UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2022 (in Room 7X111)

Membership:

Present: Prof M Boddy (Chair), Prof O Doran, Dr L Duong, Prof D Greenham, Prof J Hancock, Prof H Hickman, Prof C Hobbs, T John (Secretary), Dr M Kirjavainen-Morgan, Prof V Kumar, Prof M Rose, P Shelton, Prof A Varadi, Prof N Willey, N Button (Officer)

Apologies: Prof R Bolden, E Botwood, L Brown, M Bruce-Roberts, Dr G Christopher, Prof A Coffey, A Conway, Prof D Evans, A Geary, Dr L Goodwin, Dr S Klein, Prof M Smith

In attendance: Prof D Reynolds & Prof C Statton (item 4.5)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC22.03.1	**WELCOMES AND APOLOGIES**
RKEC22.03.1.1	The Chair welcomed new members to the meeting.
RKEC22.03.1.2	The Chair noted all the apologies that had been received.
RKEC22.03.2	**MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**
RKEC22.03.2.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 19 January 2022 as a full and accurate record.
	Matters arising
RKEC22.03.2.2	RKEC.22.01.4.1.2 Following a meeting of the Research Challenge Group, it had been agreed that a write-up of the discussion would be circulated to members of RKEC. Work on compiling this was ongoing. **Action:** Chair to update at the next meeting.

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RKEC22.03.2.3	RKEC.22.01.5.1.4 The Research Challenge had raised the issue of equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). The Chair had subsequently discussed the possibility of having a specific working group on research and EDI, which was an area of interest for the Board of Governors, and that this would be further picked up in the Research Readiness Review.
RKEC22.03.3	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**
RKEC22.03.3.1	**Chair's report - verbal**
RKEC22.03.3.1.1	The Chair presented some of the key themes from the UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) Strategy 2022-27. This had been published following the Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy's (BEIS) settlement for Research & Development (R&D) funding. The Chair noted the culture change at UKRI from its historical position as a cluster of research funding bodies to an organisation that was more focused on delivering government policy as a strategic agenda setting body. Its role had changed from "pushing back the boundaries of knowledge" to tackling real, tangible challenges identified by government. Themes that occurred in the UK Innovation Strategy from July 2011 reappeared in the new UKRI Strategy. It also had a remit of making the UK the most attractive place for research talent. While it remained the umbrella organisation for all research councils, they were now operating to the same agenda. Although UWE needed to be conscious of the change in how it approached funding and research opportunities, its areas of specialism were well placed to capitalise on those identified by UKRI.
RKEC22.03.3.1.2	BEIS' research funding allocation, which was announced shortly before the UKRI Strategy, delivered a three-year settlement with some increase funding. This would be reflected in QR and HEIF funding as well. It also contained an explicit commitment to maintaining the UK's membership of Horizon Europe.
RKEC22.03.3.1.3	The Chair also drew attention to the Spring Statement 2022, which talked about a culture of enterprise within the UK. There was only one reference to universities, however, in the context of the announcement of new PhDs in artificial intelligence (AI).
RKEC22.03.3.1.4	During discussion, RKEC raised the following points: - The University should compare its research repository to the seven priority areas identified by UKRI and look at where it had successful funding bids and existing expertise in those areas. - Although it was important to strategically direct the University's research portfolio to align with the priority areas of UKRI, there was value in expertise in other areas as well, in addition to noting the other sources of funding available.

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RKEC22.03.3.2	**Research Strategy 2030 – update on the Research Readiness Review**
RKEC22.03.3.2.1	The Chair and Secretary delivered an update on the Research Readiness Review in the context of the ongoing restructure of the University from Faculties and Departments to Colleges and Schools and the Covid-related disruption to the progress of some of the elements of Strategy 2030. The University would receive its REF results in May, which would further contextualise its research position and strengths. It had already begun the process of identifying its strengths and had launched a number of schemes to encourage research development among staff and support areas of excellence. The Review included six workstreams: - A review of centres, other research groups, and future structures - REF lessons learned - Internal funding streams and research support schemes - Capability and investment strategy - External context, R&D priorities, and funding opportunities - PGR provision, investment, and growth plan.
RKEC22.03.3.2.2	The next step in the process was identifying those areas for strategic investment and making the case for that investment. It would be channelled into Pinnacle Research Clusters, with investment at every level of the workforce from early career to established academics with existing four-star outputs. It was important to note that this included capital investment as well. Research Board had met for the first time that morning and workstreams would begin in the next couple of weeks, with the intention of completion for the end of June.
RKEC22.03.3.2.3	During discussion, RKEC raised the following points: - Innovation and impact were a key element of research excellence and consideration should be given to formalising that within the new College Structure. - Engagement with individual research staff within the workstreams was important and would be the responsibility of the working groups for each workstream. Consideration was also being given to online consultations with different groups of staff.
RKEC22.03.4	**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**
RKEC22.03.4.1	**Review of UKRI Strategy 2022-27**
RKEC22.03.4.1.1	It was noted that this item had been covered in the Chair's report.

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RKEC22.03.4.2	**UKRI Open Access Policy**
RKEC22.03.4.2.1	The Chair noted that the paper had been received but the author had sent apologies. There was a change in open access policy commencing from 1 April 2022, tightening up the requirements for output publishing of work that had been supported by UKRI. A further item on the implications would be added to a future agenda. **Action:** Secretary/Officer
RKEC22.03.4.3	**Transition from Faculties to Colleges**
RKEC22.03.4.3.1	It was noted that this item had been covered under the Research Readiness Review update item.
RKEC22.03.4.4	**Update on Internal Schemes**
RKEC22.03.4.4.1	RKEC received a presentation on the University's Internal Schemes, run by RBI, that supported researchers: the early career award and the accelerator programme, and the Challenge Fund. RBI were currently in the process of awarding the successful applications. In total, 390 people had applied for £3.3m of funding, including 123 early career researchers. It was noted that some EDI analysis would be done once the awards had been made. Some common themes that had emerged from the applications were the high quality of the written submissions and several bids in AI-related research.
RKEC.22.03.4.4.2	During discussion, RKEC raised the following points: - The earlier the process of application could be completed in the academic cycle, those who were successful could have the time protected in their workload bundles. - There was a strong view that the accelerator programme should be reopened following a decline in the number of applications. - Partnership PhDs should be included in this area of work. - Consideration should be given to how the opportunities were marketed and communicated to ensure maximum participation. - The disparities in teaching requirements and the capacity of some academics to take-on additional research responsibilities created EDI implications. There were wider issues of how to protect research time more generally. - Consideration should be given to more involvement of PGRs in sharing teaching responsibility for those academics involved in greater research activity.

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RKEC.22.03.4.4.3	RKEC noted its thanks to Philippa Shelton and the team in RBI who had delivered this work in a short space of time.
RKEC.22.03.4.5	**ERE presentation – Healthy Waters**
RKEC.22.03.4.5.1	The Expanding Research Excellence (ERE) was first launched during 2021 with four clusters funded, supporting cross-disciplinary areas and building for the future. Following two clusters presenting at the previous RKEC meeting in January, the third presented to this meeting with the fourth scheduled to attend the meeting in June.
RKEC.22.03.4.5.2	Healthy Waters – the presentation was led by Prof Darren Reynolds and Prof Chad Statton. Their work was focused on Sustainable Development Goal 6.1 (and associated SDGs) on access to safe and sustainable water supplies. The research was looking at multiple solutions that would apply in a variety of different settings and there was work ongoing on developing a bidding plan for further funding in this area of work.
	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
RKEC22.03.5.1	**Sub-Committee Updates**
RKEC22.03.5.1.1	Graduate School Sub-Committee: Professor Willey noted that on Monday 20 June, the University would hold its Festival of Learning, with keynote speaker Professor Karen Clegg of the University of York, followed by the launch of the Doctoral Supervision Pathway to Fellowship Higher Education Academy, the first of its kind at a UK university. Members of RKEC were asked to attend if possible. The other reports were starred and not discussed.
RKEC22.03.5.2	**Faculty Research Updates**
RKEC22.03.5.2.1	The reports were starred and not discussed.
RKEC22.03.5.3	**Library Services Report**
RKEC22.03.5.3.1	The report was starred and not discussed.
RKEC22.03.5.4	**External Bidding Details**
RKEC22.03.5.4.1	The report was starred and not discussed.
RKEC22.03.6	**HEALTH AND SAFETY**
RKEC22.01.7.1	The Chair noted that Covid travel restrictions had been removed, although staff were asked to be mindful of the restrictions in place in destination countries.

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RKEC22.03.7	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
RKEC22.03.7.1	It was noted that adverts had gone out for a new of the Research Ethics Sub-Committee and the Human Tissue Sub-Committee.
	DATES OF FORTHCOMING MEETINGS 2021-22 Wednesday 15 June 2022, 14:00-16:30

Actions

RKEC22.03.2.2	The Chair to update on the process of circulating feedback from the Research Challenge Group at the next meeting.	Chair
RKEC22.03.4.2.1	An item on the implications of the change to open access policy would be brought to a future meeting of RKEC.	Secretary/ Officer