



Academic Board

## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020.

### Membership:

Present: Prof M Boddy (Chair), Prof R Bolden, R Bond, Dr G Christopher, A Conway, Prof M Conway, Prof O Doran, Dr S Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Prof J Hancock, Prof D Harcourt, Prof C Hobbs, T John, Dr M Kirjavainen-Morgan, Prof V Kumar, A Mercier, Prof M Rose, P Shelton, Prof M Smith, Prof N Willey, Dr J Woodley, A Vaughton (Officer).

Apologies: R Falle, V Jones, H Moyes

In attendance: -

<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING</b>	
RKEC20.06.1	<b>MINUTES</b>
RKEC20.06.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2019, noting that the meeting scheduled for 29 January 2020 was rescheduled as a Research and Enterprise Strategy Away Day, and the meeting scheduled for 1 April 2020 was cancelled (Covid-19).
RKEC20.06.2	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>
RKEC20.06.2.1	All actions had been completed.
<b>STANDING AGENDA ITEMS</b>	
RKEC20.06.3	<b>REF2021 Update</b>
RKEC20.06.3.1	The REF Manager reported that the exercise had officially been put on hold from 24 March to 31 July 2020. Following a short consultation exercise a revised deadline of 31 March 2021 had been confirmed, with an extended assessment period for impact (1 August 2013 to 31 December 2020). Any further changes to the REF guidance would be confirmed by 31 July 2020.

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RKEC20.06.3.2	UWE preparations were continuing. Some impacts of Covid-19 were anticipated but these were not expected to be great, so the original internal timetable would largely be retained. The census date for staff remained at 31 July 2020. To date some 3500 outputs had been reviewed and almost all staff were now aware of their REF status in terms of significant responsibility for research. There had been an increase of 25% in staff numbers overall, with in the region of 950 individual outputs to be submitted (representing the outputs of around 400 staff). Additionally, 13 environment statements for the UOAs plus an institutional statement would be required, together with 41 impact case studies. It was hoped that these documents would be prepared by Christmas with an internal deadline for impact case studies of 18 December. There would be significant technical work to be done thereafter ahead of the submission at the end of March.
RKEC20.06.3.3	There remained a fair amount of work still to be done on impact evidence collection and on the environment statements.
RKEC20.06.4	<b>Business Engagement and Enterprise Update</b>
RKEC20.06.4.1	The Director of RBI provided an update on activity both nationally and locally.
RKEC20.06.4.2	Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). Following a 2-year pilot, submissions were due in October. There had been some delay which had resulted in a little more time available to prepare the narratives. Results were due to be published in December. The outcomes would drive HEIF allocations going forwards.
RKEC20.06.4.3	The Knowledge Exchange Concordat had re-emerged, with the intention of professionalising HEIs' interaction beyond academe. UWE would need to sign up to this and provide evidence of activity. Submission was expected to be in early 2021.
RKEC20.06.4.4	HEIF remained under review, with the first stage of the review now completed. It was hoped that this would result in an increase in funding for the sector to engage with their communities.
RKEC20.06.4.5	Locally UWE had worked closely with WECA. A task force was being set up to review the disruption caused by Covid-19 and this was due to report in September/October. The University expected to be well placed to see how it may be able to support this.
RKEC20.06.4.6	A Digital Innovation Fund had been launched, comprising recovery grants worth a total of £1M and available to SMEs in the region for the digitalisation of their services. This had been very well received in the city and enhanced the University's reputation. The (8 July) deadline may be extended if required, with outcomes concluded by the end of August.

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	These were competitively awarded EU funds from the European Regional Development Fund, but would no longer be available after Brexit. It was noted that UWE had worked with hundreds of SMEs across the region over recent years. In the wake of the pandemic there was no immediate prospect of the Government stepping in to replace this funding, as originally anticipated. Mrs John reported that similar schemes would run in Swindon and Wiltshire and in the Gloucester region at the beginning of next year. Anyone with local links, particularly with Swindon and Wilts, was asked to contact her.
RKEC20.06.4.7	At UWE the PIMS (replacing PASS) would be launched on 1 August, and would cover both pre- and post-award. Training sessions would be held and plenty of support would be available to help researchers with the new system.
RKEC20.06.4.8	VC Early Career Researcher Awards and VC Challenge Fund Awards had recently been made. Details were available on the intranet.
RKEC20.06.4.9	In RBI a Professional Development Programme for researchers was almost finalised and would be brought to the next meeting. An R&KE interactive calendar was in preparation, for piloting in July, and would include deadlines for funding schemes, key dates in the year, etc. This was being trialled with critical friends initially.
RKEC20.06.5	<b>Research update including the impact of Covid-19 on research and knowledge exchange, and recovery</b>
RKEC20.06.5.1	The Chair reported that lockdown had had a serious impact on a wide range of projects. He had worked closely with the Associate Deans to review the status of ongoing projects. Some had effectively completely stalled, some had been modified, some were continuing with changes, and some going ahead. The pandemic had had significant impacts across the University, and for PGR as well. UKRI and Research England had generally indicated that unfunded extensions would be permitted, with the possibility of funded extensions in some cases. The notifications to universities of QR and HEIF had been held up by the Government, but the Chair anticipated that, for both, the level of funding would be the same as in the current year, ie no increase, but equally no expectation of a decrease. Bringing forward a percentage of next year's QR had not proved helpful, as it has not been possible to spend on stalled projects, resulting in an overall underspend. He was currently trying to see what might be done to protect funds.
RKEC20.06.5.2	The University was understandably nervous about its finances for 2020-21 and going forwards thereafter, and was having to budget on a minimum shortfall of £25M. This was being addressed by the freeze in recruitment and on non-pay expenditure. At present student numbers were looking promising, but actual numbers would not be confirmed until later in the year. The Chair had to remain cautious about committing all QR but would confirm allocations when able, and he noted that the VC's internal research funding schemes had gone ahead

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	for 2020-21. Overall, while remaining cautious the situation appeared better at this stage than might have been anticipated.
RKEC20.06.5.3	The Chair advised the Committee that information was available on the intranet to help researchers navigate how to work in the Covid world. The University would continue to monitor the situation and would tailor the guidance accordingly alongside Government guidance. Any initial questions should be directed to Associate Deans.
RKEC20.06.5.4	Future Space and the University's laboratories were set to re-open from 29 June, all with Covid-secure measures in place, social distancing, etc.
RKEC20.06.5.5	The Chair confirmed that guidance on off-site working permitted some ecological surveying to go ahead. Researchers were required to complete an addendum to their risk assessment to explain how they have addressed issues raised by the pandemic to ensure Covid-secure working. These were being approved on a case by case basis. At this stage researchers were still not permitted to conduct face to face research on other people's premises.
RKEC20.06.5.6	Where UWE's KTP Associates are working on the premises of other employers, as with any UWE employees, it was necessary to ensure that Government advice is followed to make the workplace Covid-secure, and confirm that a local risk assessment has been carried out. UWE would require sight of that risk assessment, but would not carry out its own inspection. It was proposed that this be added to the guidance on the intranet. <b>Action PS</b>
RKEC20.06.5.7	The Chair reminded members that where projects have changed, been re-purposed or were researching off-site, they would need to go back through ethics approval process.
RKEC20.06.5.8	The Chair welcomed the suggestion from a member that some acknowledgment be made to researchers for having continued to pursue their research despite not having the same resources available. He noted that the University had demonstrated its commitment, for example in prioritising the opening of labs, but that he would try to find a suitable way to show appreciation to research staff for their hard work. It was pleasing to see that bidding had held up well through the period of lockdown. The University was moving quickly to make all buildings safe and Covid-secure. Although there would not be a flood of people back on campus, researchers would be part of the phasing.
RKEC20.06.6	<b>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT</b>
RKEC20.06.6.1	<b>Graduate School Sub-Committee Annual Assurance Report</b>
RKEC20.06.6.1.1	The Graduate School Director confirmed that the Sub-Committee had effectively discharged its business. He explained the need for 'force

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	<p>majeure' regulations during the early stages of Covid-19. All PGR processes had had to be moved online, including the final viva, and all was working well, indeed it had been possible to hold vivas which might otherwise have had to be delayed. Force majeure had also been applied for giving extensions to students, without the requirement – where Covid-related – to provide evidence, and remove the linkage with suspension of stipends. The University was matching UKRI advice for funded students, and working with other external funders to do the same. Nevertheless, there remained a fair number of students experiencing severe difficulties, so further challenges were anticipated. Professor Willey expressed his gratitude to the Graduate School staff for their hard work.</p> <p>On the question of any central funds for fees related to extensions, the Chair stated that faculties would generally be expected to absorb fees through waivers. He noted that some QR funding had had to be used and this would result in a reduction in the number of students to be funded in 2020-21.</p>
RKEC20.06.6.2	<b>Research Ethics Sub-Committee Annual Assurance Report</b>
RKEC20.06.6.2.1	<p>The Acting Chair of RESC presented the Sub-Committee's annual assurance report (paper RKEC20.06.04) and confirmed that the committee had discharged its responsibilities. Despite struggling without a chair for almost half of the year, there had been a lot of activity, and the committee was aware of what further work needed to be done.</p> <p>Professor Boddy reported that a permanent chair would be recruited in the near future and thanked Dr Woodley for looking after the Committee's business.</p>
RKEC20.06.6.3	<b>Human Tissue Sub-Committee Annual Assurance Report</b>
RKEC20.06.6.3.1	<p>The Chair of the HTSC, in presenting her annual assurance report (paper RKEC20.06.05) confirmed that it had performed its duties, added value, and discharged its responsibilities. She reported that three breaches had been identified, and all had been appropriately dealt with. The Committee was working hard to identify risk in the context of Covid-19. This was posing a lot of new problems, related to biological safety. In particular, it presented difficulties in bringing new tissue on site. This remains a work in progress, and for the time being no new tissue is permitted. A successful audit had been carried out.</p>
RKEC20.06.6.3.2	<p>Professor Conway reported that the committee still had concerns about its membership, and that it had not received the requested information from Academic Board on issues raised about the revised Terms of Reference. The Committee required protocols for appointing members, and was awaiting advice. She highlighted one issue in the Terms of Reference which required amendment to correct an error about quarterly reporting.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Professor Conway for her work with the HTSC.</p>

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RKEC20.06.6.4	<b>Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee Annual Assurance Report</b>
RKEC20.06.6.4.1	Professor Hancock, acting Chair of AWESC, formally thanked Dr Ellwood for his contribution to the work of the committee. He confirmed that the Sub-Committee had discharged its responsibilities, and expressed his thanks to the Research Governance team in RBI.
RKEC20.06.6.4.2	The Chair (AWESC) reported that there remained issues with the Terms of Reference and membership which needed resolution. These had been raised with colleagues in Academic Governance who had confirmed that the AWESC terms of reference should align with those of the other research governance sub-committees.
RKEC20.06.6.4.3	The Chair (AWESC) noted some highlights of the Sub-Committee's work during the year, in particular its work with Bristol Zoo, and the importance of maintaining this strong relationship. He reported that the Sub-Committee was extremely Covid aware, particularly in relation to bringing tissue on site and interaction between humans and animals on fieldwork.
RKEC20.06.6.4.4	The Committee noted the recommendations in the report. Professor Boddy thanked both Professor Hancock and Dr Ellwood for their contributions to AWESC and expressed his thanks to all of the Sub-Committees chairs and members and supporting RBI colleagues.
RKEC20.06.6.5	In summary, the Chair noted that all Sub-Committees had gone through the process of reviewing their activity during the year, and that this process had enabled them to demonstrate due governance. The Committee noted the comments of the three governance committees on seeking clarity on the matters raised earlier in the year, and this would be referred back to Academic Governance colleagues. <b>Action:</b> Chair
RKEC20.06.6.6	<b>RKEC Annual Assurance Report</b>
RKEC20.06.6.6.1	The Chair noted that the Committee's annual assurance report required further input based on the discussions around the Sub-Committees' reports. The report would be circulated to members shortly for comment prior to submission to Academic Board. <b>Action:</b> Chair and Officer
RKEC20.06.6.7	<b>GSSC - Appointment of External Examiners</b>
RKEC20.06.6.7.1	It was proposed that the approach to appointing PGR examiners should be amended in line with the Quality Code (2018) and taking into consideration practices across the PGR sector (paper RKEC 20.06.08). This had agreement from the Graduate School Sub-Committee and Research Degrees Award Board, and support from all faculties. By replacing the current 'tick box exercise' with a conflict of interest statement the GSSC was confident that the most appropriate examiners, with independent judgement, would be appointed. A further amendment sought to ensure that confidentiality of the content

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	of theses was respected during the examination process. The Committee approved the paper.
RKEC20.06.6.7.2	The Graduate School Director was asked whether the regulations had been adjusted to bring in line the arrangements for the appointment of examiners for candidates employed by the University and those who are not. He undertook to check and report back. <b>Action:</b> Graduate School Director
RKEC20.06.6.8	<b>GSSC - Amendments to PGR Academic Regulations and Procedures for 2020-2021</b>
RKEC20.06.6.8.1	It was proposed that some of the processes and practice put in place under 'force majeure' regulations to enable PGR programmes to continue despite Covid-19 restrictions should be incorporated into the core regulations, as they reflect a more flexible response to delivering accessible PGR provision in a digital landscape. These included, for example, permitting on-line vivas to take place in limited exceptional circumstances. The Graduate School Director noted in particular: 3.7 – additional point to address an issue that has caused some difficulty in recent years 8.1.4 – all external supervisors must now have completed supervisory training
RKEC20.06.6.8.2	It was proposed that the force majeure arrangements should be incorporated into the permanent regulations. For the progression examination, where it was not possible to undertake on a face-to-face basis this could be carried out online. Equally, by exception, a final viva could be conducted online, with the proviso that the Director of Studies must also 'attend' the viva (but not as part of the examining team). Currently the DoS has the option to attend.  The Committee was happy to approve these changes and thanked Professor Willey and the Graduate School staff.
RKEC20.06.7	<b>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</b>
RKEC20.06.7.1	<b>ACE Faculty RKE Committee Annual Reports</b>
RKEC20.06.7.1.1	Ms Edwards presented the ACE Faculty RKEC assurance report (paper RKEC20.06.10). She noted that the Committee was looking in particular to develop the EDI agenda across the piece and also to address the issue of student representation on the Committee.
RKEC20.06.7.2	<b>FBL Faculty RKE Committee Annual Reports</b>
RKEC20.06.7.2.1	Professor Kumar presented the FBL Faculty RKEC assurance report (paper RKEC20.06.11). He noted issues with one research sub-group but reported that these had been resolved. The FRKEC was working on aligning faculty and UWE strategies, and there were plans to establish a pedagogy-based research group.

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RKEC20.06.7.3	<b>FET Faculty RKE Committee Annual Reports</b>
RKEC20.06.7.3.1	Professor Hobbs confirmed that the FET FRKEC had discharged its responsibilities (paper RKEC20.06.12). She noted that the report template implied that the only purpose of committees is to make decisions, whilst FRKECs have a much wider and richer remit, providing an opportunity for all to be together in the room, sharing experience and very useful networking. The meetings provide an opportunity to disseminate research and impact, and many of the particularly useful aspects of the committee are not captured in the reporting. The Chair noted that while the Committees' terms of reference are set narrowly this should not constrain the activity of the committees, but recognised that the templates may preclude the opportunity to report on the more interesting research activity in faculties.
RKEC20.06.7.4	<b>HAS Faculty RKE Committee Annual Reports</b>
RKEC20.06.7.4.1	For HAS Professor Doran confirmed that the Committee had worked to its terms of reference, the assurance report would follow pending receipt of further information. She reflected on the importance of having a wide membership of the Committee as a conduit for research messages into departments and to relate activity other than research into the group.
	All reports were commended.
RKEC20.06.7.5	<b>External Bidding Details</b>
RKEC20.06.7.5.1	The Committee noted paper RKEC20.06.14, UWE research bidding August 2019-June 2020.
RKEC20.06.7.6	<b>Library Services Report</b>
RKEC20.06.7.6.1	Mrs Conway presented a Library update (paper RKEC20.06.15). Work was ongoing to make access to the campus libraries possible, recognising the demand for books. All digital resources were available and staff were looking into ways of making study spaces Covid-secure.
RKEC20.06.8	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>
RKEC20.06.8.1	There was no other business
	<b>DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS (Venues to be confirmed)</b>
	Wednesday 21 October 2020, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 20 January 2021, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 24 March 2021, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 16 June 2021, 14:00-16:30

## Actions

RKEC20.06.5.6	Ms Shelton to add guidance on working on the premises of other employers to the Covid guidance for researchers on the intranet.	PS
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RKEC20.06.6.5	The Chair to refer the request for clarity on the comments raised by the three governance committees on the revised Terms of Reference to Academic Governance colleagues	MB
RKEC20.06.6.6.1	Complete, circulate and submit RKEC annual assurance report	MB and AV
RKEC20.06.6.8	The Graduate School Director to confirm whether the regulations had been adjusted to bring in line the arrangements for the appointment of examiners for candidates employed by the University and those who are not.	NW