

UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 28 February 2023.

PRESENT: Professor John Senior (Chair)

Dr Susan Grey	Professor Stephen Page	Elizabeth Nolan
Dr Lindsay Bottoms	Dr Barbara Henry	Mohammed Ilyas
Prof. Farshid Amirabdollahian	Professor Mike Page	Julia Ratcliffe
Dr Steven Adams	Professor Pandelis Kourtessis	Dr Elizabeth White
Dr Rowland Hughes	Dr Laura Hamilton	

IN ATTENDANCE:

Linda Goodwin	Dr Peter Gooden
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APOLOGIES:

Dr Chamu Kuppuswamy	Professor Wendy Wills	Professor Julia Williams
Samantha Kelly	David Gillard	Bethan Adams
Susan Akhtar	Vesna Manasieva	Dr Kate Asante
Annalisa Jones		

28 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were noted.

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

Expanding Excellence in England (E3) Fund – First Stage Applications for the Second Round

- 29.1 The Committee **received** a verbal report regarding applications submitted to the second round of Expanding Excellence in England (E3) at the end of last week.
- 29.2 The Committee noted two applications had been made in two different areas.
- 29.2.1 One submission, in the sum of £7.7m, was a reapplication for further development of the Centre for Data Innovation Research. The single institution application, which had received positive feedback in the first round, had been subsequently strengthened and re-submitted in accordance with feedback.
- 29.2.2 The other application related to a different element of E3 made through the Wolfson Centre for Biodetection and Instrumentation Research, in partnership with Cranfield, in association with Manchester, and Leeds Universities. The Committee noted that, if successful, the joint bid in the sum of £12.3m would be the largest single source of funding the University had received to date.
- 29.3 Outcomes of second stage applications would be received in May 2023 and if successful, would be progressed for submission to the next round in September 2023. Final outcomes would be confirmed at the end of the year.

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

There were no new declarations of interest.

31 **TERMS OF REFERENCE, COMPOSITION AND MEMBERSHIP**

31.1 The Committee noted revisions made to the Terms of Reference, Composition and Membership as agreed at the last meeting.

31.2 The Committee noted an amendment required to Category 11 Membership to reflect the change of title of the Head of the Research Office, to Director of the Research Office.

(Agenda paper 4 refers)

32 **MINUTES -**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2023 were **agreed** as an accurate record of the business conducted.

(Confidential Agenda paper 5 refers)

33 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

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

RESEARCH POLICY AND STRATEGY

34 **PLANS FOR THE FUTURE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)**

34.1 The Committee **received** a verbal update regarding plans for the future Research Excellence Framework (REF).

34.2 The Committee noted that delays to the announcement regarding the future of the REF remained because of the appointment of a new Executive Chair for Research England, Professor Dame Jessica Corner. The date for the announcement, which was originally December 2022, had been postponed from March and was now anticipated in June 2023.

34.3 The Committee noted that although the announcement had been delayed further, it had been indicated at the University Alliance and other sector groups that the future REF was likely to be a 'REF mark 3' and that further consultation was possible.

34.4 The Committee **considered** that a REF3, with greater weighting on impact and possibly environment/culture would be a positive outcome for the University.

35 **HORIZON EUROPE ASSOCIATION**

35.1 The Committee **received** a verbal update from the Chair regarding recent news of a potential deal for Horizon Europe Association. The Committee noted that although uncertainty remained, recent negotiations had been encouraging.

35.2 The Committee **discussed** concerns regarding a potential delay of up to 9 months in the UK formally associating to Horizon Europe. It was noted that Co-Ordinator roles were having to be relinquished due to non-association of the UK to Horizon Europe.

36 **TRUSTED RESEARCH**

36.1 The Committee **received** a report regarding Trusted Research which followed an arranged visit from the Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) and the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI) in this respect. The Committee noted, RCAT partnered with CPNI as well as UKRI and Universities UK and provided advice on trusted research and managing risk.

Minute 36.2 is confidential and available to members and officers in attendance only

- 36.3 The Committee **discussed** the importance of due diligence in relation to University partners and collaborations and noted the University Task and Finish Group had identified a series of key actions and ongoing areas for attention which would be addressed and progressed through the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Management Group (PRMG), and reported to this Committee.
- 36.4 The Committee **acknowledged** the importance of robust processes to ensure continued collaboration with overseas partners.

(Confidential Agenda paper 9 refers)

RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT

37 REPORT FROM THE RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT GROUP (RDG)

- 37.1 The Committee **received** an update report from Researcher Development, which included updates on the HR Excellence in Research Award, the Skill Up Award for Researcher Development, the UHResDev23 Conference, and the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS).
- 37.2 The Committee noted that due to the high level of Skill up Award applications received, a case for funding additional awards in-house had been put forward to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise, and agreed.
- 37.3 The Committee noted the #UHResDev23 Conference would be held on Monday 27 and Tuesday 28 March 2023 and **agreed** to encourage researchers in their School to take advantage of the opportunities on offer.
- 37.4 The Committee noted the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS) would run between 1 and 31 March 2023. The Committee **discussed** how increased participation in the CEDARS survey could be encouraged to ensure researcher development needs continued to be identified and addressed.
- 37.5 The Committee **suggested** consideration was given to CEDARS survey pre-population in future years to ensure research active staff were targeted. This approach would also improve response rates.
- 37.6 The Committee noted email communication regarding the CEDARS survey would be issued on 1 March 2023.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 10 refers)

DOCTORAL COLLEGE

38 DOCTORAL COLLEGE UPDATE

- 38.1 The Committee **received** a report which provided an update on Doctoral College Activities and gave an overview of developments in respect of Postgraduate Research student provision.
- 38.2 The Committee noted Postgraduate Research Degree numbers were lower than reported to the last Committee in October 2022, which was attributed to the shortage of CASes available for potential new Postgraduate Research students. It was hoped that new CASes would become available by April 2023, which was the best-case scenario.
- 38.3 The Committee noted it had been agreed that all future Postgraduate Research CAS allocations would be ringfenced to avoid future shortages.
- 38.4 The Committee noted that despite CAS allocation shortages, Postgraduate Research numbers remained buoyant, which was positive.

- 38.5 The Committee noted the Postgraduate Research Conference had been provisionally set for Friday 9 June 2023 in the Forum Theatre on College Lane. There would be a poster call on the Conference theme of Sustainability, which would cut across all subject areas. Peter Hill, Chief Executive Officer for COP26 would provide the keynote.
- 38.6 The Committee noted the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) would open on March 20 and finish mid-May 2023.
- 38.7 The Committee noted recent enhancements to the functionality of the RSMS.
(Confidential Agenda Paper 11 refers)

RESEARCH INTEGRITY

39 RESEARCH INTEGRITY UPDATE

- 39.1 The Committee noted a report which updated on items in respect to Research Integrity and included planned training activities.
- 39.2 The Committee noted that funding had been received for training in Research Integrity. A half day workshop would take place in the Fielder Centre in late Spring, which would be an important contribution in the University's compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 12 refers)

RESEARCH OFFICE

40 REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF THE RESEARCH OFFICE

- 40.1 The Committee **received** a verbal report which updated on the activities of the Research Office.

Staffing

- 40.2 The Committee noted Leire Caselles Vallejo would join the Research Office on Monday 6 March 2023 and replaced Anna Whyton as Research Governance and Information Manager. The job description had been adjusted slightly to have a greater focus on research governance as the information element of the role was well supported by Senior Administrator and Research Information Systems (RIS) expert, Sarah Beeley.
- 40.3 The Committee noted a new member of staff would join the Research Office. Jane Alder from the Open University would take up the role of Deputy Head of Research Grants to support Head of Research Grants, Annalisa Jones. Vicki Smallwood would also join the team on 3 April 2023 as Research Grants Co-Ordinator.
- 40.4 An additional new vacancy for an Impact Funding Manager, which was largely externally funded through the Impact Acceleration Board, would be advertised shortly.
- 40.5 The Research Office was looking forward to having a fully resourced team over the coming months.

Research Impact

- 40.6 The Committee **received** a report on changes to internal Impact Acceleration Account (IAA) Funding allocations processes, and noted that in a research income sense, future funding would be assigned to the School/SBU that the individual carrying out the research was from, and not the School where the funding sat. The Committee **discussed** the change to process and noted the associated benefits to targets and REF reporting.
- 40.7 The Committee **received** a verbal update regarding the ESRC IAA and noted the first round of harmonised calls would be in April 2023. Specialist workshops for applicants and training on policy were planned.

- 40.8 The Committee **received** a verbal update regarding the AHRC IAA Symposium which was planned for 13 June 2023. The Committee noted a clash in dates with other events organised at the same time and **agreed** an alternative date would be found for the AHRC IAA Symposium.
- 40.9 The Committee noted that work continued to; monitor the impact portfolio, address areas identified by the impact audit, monitor the Research Fish submission, and deliver impact training to groups across the University.

Research Governance

- 40.10 The Committee noted significant work was undertaken in connection with Trusted Research, to ensure records in the Research Information System (RIS) were aligned with the Tech 1 system. Records were consequently improved, and this process would be undertaken regularly going forward.
- 40.11 The Committee noted Annual Reports for research sponsorship were due and being followed up by the Research Office.

Research Information Systems

- 40.12 The Committee **received** an update regarding the Blackdackle Research Costing Tool, which would be integrated with the HR System and the RIS. It was hoped the software would be launched in autumn 2023.

Research Funding

- 40.13 The Committee **received** an update regarding a focus on equity and inclusivity in research funding. The Research Office was meeting with Head of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Mohammed Ilyas next week to discuss ways that a wider range of applicants could be encouraged to apply for research funding.

Research Grants

- 40.14 The Committee noted a replacement for je-s was underway. The Funding Service (TFS) would be fully operational in December this year.

41 RESEARCH GRANTS APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS

- 41.1 The Committee **received** a report on Research Grant Applications and Awards to the end of January 2023 and noted the institutional level highlights. The data told a positive story.
- 41.2 The Committee noted that whilst the volume of applications had decreased in the first 6 months of 22/23, these were of comparatively higher value, which marked a return to the trend seen in 2020/21 of fewer, larger applications.
- 41.3 There was not any notable variation in the number of awards secured in the first 6 months of 2022/23, however the value was comparatively much higher. There had been a notable increase in conversion rates.
- 41.4 The Committee noted there was good progress towards the KPI to increase the number and value of awards of £300k or more.
- 41.5 The Committee noted the Research Income KPI was also on target.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 14 refers)

42 RESEARCH CENTRES

Research Centres at as October 2022

- 42.1 The Committee **received** a report which outlined University Research Centres which had remained unchanged since the last meeting in October 2022.

Change of Research Centres names in the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS)

Centre for Computer Science and Informatics Research (CCSIR)

- 42.2 The Committee **received** a report which proposed changes to the names of two Research Centres in the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS).
- 42.3 The Committee **discussed** the proposed change of title for the Centre for Computer Science and Informatics Research (CCSIR) to be renamed the Centre for Research in AI, Robotics and Neural Systems.
- 42.4 The Committee **considered** the inclusion of the term 'Neural Systems' in the Centre title and acknowledged that although it was chosen to reflect the biocomputation element of the work undertaken, that direct reference to 'neural systems' was unnecessary. The Chair advocated the use of, The Centre for AI and Robotics, which had a strong external profile and included biocomputation by association within the field of AI.
- 42.5 The Committee **did not approve** the proposal to rename the Centre for Computer Science and Informatics Research (CCSIR) to the Centre for Research in AI, Robotics and Neural Systems, and requested further consultation was undertaken.

Centre for Research in Biodection Technologies (CRBT)/Wolfson Centre for Biodetection and Instrumentation Research

- 42.6 The Committee **discussed** the proposed title for the Centre for Research in Biodetection Technologies (CRBT) to be renamed the 'Wolfson Centre for Biodetection and Instrumentation Research'.
- 42.7 The Committee **approved** the proposal.

Application for Research Centre Designation – Centre for Communications, Networks and Security (CCNSR)

- 42.8 The Committee **received** an application for a new Research Centre, the Centre for Communications, Networks and Security Research (CCNSR).
- 42.9 The Committee **agreed** a Research Centre, which brought security algorithms and cyber research together under more robust leadership, was justified. The proposal for the Centre was **agreed** in principle.
- 42.10 The Committee **discussed** the term 'Communications' and suggested it was outdated and an unnecessary addition to the title.
- 42.11 The Committee **agreed** an alternative title for the Research Centre was required.
- (Confidential Agenda Paper 15 refers)

UPDATE REPORTS

43 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE (ENTERPRISE)

- 43.1 The Committee **received** a verbal update which outlined Knowledge Exchange (Enterprise), research income related activities.
- 43.2 The Committee noted the Proof of Concept Scheme was open and following the first round of funding panel, 2 projects with a value in the region of £27-£30K were funded. The scheme would reopen with a deadline of April 2023. A staff Q&A session was scheduled in the coming weeks and applications were encouraged.

- 43.3 The Committee noted new enterprise training for academics would be available from the end of March 2023, which aimed to equip academics with a skill set portfolio of training in enterprise.
- 43.4 The Committee noted that Knowledge Exchange targets were being progressed and looked positive.
- 43.4 The Committee **received** an update regarding a new spin-out company (OSAT) which had come through the School of Physics, Engineering and Computer Science (SPECS), with a direct route to market for an online tool for recording investigations for law enforcement. Documents were in place and would be taken to the Knowledge Exchange Advisory Group in the coming weeks for approval.
- 43.5 The Committee noted that further to Audit recommendations, improvements to reporting processes for HEFCE were underway to facilitate the tracking of projects through the finance system.

44 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION**

The Committee noted a written report from the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion would be circulated after the meeting.

45 **RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATIONS**

- 45.1 The Committee **received** a report from the Research and Scholarly Communications Manager, Dr Bill Worthington, on research information management and scholarly communications.
- 45.2 The Committee noted the information contained in the report which related to the Research Information System (RIS) and University of Hertfordshire Research Archive (UHRA) activity.
- 45.3 The Committee noted most Open Access Transformative Agreements had been renewed or were in the process of renewal however there was contention in the sector regarding Springer Nature, and negotiations continued. Contingency plans were in progress for implementation if necessary.
- 45.4 The Committee noted the 8000 titles provided good value for money, at an approximately 10 to 1 return on publication/subscription fees. The Committee **supported** the proposal for Learning and Computer Sciences to apply for the budget for ongoing funding for transformative agreements in the business planning round.
- 45.5 The Committee noted, Pure Portal, a new cloud-based system for research profiles was launched in January 2023. The new system featured a modern and accessible interface, greater flexibility, and aligned well with the University brand. The Committee noted that the RIS would move to the cloud next year.
- 45.6 The Committee noted the University had put out a tender to move the University of Hertfordshire Research Archive (UHRA) system to the cloud. Results of the tender would be known at the end of March 2023 and a business case put forward to the planning round.
- 45.7 The Committee noted that Library and Computing Services Information Managers would liaise with Schools ahead of the planning round to discuss resources budgets.
- 45.8 The Committee noted Library and Computing Services had been engaged in conversations around Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Chat GTP in regard to the Education and Student Experience. The Committee **agreed** the Research AI/Chat GTP position would be discussed at the next Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research Management Group (PRMG).

(Confidential Agenda Paper 18 refers)

46 **LIBRARY AND COMPUTING SERVICES**

The Library and Computing Services update report was consolidated within the previous item.

OTHER BUSINESS

47 **CLERK'S REPORT**

47.1 Schedule of Meetings-2022/23

The next meeting on Tuesday 23 May 2023 was scheduled at 09:30 hours in the Central Committee Room.

47.2 Research Degrees Board

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

(Confidential Agenda Paper 20 refers)

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

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

49 **PEOPLE DEVELOPMENT**

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

50 **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.

51 **EMERGENCY BUSINESS**

51.1 The Committee noted concerns raised with regard to amendments to the Workload Allocation Model. It was **agreed** the discussion would be taken outside of the meeting and progressed through the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research Management Group (PRMG).

52.2 The Committee **discussed** a concern raised, that the University's commitment to Skilled Education for the online delivery of Masters programmes had implications for researchers. It was noted that Skilled Education Masters programmes had 6 entry points throughout the year, which would impact on Semester C, when opportunity for research was optimal.

52.3 The Committee **acknowledged** concerns with the new Skilled business model and noted that its implementation would require consideration from a research perspective.