



Academic Board

## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 June 2021.

### Membership:

Present: Prof M Boddy (Chair), Prof R Bolden, L Brown, M Bruce-Roberts, A Conway, Prof O Doran, Dr S Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Prof D Evans, Dr D Greenham, Prof J Hancock, Prof D Harcourt, Prof C Hobbs, T John, Dr M Kirjavainen-Morgan, Dr S Klein, Prof V Kumar, Prof M Rose, N Rothwell-Warn, Prof M Smith, Prof N Willey, A Vaughton (Officer).

Apologies: A Chidinma Nnajofofor, Dr G Christopher, Prof A Coffey, Prof M Conway, A Geary, H Moyes, P Shelton,

In attendance: -

<b>MINUTES OF THE MEETING</b>	
RKEC21.06.1	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
RKEC21.06.1.1	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, including Melanie Bruce-Roberts to her first meeting representing Marketing and Communities.  Apologies were received from the SU President, Dr G Christopher, Prof A Coffey, Prof M Conway, A Geary, H Moyes and P Shelton.
RKEC21.06.2	<b>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</b>
RKEC21.06.2.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021 as a full and accurate record.
	<b>Matters arising</b>
RKEC21.06.2.2	RKEC21.03.5.2.2: The Chair to share the equalities data with the ASSG, and with Professor Olomolaiye and the Equality and Diversity group. The Chair confirmed that the REF and VC ECR equalities data would be presented to the Athena SWAN Steering Group on 19 July, and would be shared with the UWE EDI Group.

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RKEC21.06.2.3	RKEC21.03.5.2.4: The Officer to bring the full equalities data for the 2021/22 VC ECR round to the next meeting. Following the substantial increase in funds available to support these, thirty five awards had been made for 2021-22, a significant increase on previous years. Of the 50 applications received, 52% were from female members of staff and 48% from male staff, with 54% of awards made to female staff and 46% to male staff. The breakdown on ethnicity showed a doubling of the proportion of applications received (36% compared with the previous year, 18%) from ethnic minority staff, with 32% of the awards made to these applicants.
RKEC21.06.2.4	Overall there was a strong profile across all staff for this cohort (following two years when ethnic minority staff had been underrepresented). The information had been discussed by RSIG, and further interrogation of the data had identified that by extending the number of awards made, the number of successful female applicants had increased. A full breakdown of the equalities data would be brought to the next meeting. <b>Action:</b> Officer
RKEC21.06.2.4	Other actions were on the agenda for discussion at the meeting.
RKEC21.06.3	<b>STANDING AGENDA ITEMS</b>
RKEC21.06.3.1	<b>Chair's report</b>
RKEC21.06.3.1.1	The Chair reported that preliminary information on the Government's funding allocation to UKRI for 2021-22 was essentially good news, with the volume of funding maintained from this year and last, representing an uplift on previous years. One contentious area was ODA funded research which had been cut (despite being a manifesto pledge).
RKEC21.06.3.1.2	There would be a Public Spending Review in the autumn, but indications were that funding for R&D would be maintained, with the continued intention to achieve the average level of GDP for OECD countries. It had been good to learn that the Government planned to fully fund participation in Horizon Europe, and not to take this funding from the UKRI budget. It was not yet clear what the position would be on EU structural funds, an area in which UWE has been particularly successful in the past. There remained a great deal of uncertainty going forwards.
RKEC21.06.3.1.3	Professor Boddy had chaired a workshop for Research England on the next REF, considering many options for different approaches. While the general view of the group Professor Boddy had worked with was that the preferred option would be a simplified version of the current system, this did not fit with any of the options provided.

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RKEC21.06.3.2	<b>REF2021 Update</b>
RKEC21.06.3.2.1	The Chair reported that the REF Equality Impact Assessment had already been reviewed and signed off by REF SIG/RSIG and noted that there were some clear messages to take from the document. The University is required to produce this document and submit it to EDAP (the REF Equality and Diversity Advisory Panel) as part of our REF submission and universities are expected to publish their EIA as a matter of good practice. The EIA will not be assessed by EDAP, however the EIAs will be used to evaluate the overall effectiveness of the equality and diversity aspects of the REF at sector level, and lessons learned for the future.
RKEC21.06.3.2.2	The EIA had been developed in a two-stage process, firstly on the mock REF and subsequently on full submission. It followed the process outlined in the University's REF Code of Practice and met the requirements of the EDAP. The principal findings were all rather predictable, and all rather disappointing, although it is not possible to tell to what extent UWE's outcomes align to the rest of the sector. While male minority ethnic representation looked good, female minority ethnic representation was particularly disappointing. Looking, in comparison, at research inputs, such as specific initiatives, female and ethnic minority staff were successful in securing funding so it appeared that specific initiatives did not appear to be driving entry to the REF.
RKEC21.06.3.2.3	Professor Hobbs, (former) Co-chair of the Athena Swan Steering Group noted her disappointment, particularly at the data around gender, given the action taken on Athena Swan since the previous submission (REF2014). It was a shame not to have made more progress, and in a sense was not important how the rest of the sector looks. She noted that it was useful to have the data, and to share this with colleagues. It would be highlighted to other relevant groups including to the PVC Equalities and Civic Engagement and the Head of EDI.
RKEC21.06.3.2.4	Members shared their comments on the report. The main issue for women is generally time, with women still commonly principal carers, often working part-time, and therefore unable to devote as much time to their research. These data would be shared with faculty executives, with a view to considering them in the context of research strategy implementation plans, and linking to staff development and planning. It was hoped that mitigation strategies would be considered for the issues specifically raised about women researchers and the damage done by Covid. The opportunity to recognise these issues and potential mitigations in the current promotion round was welcomed. The Co-Chair of the WRMS noted that more data would be available in the summer on the experience of Covid working. Taken all in, this would provide an opportunity for bringing together all of this data, and thinking about how we might re-gain the lost time.

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RKEC21.06.3.2.5	The Chair summarised by noting some concern over the extent to which the University's initiatives can leverage changes in gender and ethnic minority representation in exercises such as the REF, in the context of other cultural issues, childcare, career breaks, etc which impede women's progress. It would be important to ensure that the new initiatives continue to focus on equalities issues and are resourced in line with our goals. Consideration would need to be given to determining if positive action may be appropriate. Data presented to RSIG had shown that the WRMS had been effective in involving people, but did not appear to have shifted the position of women researchers, and this might merit further discussion.
RKEC21.06.3.2.6	The Chair proposed that the information be shared widely, working with colleagues in EDI to determine which gaps we should/can address, and how. He noted that one area for some optimism was the allocation of research resources to female and minority ethnic staff, which was looking positive, and would hopefully be a foundation for improvement going forwards.
RKEC21.06.3.3	<b>Business Engagement and Enterprise Update</b>
RKEC21.06.3.3.1	The Director of RBI reported that the University would be continuing to run some business engagement programmes until July 2023, and had submitted bids to WECA for innovation and skills programmes around sustainability and growth, an area in which UWE has considerable strength. Work was ongoing to develop the Enterprise Zone, to coincide with Oxford Innovation's contract coming to an end, with a re-shaped Launchspace and enhanced graduate incubator. There were exciting growth plans including an expansion of the innovation centre, together with CFPR's imminent move from the City Campus to W block at Frenchay.
RKEC21.06.3.3.2	The University's 5-year plan for HEIF had been submitted. Mrs John noted that reporting arrangements for HEIF were changing with additional supporting information required.
RKEC21.06.4	<b>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL</b>
RKEC21.06.4.1	<b>RKEC Annual Assurance Report 2020-21</b>
RKEC21.06.4.1.1	The Chair presented the Committee's annual assurance report (paper RKEC21.06.02). He noted the results of the effectiveness survey were generally very positive. A number of recommendations were included around committee working during and after the pandemic and the increased use of starred items to free up meeting space for discussion. One minor error was noted for correction (page 6, May 2021 should read May 2022), and the report was commended to Academic Board. <b>Action:</b> Chair/Officer

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RKEC21.06.4.2	<b>RESC/UWE policy on not accepting funding from the tobacco industry</b>
RKEC21.06.4.2.1	The Chair of the RESC presented paper RKEC21.06.03, UWE/RESC policy on not accepting funding from the tobacco industry. He explained that this had been prompted by a specific issue, but had highlighted that the University has no formal policy. Many other HEIs appeared to be in the same position, but the University of Bristol has a clear formal policy and following discussion at its meeting in May the RESC agreed that it would be helpful for UWE to adopt a formal position. There were very clear grounds for coming to this opinion: the strong narrative of a long history of issues around research funded by the tobacco industry; the likelihood that some funders would not be prepared to fund UWE if we were to accept funding from the tobacco industry; the danger of reputational risk. Professor Evans encouraged the Committee to endorse the decision of the RESC and recommend acceptance by Academic Board.
RKEC21.06.4.2.2	Members fully supported the RESC Chair's proposal, agreeing that it was critical for the University to have a formal written position. They further asked whether UWE had policies on accepting funds from other sensitive industries, eg alcohol, gambling, and the arms industry, or other international funding which might be viewed as unethical. It was confirmed that this is not currently the case and should be considered. Funding from the tobacco industry was generally accepted as a well-proven case. Professor Evans proposed that a webinar be held to give colleagues the opportunity to discuss this matter and identify the issues, with a view to putting together a set of guidelines, accepting that the case may not be as clear-cut for other potential funders as it is for tobacco because there are a lot of grey areas, and a wide range of stakeholders. Members agreed that clarity on this would be very helpful.
RKEC21.06.4.2.3	The Chair noted that it was interesting that no reference had been made to the damage to health from tobacco; this was taken as read. He stated that individual cases relating to funding from companies from which the University may have issues could be referred to the Governors, but he was not aware that that route had been used to date, and the process for doing this should be clarified. He thanked Professor Evans for this work and welcomed the proposed action to identify further areas to be addressed. Members agreed that the proposal should be approved and forwarded to Academic Board. <b>Action:</b> RESC Chair/Officer
RKEC21.06.4.3	<b>Graduate School: Proposed Amendments to PGR Processes and Regulations for 2021/22</b>
RKEC21.06.4.3.1	The Graduate School Director presented paper RKEC21.06.04 comprising: Mandating the deposition of doctoral research data on

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	UWE data repository; Examining arrangements for staff candidates; Changes to Final assessment arrangements; Amendments to PGR regulations for 21/22. He noted the need for a lot of changes due to Covid, but stressed the importance of ensuring that regulations are fit for purpose.
RKEC21.06.4.3.2	Members welcomed the mandating of the deposition of doctoral research data on the UWE data repository and the proposed alignment of examination arrangements for staff candidates on UWE doctoral awards. They noted the opportunity for doctoral students to express their preference to have their viva either online or face-to-face (where possible) to give them the best chance to meet the award criteria, this would apply equally to progression exams. The supervisor will be responsible for identifying the examining team so will ultimately determine the team of examiners, but will use best endeavours to meet the candidate's needs and preferences. Permitting online examining is likely to open up the available pool of examiners, particularly from overseas. The Graduate School Director confirmed that candidates are no longer required to provide hard copies of theses, but in the event that an examiner wishes to have a hard copy, this will be provided by the Graduate School. He further confirmed that the force majeure regulations remained available should they be required.
RKEC21.06.4.3.3	One member flagged the importance of a student's welfare in the event that they are examined remotely, have an unexpected result and are not supported, for example if a vulnerable student were to fail. The examining team would need to be aware of this possibility. Professor Willey acknowledged that need for this to be considered, and the issue of gauging who may be vulnerable. It was suggested that this should be included in the guidelines for independent chairs and taken offline.
RKEC21.06.4.3.4	All of the proposed amendments appeared to be sensible and the Committee approved the proposals in papers a – c, approved the procedural amendments relating to them, and endorsed all regulatory amendments for onward submission to Academic Board for final approval. <b>Action:</b> Graduate School Director
RKEC21.06.5	<b>ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION</b>
RKEC21.06.5.1	<b>Supporting Research Excellence 2021-22 - update</b>
RKEC21.06.5.1.1	The Chair presented paper RKEC21.06.05, an update on taking forward the research strategy. The measures detailed in the paper were intended to support the longer-term shift in research excellence through investment. There had been much debate and discussion, and there was a sense that the University has matured and is increasingly confident. Teaching and Learning were well established, and their

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	success demonstrated through TEF, league tables etc. The institution was financially strong.
RKEC21.06.5.1.2	<p>Having established a strong research trajectory, with external income up year-on-year, PGR completions rising, numbers of staff included in REF 2021 well up on REF2014, and planned to double for the next submission, the following progress on new initiatives was reported:</p> <p><b>Recruitment of L/SL staff</b> – the goal was to increase the number of staff with a research track record and potential, as the key to expanding the volume of colleagues with quality outputs and impact.</p> <p><b>Research Accelerator Programme</b> - this was to be harmonised across all faculties, (the equivalent of mid-career support) with cohorts of individuals in each faculty, and allocated over 2 years.</p> <p><b>Bursaries</b> – numbers doubling, and supported with QR funds. These would largely be for partnership PhDs. The scheme was working very well to date. The Chair noted that if colleagues were successful in winning a bid of £0.5M or more a fully funded PhD studentship would be allocated by the University.</p> <p><b>Professors and Associate Professors</b> – The roles of Professors and Associate Professors were to be re-set, with the expectation that they will be research leaders, leading by example and supporting less experienced colleagues. Leadership programmes were being developed, and an increased workload bundle allocation for Associate Professors who sign up to the programme. The intention was to start this from January rather than August to be able to get the necessary mechanisms in place. The Chair noted that it would still be a difficult year, and this would give Departments some leeway with teaching etc. The additional workload allocations for Associate Professors had not yet been finally decided but was likely to go ahead. Professor Boddy confirmed that, assuming agreed, the allocation of additional time for Associate Professors would be standardised across all faculties, and all Executive Deans had favoured the delayed start.</p> <p><b>Expanding research excellence (ERE)</b> – these would be large interdisciplinary programmes led by an established PI, to include staff at all stages of their careers, and building on the Challenge Fund. It was hoped that the process would be made as lightweight as possible.</p>
RKEC21.06.5.1.3	The Chair stated that all QR funds would directly support research, ie none to be held back as was the case when the pandemic began. The resource envelope was looking fairly healthy.
RKEC21.06.6	<b>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</b>
RKEC21.06.6.1	<b>PwC Internal Audit Report 2020/21: Research Governance Review</b>

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RKEC21.06.6.1.1	This report (paper RKEC20.06.06) had been commissioned to review current research governance practices. The report identified some areas where good processes are in place, but some areas for improvement, many relating to taught student research. All areas of concern were being addressed, by the Chair, the Director of RBI and the Chair of RESC.
RKEC21.06.6.1.2	The outcomes had spurred thinking on improving accessibility. There was a degree of concern that some students may be undertaking research where governance processes should be in place but a gap has been identified. The Chair welcomed the DVC (in her role as Chair of LTSEC) taking up the recommendations relating to taught students conducting research. The report had been reported to Governors and all was in hand.
RKEC21.06.6.2	<b>Sub-Committee Annual Assurance Reports and Updates</b>
RKEC21.06.6.2.1	The following annual assurance reports were received by the Committee:
RKEC21.06.6.2.2	Graduate School Sub-Committee (paper RKEC21.06.07) – Professor Willey reported that online working had been very successful during the reporting year. He had no issues to raise.
RKEC21.06.6.2.3	Research Ethics Sub-Committee (paper RKEC21.06.08) – Professor Evans stated that the Faculty Research Ethics Committees had struggled with workload and were not consistently meeting target deadlines. Further efforts were needed to try to streamline processes, and systems elsewhere were being looked into to see if better ways of working could be discovered. The aim was to reduce workload and improve timescales. The Chair (RKEC) asked the Chair (RESC) to make a small amendment to the report to flag this. <b>Action:</b> RESC Chair
RKEC21.06.6.2.4	Animal Welfare and Ethics Committee (paper RKEC21.06.09) – Professor Hancock had no further issues to raise.
RKEC21.06.6.2.5	Human Tissue Sub-Committee (paper RKEC21.06.10). Professor Conway was not able to attend the meeting but had indicated that she would be happy to take any comments on this report by email.
RKEC21.06.6.2.6	The Chair noted that all reports were very clear and well set out and thanked the authors. The reports were confirmed by the Committee.
RKEC21.06.6.3	<b>Faculty Research Updates</b>



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RKEC21.06.6.3.1	The Chair thanked the Associate Deans and Directors of Research for their faculty updates (papers RKEC21.06.11-14) and noted the strong content in each.
	<b>Library Services Report</b>
RKEC21.06.6.1.1	The Chair thanked Mrs Conway for her report.
RKEC21.06.6.1.2	<b>External Bidding Details</b>
	The Chair reported that Rachael Fleetwood was looking to put together a single enhanced reporting structure. The present report continued to show a healthy picture.
RKEC21.06.7	<b>HEALTH AND SAFETY</b>
RKEC21.06.7.1	Laboratories continued to be Covid-secure with colleagues having returned to safe working. No issues were raised by members.
RKEC21.06.8	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>
RKEC21.06.8.1	There was no other business.
	<b>DATES OF MEETINGS 2021-22</b> Wednesday 20 October 2021, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 19 January 2022, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 30 March 2022, 14:00-16:30 Wednesday 15 June 2022, 14:00-16:30

## Actions

RKEC21.06.2.4	Full VC ECR equalities data to be brought to the next meeting	Officer
RKEC21.06.4.1.1	RKEC Annual assurance report to be submitted to Academic Board	Chair/Officer
RKEC21.06.4.2.3	The proposal on not accepting funding from tobacco companies to be forwarded to Academic Board.	RESC Chair/Officer
RKEC21.06.4.3.4	Graduate School proposed amendments: endorsed for onward submission to Academic Board	Graduate School Director
RKEC21.06.6.2.3	The Chair of RESC to amend the RESC Annual Assurance Report to flag the issues raised in the meeting.	RESC Chair