being monitored;
  - f submissions for silver Athena Swan Awards by two Schools;
  - g development of new EDI training workshops based on feedback obtained at previous workshops;
  - h organisation of Pride Month, starting in June, and South Asian Heritage Month, which would be celebrated at the University for the first time in July.

## 64 **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS**

- 64.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Research and Scholarly Communications Manager, Dr Bill Worthington, on research information management and scholarly communications.
- 64.2 The Committee noted the information contained in the report and discussed in detail the current difficulties and opportunities regarding Open Access (OA).  
*Minute 64.3 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only.*  
(Confidential Agenda Paper 21, refers.)

## 65 **LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

There were no matters to report.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### 66 **CLERK'S REPORT**

#### 66.1 **Schedule of meetings – 2022/23**

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

Thursday, 18 October 2022  
Thursday, 21 February 2023  
Thursday, 23 May 2023

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

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Ethics Committee meetings of 3 November 2021 and 2 February 2022.

**66.3 Research Degrees Board**

Minutes of the Research Degrees Board meetings were available for inspection from Governance Services on request.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 23, refers.)

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

There were no other matters relevant to the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (PREVENT) that had not been dealt with earlier in the meeting.

**68 PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT**

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

**69 RISK**

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

**70 EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

Minute 70.1, refers.

**70.1 Export control advice from the Department of International Trade (DIT)**

The Committee noted that the Department of International Trade Export Controls Joint Unit had recently issued advice regarding sanctions against the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus. This affected anyone involved in technology or intellectual property development, knowledge exchange/transfer, or research collaboration with entities based in those countries. All such activities were required not to infringe the sanctions against those countries. Further information in relation to UH activities could be sought from the Legal & Compliance Team ([legal@herts.ac.uk](mailto:legal@herts.ac.uk)) and the latest Government advice could be accessed at the following links:

Russia: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russiasanctions-guidance/russia-sanctions-guidance>

Belarus: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-sanctions-belarus>

**71 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Research Committee will be held on Tuesday, 18 October 2022 from 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room, MacLaurin Building and via MS Teams.

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 28 October 2022 and reports submitted by 4 November 2022.