

Research & Enterprise Committee 19 October 2017 - Summary of Proceedings

Matters Arising

- 1 The Committee noted the matters arising report. One key matter to note concerned the Research Ethics procedures where it was confirmed that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee would be considering the revised procedures at its meeting in December 2017 following delays in implementing the revised online system. The Research & Enterprise Committee would then receive the new procedures for consideration at its January 2018 meeting and the new procedures would be implemented later in 2018

Outcome of the Research Excellence Framework Consultation / Research & Enterprise Strategy Update

- 2 The Chair noted that the outcomes of the Research Excellence Framework Consultation had not yet been published. The Chair had also attended a recent Universities UK (UUK) briefing meeting where it was apparent that further discussion would need to take place between the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), the Research Councils UK (RCUK) and HEFCE before anything was published. The Chair also confirmed that he was seeking an update on when the second tranche of guidance notes would be published concerning the REF and an update would be provided as soon as possible on what the eligibility criteria and output requirements for the REF exercise will be.
- 3 The Committee discussed the funding of research in the UK and in particular the concerns raised by the Financial Sustainability Strategy Group (FSSG) about the sustainability of funding for UK universities research and their plans to use a proportion of the Quality Related research funding (QR) to help fund research council research grants to support funding for research in science.

Annual Director's Report from Research & Enterprise Services

- 4 The Committee received the annual report from the Director of Research & Enterprise on the recent activities of the Research & Enterprise Service during 2016/17. The report covered the three themes that underpin our Service Strategy: Smart Support; Excellent Environment; and External Engagement.
- 5 It was noted that progress has been made against all of the three themes with some key points including:
 - (a) During the last year the Research Office and the Enterprise Office had transitioned from two separate teams to a fully coordinated service following a service review completed on 01 October 2017.
 - (b) In October 2017, we will have our first student intake into the Graduate School, with a full launch of the School at our February intake.

- (c) The University recorded its largest ever research income in 2016/17 of £3.3 million.
- (d) The number of student completions has dropped but the actual completion rates are an improving picture.
- (e) During 2016/2017 there were a higher number of external funding applications submitted than in the previous two years.
- (f) The total value of the successful grant applications fell slightly from £2,855,350 in 2015/2016 to £2,695,329 in 2016/2017 however the overall success rate of 55% for academic staff applying and successfully obtaining external research income was an increase on previous years.
- (g) The number of enrolled research students has increased from last year from 592 to 633 along with the number of applications to the University.
- (h) Completion rate times for full time doctoral students had fallen to 4 years and 3 months and was approaching the target of 4 years or under.

University Research & Enterprise Forum

- 6 The Committee received proposal for the constitution of a University Research & Enterprise Forum. The purpose of which was to provide an opportunity for those leading research in schools and central services to share best practice and work together on university-wide initiatives. The forum would not possess any formal decision making powers and would exist to discuss ideas and recommend solutions to the Research and Enterprise Committee. Membership of the forum would be made up of representatives from all schools and units of assessment along with all Directors of Research and the Director of Research and Enterprise who would Chair the forum. The forum would be scheduled to meet on a monthly basis. *The Committee agreed to approve the proposal subject to an amendment to its terms of reference to clarify where recommendations that had resource implications should be considered.*

Operation of Research Ethics in Schools

- 7 Feedback was received from each School concerning their approaches to the operation of the research ethics processes at school level. The School Research Ethics Co-ordinators had noted that the arrangements had operated well so far and that on the whole each Schools' approach was functioning and that ethical approval for higher risk research was being escalated through the correct channel in each School. Concern was raised however as to how the School Academic Committees were maintaining oversight of this activity as in some Schools the research ethics co-ordinators presented a standing report to each meeting of their School Academic Committee providing an overview of research ethics activity whereas in other Schools this type of reporting was not taking place. The Research Ethics Sub-Committee had agreed that the reporting of research ethics activity to the School Academic Committees should be taking place and guidance would be provided to Schools on how this could be carried out. *The Research & Enterprise Committee endorsed this action and the Chair agree that he would write to the Deans of School to ensure that the appropriate monitoring mechanisms were put in place.*

Committee Reports

- 8 The Committee received reports summarising the work of the Research Degree Sub-Committee, the Research Ethics Sub-Committee and the School Academic Committees.
- 9 *In relation to the work of the Research Degrees Sub-Committee the Committee agreed that a message would be sent to colleagues in Schools to thank them for their work over the last year to improve practice and the management of research student matters.*
- 10 *The Committee agreed that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee would be asked to investigate whether there were any research ethics implications for staff conducting research as part of their apportioned scholarly activity.*
- 11 *The Committee agreed that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee would be asked to investigate the nil returns that kept being recorded for staff research under the PREVENT questions in the research ethics approval process to ensure that this was accurate.*