



**RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE**

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023 in 7X111 in the VCO Board Room.

**Present:** Prof. J Lamond (Acting Chair), Prof. O Doran, Prof. J Hancock, F Abdul Kareem, Dr H Lewis-Smith, Prof. D Sinnett, P Shelton, Prof. R Thorn

**In attendance:** A Conway, T John (Secretary), G Oaten (Officer)

**Apologies:** Prof. A Coffey, Prof. F Cramp, Dr L Duong, Prof. R Granger, Prof. J Green, Prof. D Greenham, H Hickman, O Okeyoyin, Prof. N Quenivet

<b>RKEC.23.11.1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
RKEC.23.11.1.1	Apologies for absence were noted.
<b>RKEC.23.11.2</b>	<b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b>
<b>RKEC.23.11.2.1</b>	<b>Previous minutes</b> <i>Paper RKEC.23.11.1 was received.</i>
RKEC.23.11.2.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2023.
<b>RKEC.23.11.2.2</b>	<b>Action sheet and matters arising</b> <i>Paper RKEC.23.11.2 was received</i>
RKEC.23.11.2.2.1	The Secretary drew attention to the ongoing actions from the sheet. Members provided updates on the actions that had progressed since the last meeting.
RKEC.23.11.2.2.2	<u>Action RKEC.23.06.4.1.1</u> The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) confirmed that a meeting would be held with the Chief People Officer in January.
RKEC.23.11.2.2.3	<u>Action RKEC.23.09.2.2.2</u> The Chair of UEIC confirmed that this action is ongoing, with RKEC items being shared at UEIC, as well as the research risk register being brought to every UEIC meeting.

**RKEC.23.11.3 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS****RKEC.23.11.3.1 Research and knowledge exchange KPIs**

*Papers RKEC.23.11.3–5 were received.*

RKEC.23.11.3.1.1 The Secretary gave a verbal update on key KPIs, highlighting that:

1. Overall, the success rate of bids has climbed. This merits investigation of whether this is due mostly to higher-quality and larger-value bids or whether there is more success with smaller bids at a higher quantity.
2. It should not be assumed that the bid success rates are similar from year to year, and noted that there is not necessarily a relationship between income and bid success.

RKEC.23.11.3.1.2 In discussion, members commented that:

1. The goal for bid revenue by 2030 is likely to be ambitious. Due to the impact of COVID and restructuring at UWE, it is likely that the University is beginning from a lower baseline than originally expected while the strategy was under development. Members discussed at length whether this goal is achievable and posed concerns about the viability of meeting this.
2. It would be beneficial to get a breakdown of what bids are successful and whether there is any correlation between those that are and are not successful. It was agreed that mapping and monitoring of bids and their success would be useful for reporting to the group.
3. Members discussed the feasibility of aiming to achieve £32m in research income by 2030, noting that this target puts significant pressure on RBI staff. The objective of doubling research income does not adequately consider the resources required of PIs and supporting staff.
4. It would be helpful to use data on upcoming bids and schemes within the College to determine a pipeline estimate for the total number of bids expected, providing a more joined-up approach to managing the demand for resources.
5. Members agreed that the Secretary, along with the Senior Business Intelligence Analyst, would carry out an analysis of successful bids by funder type, to determine how much confidence RKEC ought to have in the ability to meet the 2030 ambition, and to evaluate where the demand for resources might be.

**[ACTION: Secretary and Senior Business Intelligence Analyst to carry out analysis of successful bids by funder type.]**

HEIF

RKEC.23.11.3.1.3 The Secretary gave a brief update on the HEIF work. Members reiterated the need to be cautious in target-setting for research income, due to the significant turnaround time for research bids.

**RKEC.23.11.3.2 \*College research updates**

*Papers RKEC.23.11.6–8 were received.*

RKEC.23.11.3.2.1 Members noted the reports for information.

**RKEC.23.11.4 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**RKEC.23.11.4.1 Doctoral Academy update**

*Papers RKEC.23.11.9–10 were received.*

RKEC.23.11.4.1.1 The Secretary and Head of Library, Research, Performance, and Internal Comms gave a verbal update and drew the Committee’s attention to the paper, highlighting that:

1. Recent survey feedback has identified the need for PGR working space across the university.
2. The library is beginning a new program of refurbishment and has been undertaking consultations with the stakeholders of the university including PGR students. Some of the feedback is not necessarily appropriate for the library work but should be considered more widely within the University.
3. PGR students reported that feel they need a PGR working space that can be used for confidential work, discussions, and meetings. PGRs reported they feel that they need a dedicated space for a PGR community to build up and to prevent students from feeling isolated from the rest of the University community.

RKEC.23.11.4.1.2 In discussion, members commented that:

1. The feedback from this survey is consistent with PGR surveys conducted within the Colleges.
2. Members noted a tendency to treat PGR students differently from undergraduate students, sometimes expecting them to act as staff, but without providing them with the benefits of being staff.
3. The wider University should look to embed PhD students as members of staff, and this should start through better integration at the School and College levels.
4. RKEC should raise these concerns within an appropriate forum; the College Deans of Research will take this to their respective College boards.

**[ACTION: College Deans of Research to investigate how PhD students can be more widely embedded into the University through the Schools and Colleges]**

**RKEC.23.11.4.2 Researcher Concordat update**

*Papers RKEC.23.11.17–18 were received.*

RKEC.23.11.4.2.1 The Secretary gave an update on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, including analysis of UWE's current position against the expectations of Concordat signatories and any gaps.

RKEC.23.11.4.2.2 Members heard that:

1. There is further work to be undertaken to finalise where the biggest gaps are before a recommendation on becoming a signatory of the Researcher Concordat can be brought to RKEC.
2. Many Universities have framed the Concordat as good practice for all researchers; however, before signing the agreement, there are expected to be key challenges that may take longer to address.

RKEC.23.11.4.2.3 In discussion, members:

1. Highlighted concerns that the Concordat requires ten days of training annually, which may cause issues with funding and commitments for externally funded researchers. It was agreed that further clarification on the extent of training requirements would be beneficial (for example, whether CPD would contribute towards it or whether formal training days are required).
2. Agreed that the Secretary would provide a full gap analysis in February, indicating options to meet the Concordat principles and mitigation if it later transpires that the University is unable to commit to them. Members agreed to have a full discussion on this in February.

**[ACTION: Secretary]**

**RKEC.23.11.4.3 Research Excellence Group (REG) update (including REF preparation work)**

*Papers RKEC.23.11.11–13 were received.*

RKEC.23.11.4.3.1 The Acting Chair highlighted key updates from the recent REG meeting, noting that a REF Manager has been appointed; this is followed by a new role as the Head of Impact and Engagement, which is currently being advertised.

RKEC.23.11.4.3.2 The Secretary noted that as part of the environment component of the REF, and also to support the Researcher Concordat, there is a need to measure and evidence how engaged researchers are. HR is currently working with an external survey provider to conduct a pulse survey of researchers in January 2024.

RKEC.23.11.4.3.3 Members commented that:

1. The response rate and positivity of responses may be low at that time of year due to burnout and return after the festive break. Members suggested it may be better to postpone the survey until the Spring.
2. It may be valuable to investigate whether the survey could be created and delivered internally rather than by an external company.

RKEC.23.11.4.3.4 Members agreed to continue the discussion after the meeting to decide on whether to conduct the survey in January.

**[ACTION: Secretary to liaise with HR on survey roll-out.]**

**RKEC.23.11.4.4 UEIC update**

RKEC.23.11.4.4.1 The Chair of UEIC provided a verbal update, highlighting:

1. Establishment of a transition group that will oversee the transition from Faculty Research Ethics Committees to a Colleges- and Schools-based framework.
2. The new Conflict of Interest Policy, which was endorsed for onward approval by the Vice-Chancellor's executive.
3. A presentation from the Head of Health and Safety on how UEIC can support health and safety, including aspects that would need to be brought to UEIC.
4. Verbal reports from the sub-committees (Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee and Human Tissue Sub-Committee); written reports are to be provided to UEIC at their next meeting on 5 March 2024.

**RKEC.23.11.5 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**RKEC.23.11.5.1 EDI in Research Working Group outcomes**

*Paper RKEC.23.11.19 was received.*

RKEC.23.11.5.1.1 The College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CHSS) provided an update, noting that:

1. The EDI group has established three workstreams (Pathways and Progression, PGR and Research Practice) and developed action plans for each, with their own subgroups for monitoring and ensuring effective outcomes.

2. Activities planned for EDI in Research Practice (incorporating EDI into research) include ensuring EDI is reflected on in every grant application.
3. EDI is not prominent nor explicit in the Research Beacons; moving forward there should be a statement on the University's ambition to incorporate EDI into ways of working.

RKEC.23.11.5.1.2 Members discussed:

1. Next steps to be set out for the group, which established for one year and is therefore due to be dissolved in February. There is a need to discuss whether the group will continue or if its activities will become part of RKEC business going forward.
2. The need to produce a set of recommendations on EDI in research from the working group before it is either closed out or continued.

**[ACTION: College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CHSS) to consider developing a set of recommendations.]**

**RKEC.23.11.5.2 Internal investment schemes**

*Paper RKEC.23.11.14 was received.*

RKEC.23.11.5.2.1 The Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services provided an update to the group, noting that:

1. The schemes this year are intended to achieve wider engagement from a more diverse range of staff. They have been evaluated and improved to ensure that they are suitable for different career areas.
2. The Engagement and Impact Fund pilot has been designed to support engagement and develop impact from UWE Bristol-based research, building on the experience of the AHRC IAA and ICE schemes. It will support a range of activities including the development of sustained partnerships and exploring commercial opportunities for UWE Bristol-based research. It is an open scheme and applicants can apply for up to £20,000 to support their individual requirements.
3. The focus in promoting this year's schemes will be for individuals to consider all opportunities available, including the complementary Invest in Yourself: Researcher Skills Development Programme. This scheme will involve individuals working with their line manager or Centre Directors to ensure they are accessing the support needed for their relevant research stage and research goals.

RKEC.23.11.5.2.2 In the discussion, members commented on:

1. How the schemes would support different groups within the University more widely, commenting that schemes could be incorporated earlier in the year. It was acknowledged that evaluation of emerging patterns among those engaging with them is necessary.
2. How cost codes, budgetary implications and financial backing for the work will be processed and how Colleges will be expected to manage these.
3. The schemes' potential impact on workloads. Members recognised it is good practice to improve researcher skills at all career stages; however, concerns were raised about how the time to engage with the schemes would be protected in practice and how the time would be monitored effectively. Members indicated that while line managers may be likely to sign off on investment scheme involvement, in practice, the time required might not materialise or due to competing demands the scheme work might get overlooked.

RKEC.23.11.5.2.3 Members agreed on the need for robust monitoring within their respective Schools and Colleges to ensure that both the individual and their manager are accountable, therefore ensuring that the investment is being delivered effectively.  
**[ACTION: Secretary to review and report on monitoring of central investment schemes; College Deans of Research and Enterprise to conduct the same for College schemes.]**

**RKEC.23.11.5.3 Centre reviews**  
*Paper RKEC.23.11.15–16 was received.*

RKEC.23.11.5.3.1 The College Deans of Research and Enterprise gave an overview highlighting key factors of the centre reviews that RKEC should note. All of the colleges have undertaken a review of their research centres as a part of the college ecosystem evaluation. Members were assured that the centre reviews appeared to be on track to meet their purpose.

**RKEC.23.11.6 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

- RKEC.23.11.6.1 Next meeting dates for academic year 2023/24:
- Wednesday 21 February 2024
  - Wednesday 1 May 2024
  - Wednesday 19 June 2024