

UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

21/01 A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 9am on Microsoft Teams.

Present

Dominik Zaum, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)
Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource)
Adrian Williams, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Roberta Gilchrist, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)
Phil Newton, Research Dean (Environment)
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)
Dianne Berry, Dean for Post-Graduate Research Studies
Sue Walker, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, Senate member
Darren Browne, Commercial Director
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian
Richard Frazier, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Senate member
Matthew Windsor, School of Law, Early Career Researcher member
Rachel Wates, RUSU Diversity Officer, Students Union representative
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

Apologies

Phil Newton, Research Dean (Environment)

21/02 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 November 2020 [item 3]

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 6 November 2020.

21/03 Actions from previous meetings [item 4]

- **20/40 Phase 2 implementation research related update: ECR response.** Matthew Windsor, the ECR member, would be seeking more detailed input from ECR colleagues, in consultation with the PVCs (R&I), to feed into a later stage of the Strategy implementation.

21/04 Matters arising from the minutes: Concordat to support the career development of researchers [item 5]

There were no matter arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

21/05 Update on the Strategy implementation [item 6]

Dominik Zaum (PVC R&I) provided an update on the Strategy implementation following on from the conclusion of Phase 2 work. Phase 2 was now a strategic programme with its own governing board. There were four areas of work, which broadly mapped onto the main pathways. For three of the four areas, detailed management cases were being drafted and discussed, with groups identified to

take activities forward. These would be shared with relevant boards and committee as and when approved. Similarly detailed membership and remits would be confirmed with the respective chairs.

The Board noted that there were some implications for research in the ways of working (for example space) and the teaching pathways (for example culture) and therefore research would be represented on these groups.

The workload/expectations pathway, however, was the area with the most direct implications for research, building on some of the principles emerging in the Phase 2 work. Initial focus would be on academic expectations and workload with consideration of Professional Services to follow. There were four main workstreams associated with the pathway: academic expectations, the PDR process, workload management, and data and systems. The pathway would be overseen by a Steering Group and a project management group. Further governance would be instituted as appropriate through UBTLBS, UBRI, Staffing committee and digital infrastructure.

The programme was planned over four to five years with parts of the project expected to be completed by the end of this year.

Mark Fellowes (PVC Academic Planning and Resource) highlighted that the overarching strategy board would help determine the direction of travel and ensure that the planned activities knitted together, and that there was recognition of potentially overlapping remits and impacts. In all pathways, it was also important not to lose sight of the University finances and how resource should be deployed.

With regard to the expectations workstream, members emphasized the importance of recognizing disciplinary and career stage differences, and that this should be reflected in the membership. It was noted that workstreams would draw on wider consultation as required for further input and information gathering.

21/06 Research-related Diversity & Inclusion data [item 6b]

The Board received a presentation from colleagues in the Planning and Strategy Office on research-related Diversity & Inclusion data, building on the work initiated by the Board's Working group on diversity and inclusion data. Monitoring Diversity & Inclusion data was recognised as important as regular and statutory activity, but had been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic and concerns that COVID has had disproportionate impact on research productivity in certain groups, as well as other potential inequalities. The Board noted recent proposals around

The Board received some data on the following against specific characteristics (sex/gender, ethnicity, disability and career stage): Staff and PGR student demographics over time; Research awards and applications, quantity and success rates; Research students admissions and attainment; Research publications volume; and internal funding competitions.

The Board noted some important caveats

- The issue of small numbers and declaration rates for certain data items and statistical certainty/significance.
- The analysis focused on binary grouping, but generally did not consider intersectionality which in some against multi-option and where suitable and respectable.
- These were sensitive data and therefore processes and presentation were in place to ensure confidentiality

- When interpreting, it was important to be aware of conscious and unconscious bias.

In discussion, the following points were highlighted

- Staff demographics had remained relatively stable over time
- Data on awards were presented at Theme level to allow disciplinary comparison, reflecting the different demographic constituency and rates of activity in disciplines.
- The average value of research awards was higher for male than female staff, which was partly explained by higher proportions of male staff in higher award value disciplines.
- There were lower levels of awards from BAME academics.
- For some data, there were levels of statistical uncertainty depending on declaration rates and/or numbers in the sample.
- There was a connection with the workload/expectations pathway and the equality impact element.
- In some data items, there was a driver to improve declaration rates

The presentation also prompted a discussion about a broader set of information that could be drawn upon and/or collected, for example to include inter alia research output quality and use of ROSS, qualitative/culture measures (including staff surveys), citizenship roles and wider University contributions.

As a starting point for wider reflection, it was suggested that the data/presentation be shared for discussion with Research Division Leads, and Heads of School, and then consider how it could be taken forward more widely.

21/07 Committee on Research Infrastructure: World class labs initiative [item 6b]

The Board received for note University research infrastructure projects funded through UKRI's World Class Labs initiative. The University had received £1m for laboratory research equipment upgrades, to be spent by 31 March 2021. With input from the University Committee for Research & Innovation, colleagues in Estates, Technical Services and Procurement, the Chair of the Committee for Research Infrastructure (the Research Dean for Agriculture, Food and Health) and the Research Dean for Environment coordinated the allocation of funding, drawing on requests to the Committee and Research Division Operating plans.

The University received an additional c. £100k for regional investment, again to be spent by 31 March 2021. A short competition was run aimed at Early Career Researchers for small items under the procurement threshold. The fund was able to support all requests.

Reflecting on the process, Adrian Williams suggested that it would be helpful for the University to maintain a running list of strategically important items (for example from Research Divisions) in the event that further funds became available at short notice or other schemes with short application deadlines. The Research Dean for Heritage & Creativity also highlighted University Museums and Special Collections, for whom there might be relevant requirements in the digital humanities.

The Chair thanked the two Research Deans and procurement for preparing the submissions under such a short timeframe.

21/08 European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) [item 6c]

The Board received a verbal update on the ECMWF. The ECMWF Council had made the Brexit-influenced decision to relocate Copernicus and EU-related part of its activities to Bonn. The UK Government had renewed its commitment for the ECMWF headquarters and associated core research activities to be located at the University's Whiteknights campus.

Recognising that ECMWF constituted a core research partner at the University, the University Committee for Research and Innovation had agreed to fund a 0.1FTE Director of ECMWF collaboration role from the Research Endowment Trust Fund to facilitate collaborative research. In addition, the Board noted that the Graduate School had agreed to support two Studentships and that there might be RETF pump-priming funds available.

21/09 Research output prize for Early Career Researchers [item 6d]

The Board received the Theme shortlists and details of the process in each Theme to determine the winner. The winners would be endorsed by Chair's action in advance of Court in March. The Board approved the Theme selection processes and thanked the Research Deans and relevant Research Division Leads for their role in the process to date. It noted in particular that in the Heritage & Creativity Theme, there had been fewer eligible ECR outputs, and only three Research Division had submitted nominations; this was perhaps some cause for concern.

21/10 Reporting committees [item 8]

The Board received the following from its reporting committees.

- **Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies** minutes. Because of the phasing of meetings, the minutes of the meeting were somewhat out of date. More topical minutes would be provided at the March meeting
- **University Committee for Research and Innovation** summary highlights. The Chair highlighted that the RETF Open call and University research fellowships for 2021/22 would be advertised shortly.
- **Committee on Open Research and Research Integrity**. No meeting had taken place, but the Board noted that the Open Research plan had been published
- **REF Planning Group** update on progress. The Chair of the REF Planning Group reported good progress: impact case studies were being finalised; environment statements were being reviewed and finessed; and UOA leads were confirming output selections. It was noted that the REF funding body team had allowed for an extension to the deadline for environment statements and Impact case studies; the University was still working towards the 31 March deadline.