Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023 in Room 4Q07 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Prof. A Coffey (Chair), Prof. F Cramp, Prof. O Doran, Prof. R Granger, Prof. J Green, Prof. D Greenham, Prof. J Hancock, H Hickman, T John (Secretary), P Shelton, Prof. N Willey

Apologies: Dr L Duong, F Abdul Kareem, Prof. J Lamond, Dr H Lewis-Smith, G Oaten, Prof. D Sinnett

In attendance: C Reilly (Acting Officer)

RKEC.23.09.1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
RKEC.23.09.1.1	Members were welcomed to the committee and apologies were noted.
RKEC.23.09.2	**RKEC BUSINESS**
RKEC.23.09.2.1	**RKEC terms of reference and membership** *Paper RKEC.23.09.1 was received.*
RKEC.23.09.2.1.1	Members noted the revised terms of reference, which were approved by Academic Board on 5 July 2023. It was also noted that as research governance and ethics now fall within the remit of the newly established University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC), the Chairs of the Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee and Human Tissue Sub-Committee are now represented on UEIC rather than RKEC.
RKEC.23.09.2.2	**RKEC business plan** *Paper RKEC.23.09.2 was received.*
RKEC.23.09.2.2.1	Members noted the indicative business plan for 2023/24 and commented that it should ideally cover a mixture of both strategy and assurance. It was requested that corporate KPIs for research

and knowledge exchange, and strategic research risks, which are owned by RKEC, be included within the plan. The updated strategic risk register would be shared with the committee. **[ACTION: Secretary/Officer]**

RKEC.23.09.2.2.2   It was further noted that the research governance tactical risk would now be overseen by UEIC and that it was overseeing work to review the register. Since this was previously managed by RKEC, members would require assurance from UEIC that the latter has effective oversight.
[ACTION: Officer/Chair of UEIC]

RKEC.23.09.3	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

RKEC.23.09.3.1   **Previous minutes**
Paper RKEC.23.09.3 was received.

RKEC.23.09.3.1.1   Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June 2023.

RKEC.23.09.3.2   **Action sheet**
Paper RKEC.23.09.4 was received.

RKEC.23.09.3.2.1   *RKEC.23.06.4.1.1 (research governance process for leavers)*
Members noted that a leavers document had been shared with HR but would need following up due to the tactical risk associated with research governance.

RKEC.23.09.3.2.2   *RKEC.23.06.4.2.1.1 (PGR growth and offer expectations)*
Members noted that a review of the PGR code of practice had been put in place, which would be considered at the January meeting of the Doctoral Academy Sub-Committee and would return to RKEC thereafter. The action was closed.

RKEC.23.09.3.2.3   *RKEC.23.06.4.2.1.2 (future ethics structure)*
Members noted that work to implement the newly proposed research ethics framework for Colleges and Schools was ongoing and being managed by a transition group (overseen by UEIC). The action was closed.

RKEC.23.09.3.2.4   *RKEC.23.06.4.2.1.3 (end-of-year review of Research Investment Scheme)*
The action was closed.

RKEC.23.09.4	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

RKEC.23.09.4.1   **Chair's report and external environment update**
Verbal update

RKEC.23.09.4.1.1   The Chair gave a verbal update, highlighting that interviews for the new Pro Vice-Chancellor Research were scheduled for 28 September 2023. Thanks were noted for those colleagues involved in the recruitment and selection process.

RKEC.23.09.4.1.2   Knowledge Exchange Framework
The Secretary gave a verbal update on the Knowledge Exchange Framework results, noting that:

1. UWE Bristol scored particularly well across three areas: working with business, local growth and regeneration, and public and community engagement (being in the highest quintile for all three areas); this was broadly consistent with the previous results.
2. The University scored above average in IP and commercialisation, which was likely driven by student involvement; further room for growth in CPD was noted. Scores for working with the public and third sector and research partnerships were consistent with the cluster average.
3. The results would be brought for detailed consideration at the next meeting of RKEC, including comparative data on the performance of other universities.

RKEC.23.09.4.1.3   It was noted that RKEC would need to consider the results strategically in order to optimise the University's narrative around research and knowledge exchange and to identify areas of investment in relation to existing strengths, as well as mitigating declines.
[ACTION: Secretary]

RKEC.23.09.4.2   **External bidding data**
Paper RKEC.23.09.5 was received.

RKEC.23.09.4.2.1   The Secretary introduced the data, highlighting that:

1. There was an increased number of research bids exceeding £15 million compared with the previous year, with a greater volume of bids and increased success rates overall.
2. A decrease in bids submitted over the April to August period compared with last year was noted, which may be related to the impact of industrial action in 2022/23.

RKEC.23.09.4.2.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. The data ought to be presented to the committee with an overarching narrative to highlight anomalies, nuances or other significant developments.
2. Despite a decrease in the average value of bids submitted, there was an overall increase in the total net funding successfully awarded; there is therefore a need to consider where funding is successful for larger bids on a College-by-College basis.
3. More work is needed to understand different success rates between funder types as well as to monitor internal investment in research. Some monitoring of the delivery of internally invested research happens within the Colleges but there is a need for University-level oversight through RKEC.

RKEC.23.09.4.2.3   In further discussion of internal research funding schemes, it was noted that these were reviewed as part of the Research Readiness Review, but their impact was not assessed. Further work is also needed to examine barriers to the use of internal schemes and to consider how Colleges might wish to implement the schemes differently, as well as to develop shared understanding of where schemes could be used selectively to support targeted areas.

RKEC.23.09.4.2.4   Members recommended that a deep dive into internal research funding schemes be conducted in order to strengthen RKEC's oversight thereof.
[ACTION: Secretary]

RKEC.23.09.4.3   Health and safety
Verbal update

RKEC.23.09.4.3.1   Members noted that RKEC would continue to have line of sight on health and safety matters within research but that failures to manage health and safety risks in this area would also be reported to UEIC, further noting a distinction between assurance and risk management.

RKEC.23.09.4.4   College research updates
Papers RKEC.23.09.12a–c were received.

RKEC.23.09.4.4.1   <u>CBL</u>
The College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CBL) introduced the paper, highlighting that CBL has achieved reasonable and

sustained progress, including success through British Academy Small Research Grants. In addition, an internal peer review process was in development as part of REF 2028 preparations.

RKEC.23.09.4.4.2   CATE
The CATE representative School Director of Research and Enterprise (in the absence of the College Dean of Research and Enterprise) gave a brief update, highlighting the forthcoming impact showcase event scheduled for November 2023.

RKEC.23.09.4.4.3   CHSS
The College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CHSS) introduced the paper, highlighting significant funding awarded by the National Institute for Health Research (including as part of collaborative work with CATE), work related to future REF submissions through the College Impact Working Group and a QR-funded scheme for pilot projects developed in collaboration with CBL.

RKEC.23.09.4.4.4   In discussion, members considered how College reporting could be further enhanced and, in particular, whether it would be possible to include literature outputs as an indicator of quality. It was noted that a research output repository exists, but this includes book reviews and conference proceedings, making it unsuitable as an indicator of high-quality publications.
[ACTION: Secretary]

RKEC.23.09.5   THEMATIC DISCUSSION

RKEC.23.09.5.1   Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) and the implications for REF 2028
Verbal update

RKEC.23.09.5.1.1   Members received a presentation on the Future Research Assessment Programme and heard that:

1. The REF will continue to determine quality-related research (QR) funding. QR funding remains relatively low at UWE compared with other institutions. Learning from other universities, especially in relation to sustaining QR funding, would therefore be helpful.
2. UWE Bristol, as a research-active post-1992 university, should look to position itself accordingly, noting that similar universities such as Plymouth and Manchester Metropolitan are further ahead in terms of QR funding.

3. REF 2028 includes new sub-profiles for people, culture and environment; contribution to knowledge and understanding; and engagement and impact. Culture is expected to be a significant focus, while impact has been broadened by not being limited to outputs of 2* or above. A Research England consultation on proposed revisions to the percentage weighting for each sub-profile is currently open.

4. The volume of submissions for the new REF would be determined by HESA returns on the numbers of staff with significant research responsibility (SRR), averaged over the two years preceding the submission. Work is being undertaken to update the REF code of practice accordingly.

5. Academic Board and RKEC would be key to strategic decision-making on SRR target numbers. Current SRR numbers are estimated at around 400 FTE. Opportunities to invest in research-active staff, as well as realigning involvement in research versus teaching in some areas of the University, would also need to be considered.

6. A University-wide REF audit would be conducted by autumn 2024 as part of REF planning.

RKEC.23.09.5.1.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. Negotiating which staff are to be included within SRR numbers is particularly complex for UWE since there is no distinction between teaching/research or teaching/scholarship contracts. Care is needed to avoid alienating teaching-only staff through this process.

2. There is an opportunity to use the new people, culture and environment sub-profile to strengthen the integration of research within teaching.

3. Given the University's current position, it is unlikely that it will be able to achieve the target of doubling the submission volume in REF 2028.

RKEC.23.09.6	ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

RKEC.23.09.6.1   **Research Strategy**
Papers RKEC.23.09.6–10 were received.

RKEC.23.09.6.1.1   <u>Research Excellence Group</u>
The Secretary gave an update on the establishment of the Research Excellence Group, which will drive the strategic delivery

of excellent research with a particular focus on REF 2028 preparations. The Group will not be a formal part of the academic governance structure but will report regularly to RKEC once its first meeting is convened.

RKEC.23.09.6.1.2   Research centre criteria
Members heard that as part of work to refresh the University's research strategy, a review of research centres has been undertaken to enhance their effective operation and improve monitoring thereof. Draft criteria for research centres have been developed with the input of the College Deans of Research and Enterprise to ensure consistency across the University, though this work is ongoing.

RKEC.23.09.6.1.3   In discussion, members commented that:

1. The work to enhance research centres was particularly relevant to wider work to embed a stronger research culture.
2. There is considerable diversity in the size and shape of current research centres and groups, with different management arrangements. Institutes that do not fully meet the criteria for research centres were cited as an example where flexibility is desired, without developing criteria based on exceptional cases.
3. Similarly, clarity is needed on the distinction between research centres and research groups: for example, in terms of scale, distinctiveness and international profile. This complexity could potentially be addressed by reframing them as research entities.

RKEC.23.09.6.1.4   Research strategy update
Members noted the research strategy update, including proposed next steps, for information.

RKEC.23.09.6.1.5   Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers
Members noted the report and heard that while UWE is not yet a signatory to the Concordat, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Head of CHSS is working with colleagues towards achieving this.

RKEC.23.09.7   ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

RKEC.23.09.7.1   **Update on the University Ethics and Integrity Committee**
Paper RKEC.23.09.11 was received.

RKEC.23.09.7.1.1   The Chair of UEIC gave an update on the newly established committee, noting that the Research Ethics Sub-Committee has now been dissolved, having agreed business to be taken forward by UEIC at its final meeting. UEIC confirmed at its inaugural meeting on 26 September 2023 that this will be taken forward.

RKEC.23.09.7.1.2   It was further noted that Faculty Research Ethics Committees would continue to operate until the transition to the new ethics framework, including College Research Ethics Committeees, is complete. This will be managed by the transition group with the involvement of the College Deans of Research and Enterprise. Completing the transition will also depend on the appointment of a sufficient number of ethical scrutineers.

RKEC.23.09.7.1.3   Members were assured that oversight of research ethics was now being effectively managed by UEIC.

RKEC.23.09.8   **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

RKEC.23.09.8.1   Members expressed thanks to the outgoing Director of the UWE Graduate School for his contribution to the work of the committee. A replacement (as the Head of the Doctoral Academy) is expected to be in place by the next meeting.

RKEC.23.09.9   **DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

Next meeting dates for academic year 2023/24:
- Thursday 30 November 2023
- Wednesday 21 February 2024
- Wednesday 1 May 2024
- Wednesday 19 June 2024