

UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

21/31 A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Wednesday 27 October 2021 at 11am on Microsoft Teams.

Present

Dominik Zaum, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)
Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Carol Wagstaff, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Phil Newton, Research Dean (Environment)
John Gibbs, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)
Adrian Williams, Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development
Daniella La Penna, Department of Languages and Culture, Senate member
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian
Richard Frazier, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Senate member
Ainur Bulasheva, Postgraduate Research Student Officer RUSU, Students Union representative
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

Apologies

Darren Browne, Commercial Director
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)
Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource)

21/32 Welcome [item 1]

The Chair welcomed members to the Board's first meeting of the academic year, in particular those members attending their first meeting.

21/33 Disclosure of Interests and Risk Register [item 2]

Board members were reminded of the requirement to disclose interests and to inform the Chairs of any personal interest in agenda items at this meeting.

The Board received the University Risk Register and asked to pay particular attention to the risks relevant to the research and innovation remit, namely risks 1-4 and associated controls and early warning indicators. The Board highlighted the following:

- Under risk 1, consequences could include impact on people, including staff morale. In addition, explicit reference should be made to research integrity under consequences/effects, and the University's activity in relation to the Concordat on research integrity could be included in Control/Mitigating actions.
- Under risk 3, the Board noted that they had limited influence with regard to the recruitment of PGR students.
- Risk 16 highlighted the risk of falling in global rankings and league tables. The Board noted the significance of research measures and metrics in these rankings, and therefore suggested that more explicit references be made to research under controls/mitigations. Potentially, UBRI could also be included under monitoring bodies.

Members were invited to email any further comments to the Chair and Secretary to inform the report to the Risk Management Group. It was also noted that the Risk Management Group would be undertaking a strategic and holistic review of the corporate risk register in this coming academic year.

Action: Secretary to provide Board feedback to the Risk Management Group

21/34 Research governance, Terms of Reference and membership [item 2]

The Board received the research governance structure, including reporting committees and other research-related bodies. The Board approved the Terms of Reference with the intention to review the Board's activity in relation to the Terms at its June meeting.

The Board noted the following changes to membership:

- John Gibbs and Carol Wagstaff as new Research Deans; Adrian Williams as new Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development; Daniella La Penna as new Senate member
- ECR representative vacancy: Process to appoint replacement in train
- Research staff representative vacancy: Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development to review
- RUSU would be represented by the Postgraduate Research Student Officer

21/35 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 June 2021 [item 4]

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 June 2021.

21/36 Actions from previous meetings [item 5]

There were no actions from previous meetings.

21/37 Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda) [item 6]

There were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

21/38 Report from the University Committee for Research and Innovation [item 7]

The Board received a verbal report from Parveen Yaqoob, co-Chair of UCRI, along with some selected papers, on the Committee's recent activity, including the following:

- The Committee had **updated its Terms of Reference**, which were approved by the Board.
- **UCRI away day.** The Committee had held an away day. The Board received a copy of the presentation that had been provided to Research Division Leads following the away day. It noted the external context of the government focus on the levelling up agenda; post-COVID business and industry recovery; and research culture. The University's priorities over the five years included research culture; building on strategic partnerships; developing the impact strategy; a public engagement plan; learning from the REF outcomes; and review of other elements of the 2020 Research Plan.
- **Other UCRI activity.** The Board noted other recent UCRI activity, including the announcement of the first RETF open call; evaluation of previously funded projects; and the review of initial work on the Research 2020 plan review projects. Future work included the setting up of research fellowship competitions in December and the review of Research Division operating plans.

- **Research awards and applications performance 2020/21.** The Board received the end of year position for research awards and applications. The University had received over £37m in research awards, around 88% to the single year target. The Board agreed that, whilst this was below target, this was a positive performance; there were also reasons to be cautiously optimistic given the healthy level of applications. It was noted that anecdotally other institutions' research income had been impacted by the pandemic; the extent of this impact would be known once sector finances were published next year.

The University would be revisiting longer term income targets following the publications of REF outcomes and data in May 2022, with the intention to adopt a similar approach as post REF 2014 with reference to identified competitor performance.

- **THE World University Rankings.** The Board received for information the outcomes from the recently published THE World University rankings. The University was ranked just outside the top 200 and in the top 29 of UK universities. At subject level, the University had improved in 6 of the 10 tables published to date, including Education now ranking in the Top 100. The Board noted the two University KPIs from the rankings: To be in the top 25 of UK universities and in the top quartile in the International outlook pillar (currently 74th). The Board highlighted some potential metrics of concern for future performance in the rankings, namely PGR recruitment (on the Teaching element) and impact of Brexit (on International outlook). It was suggested to invite Paul Inman (PVC International) to a future meeting to discuss international collaboration, particularly given that some aspects were a relative weakness in the THE Impact Rankings submission.

Action: Chair/Secretary to invite Paul Inman to a future meeting to discuss international collaboration

21/39 Strategic Foundation Programme: Individual Expectations Framework [item 8a]

The Board received the latest version of the Individual expectations framework for comment and approval. The Framework put forward the outline principles and a set of indicators across teaching, research, citizenship and leadership. The Board noted that UEB had decided to stretch out the other three elements to the pathway – the PDR process, Workload and Data and Systems workstream – in order to reduce pressure on colleagues.

The Board were reminded that the purpose of the Framework was to arrive at a point where each academic had a clear understanding of what is expected in terms of quality and productivity (not volume) and that this was transparent and could be benchmarked where appropriate. UBRI had previously reviewed given feedback. It was noted that the Framework had been subject to consultation with School Management Boards and UCRI. Some issues highlighted through that process were out of scope, but were included here since they could be relevant to the other workstreams.

In discussion the following main points were highlighted

- There were concerns about potential imbalance between expectations for Teaching & Research and Teaching intensive colleagues. This related in part to workload models and what percentage time such colleagues might have allocated for research. There was existing practice in Schools with regard to workload models that could be usefully shared, but otherwise this question would be addressed by the workload workstream.
- The list of indicators was a guide and not exhaustive. Academics would not be expected to deliver across all indicators; this would be determined by Schools and disciplinary context.
- It was suggested that open research practice be included among the research indicators.

- Members highlighted the importance of consistency between Schools, notwithstanding the disciplinary context, for example the balance between aspiration and realism in target setting. In this respect, the School contextual statements would allow sense checking for comparability and how expectations had been determined with reference to internal or external benchmarks.
- An increase in expectations might result in an increased burden on professional services colleagues, for example an increased number of applications. The Board acknowledged that research support needed to be directed to those applications most likely to be successful, but that level of resource in RES, for example, would continue to be monitored to ensure the University remained competitive.

The Board's comments would be appended to the Framework document, which would now be taken to the pathway steering group and UBTLSE.

Action: Secretary/Workstream Chair to feedback Board comments to Pathway Project Manager

21/40 Concordat to support research integrity: verbal update [item 8b]

The Board received a verbal update from the Co-Chair on the University's activity in regard to the Concordat, which was published in October 2019, and overseen by the Committee on Open Research and Research integrity. It noted the following

- The Committee had undertaken a self-assessment and compliance gap analysis and was addressing issues. The Committee would revisit its self-assessment in spring term in light of further guidance from UKRIO.
- Work over the last year had included addressing requirements for research integrity training; the University was piloting research integrity training (train the trainer) and working with UKRIO to develop online training materials for roll out in spring term.

In discussion, the Board queried the extent to which the University wished to remain signatories should requirements become too onerous. It was agreed that the expectations were sufficiently broad to deliver what worked best for the University without being constraining; the signatory served to reinforce that the University took the matter seriously and retained public trust in our research.

21/41 Concordat to support the career development of researchers update [item 8c]

The Board received a copy of the update paper that had been provided to Council by the former Dean of Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development. The primary activities over the previous year had been the development of guidance and training materials and webpages to support wider awareness, and staff development. Further work would consider research culture and the broader challenges of engaging the researcher community. The Board noted that £50k had been made available from RETF to support the work. In addition, RETF had also agreed to fund a two-year fixed-term post to support the concordat and the HE Excellence in research award (working closely with HR).

21/42 Research output prize for Early Career Researchers [item 8d]

The Board received the criteria and timeline for this year's research output prize for Early Career Researchers. Noting that it was in line with previous year's arrangements, the Board approved the call text. Because of phasing of meetings, the outcomes would be approved by Chair's action. Research Deans would update the Board on the selection process being adopted in their Themes at the next meeting.

21/43 UKRI Open Access policy [item 9a]

The Board received a paper that had been provided to the Committee for Open Research and Researcher Integrity on the recently published UKRI Open Access policy for outputs funded by UKRI and its constituent Councils. It noted the following

- Peer reviewed articles submitted after 1 April 2022 must be made open access immediately without embargo
- Monographs and other long form publications submitted after 1 January 2024 must be made open access within 12 months of publication
- UKRI had set aside £46m and £3.5m respectively to support. Funds would be managed centrally through the grant application process, the mechanics to be determined.
- Implications for REF were not yet known, but it was expected that the approach would inform future REF requirements.
- The University had established a working group to explore the implications of these requirements, including planning communications to researchers and keeping abreast of responses and emerging developments in the sector.

In discussion, the following was highlighted

- The number of UKRI funded monographs was relatively small, but REF implications would be more significant.
- It would be important to understand implications as early as possible, particularly given long lead times with monograph contracts.

The Board would receive an update on progress at its January meeting.

21/44 Responsible metrics and Open Research in promotions criteria [item 9b]

The Board received a paper that had been provided to the Committee for Open Research and Researcher Integrity on the use of responsible metrics and open research in promotions criteria.

The Board approved in principle the paper's recommendations relating to the use of responsible metrics and open research in recruitment and promotions processes, and was supportive of the proposal to investigate use of narrative CVs. It recommended the establishment of a working group (reporting jointly to this Board and the Personal Titles Committee and including representation from HR which covers both recruitment and progression of staff) to take forward, subject to further discussion with the University Secretary.

Action: Co-Chair of this Board and Chair of CORRI (Parveen Yaqoob) to liaise with the University Secretary to coordinate the establishment of the working group

21/45 Research and Knowledge Exchange Funding 2021/22 [item 9c]

The Board received information on Research England's funding allocations for 2021/22. Sector recurrent funding streams (QR, Knowledge Exchange, Research Capital) were in line with the previous year, with additional single-year grants for 2021/22, including additional QR and allocations focused on strengthening partnership working and strengthening university capacity.

The University had subsequently received its individual funding allocation, which amounted to c, £26m in total: c. £18m in recurrent research, £3.4m in Knowledge Exchange and £1.7m in research capital funding. Additional single-year allocations amounted to £2.3m with some allocations yet to be determined, including that for Research culture.

21/46 Research Endowment Trust Fund (RETF) allocation [item 10a]

The Board heard that final breakdown of RETF expenditure from last year had yet to be confirmed; the outturn would inform levels of available expenditure for this coming year. Notwithstanding, it was intended to continue to support larger programmes and ongoing multi-year commitments, including the Open call, research fellowships, projects to support concordats, and the British Museum relationship. A detailed paper would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: Co-Chair (Dominik Zaum) to bring RETF paper outlining planned priorities to the next meeting

21/47 Update on Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 [item 11a]

The Board received information on ongoing activity with regard to REF 2021, which had been submitted in spring 2021, notably.

- The University had submitted its Equality Impact Assessment in July 2021, a copy of which was provided to the Board
- Colleagues in professional services were coordinating responses to Funding body audits of the submission, primarily around eligibility of staff, outputs and assurance processes for staff circumstances.
- Some colleagues across the University were involved in panel review of submissions.
- The University was beginning planning for the results of the submission, which would be published in May 2022.

21/48 Reporting committees [item 11b and 11c]

The Board received minutes from the recent meetings of the following Committees/Groups

- Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity: minutes from the autumn term meeting. The Board noted the following
 - Committee had reviewed progress on the Open Research action plan, including the successful introduction of open research champions.
 - The University was a member of the UK Reproduceability Network, which had been awarded £8m to fund work around research reproduceability and research integrity.
- Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies. Minutes from the February 2021 meeting. The Dean of Postgraduate Studies reported more recent developments to the Board, including the following:
 - Whilst PGR applications were being maintained, available academic capacity anecdotally was becoming a factor in admissions decisions.
 - Opportunities for growth in PGR students included at a distance, and PhD by publication.
 - The Graduate School was reviewing current pricing policy of PGR programmes, mindful of relative burden of delivery.

21/49 Date of next meeting

25 January 2022, 9am