



Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020.

Membership:

Present: Prof M Boddy (Chair), Prof R Bolden, R Bond, A Chidinma Nnajofofor, Prof A Coffey, A Conway, Prof M Conway, Prof O Doran, Dr S Dragojlovic-Oliveira, H Edwards, A Geary, Prof J Hancock, Prof D Harcourt, Prof C Hobbs, T John, V Jones, Dr M Kirjavainen-Morgan, Dr Susanne Klein, Prof V Kumar, Prof M Rose, P Shelton, Prof M Smith, Prof N Willey, Dr J Woodley, A Vaughton (Officer).

Apologies: Dr G Christopher, H Moyes

In attendance: -

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
RKEC20.10.1.1	The Chair welcomed the SU President, Augusta Chidinma Nnajofofor, to the Committee; Andy Geary as the new representative of technical staff; Dr Susanne Klein as a co-opted member, and the DVC to her first meeting of the Committee. He noted that the Officer was currently working with the Student Union Representation Manager to recruit PGR representatives to this Committee (and to other committees) and that there remained a vacancy for the role of FBL research active representative.
RKEC20.10.2	TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP
RKEC20.10.2.1	The Committee confirmed its Terms of Reference (paper RKEC20.10.01). It was noted that some minor changes had been made as a result of the new arrangements for strategy oversight agreed over the summer, and these changes had already been agreed by Chair's action and signed off by the VC.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.2.2	<p>In the light of events in the summer and the Black Lives Matter movement the issue was raised of the extent to which this Committee and research at UWE in general reflected the diversity of the community. The Chair agreed on the importance of this point and reported that EDI was being looked at centrally through the use of a toolkit which was examining representation on groups, including committees. It was imperative that this go beyond committee membership, and would require input from all constituencies and would need to inform all research conducted at UWE. He proposed that this item be discussed at the next meeting of the Committee, including a review of the toolkit and a compendium of data. It was noted that discussions on this were already taking place in faculties.</p> <p>Action: Agenda item for meeting on 20 January 2021.</p>
RKEC20.10.3	BUSINESS PLAN
RKEC20.10.3.1	<p>Paper RKEC20.10.02 set out the key business for the Committee over the coming year. This included establishing a group to develop an implementation plan for the Community and Business Engagement strategy. The Chair explained that this strategy had a much broader remit than the Research strategy and would involve other areas of the University. It was important for faculties to consider where their responsibilities lay in the context of the Community and Business Engagement strategy.</p>
RKEC20.10.3.2	<p>The Officer was asked to update the Business Plan to provide a clear timetable for reporting from sub groups such as the Athena SWAN Steering Group's annual report to the Committee.</p> <p>Action: Officer</p>
RKEC20.10.4	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
RKEC20.10.4.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2020.
	Matters arising
RKEC20.10.4.2	<p>RKEC20.06.6.5 – The Chairs of the Governance Committees had asked for clarity on the comments raised by their committees on the revised Terms of Reference. The Chair stated that he had reported this back to Academic Governance colleagues but it was felt that the issues had been addressed and this matter should now be considered closed.</p>
RKEC20.10.4.3	<p>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. The Graduate School Director reported that a paper, proposing this, was due to be discussed at the next meeting of the Graduate School Sub-Committee.</p>

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.5	STANDING AGENDA ITEMS
RKEC20.10.5.1	REF2021 Update
RKEC20.10.5.1.1	The REF Manager presented paper RKEC20.10.03. This paper had already been submitted to Governors and to the SPPC. The census date for REF2021 had now passed (31 July 2020) with the submission date now pushed to the end of March 2021 (from 27 November 2020) because of the pandemic. At the census date the University had 400 staff with significant responsibility for research, and therefore for whom research outputs were to be submitted. This number represented an increase of 25% on the number of staff submitted to REF2014, and reflected both the changes to the rules for inclusion and the growth in research activity in the University. The University's submission would therefore comprise around 900 research outputs and 41 impact case studies for 13 units of assessment (UOAs). This was a smaller number of submissions in comparison with REF2014, although the submissions were generally larger, reflecting the University's concentration on areas of strength.
RKEC20.10.5.1.2	The predicted outcomes for the exercise were looking favourable, however these must be considered with caution. There appeared to be an increase in the number of 3* and 4* research outputs, but no way of knowing the extent to which this might also be replicated in the rest of the sector. This did however reflect the greater selectivity presented by submitting between one and five outputs per person. Predicted scores for impact case studies were even more difficult to predict but overall there appeared to be an increase in quality. Again, this may be mirrored across the sector. Income generation across the census period showed a reasonably healthy increase, and PGR completions had remained steady.
RKEC20.10.5.1.3	The revised timetable for completing the exercise was presented. It was hoped that work relating to the selection of outputs and provisional final drafts of environment templates and impact case studies would be completed before Christmas. Thereafter significant work would be required by the REF team in RBI to prepare the content for submission on the REF system.
RKEC20.10.5.1.4	The Chair noted that Table 1 demonstrated that staff FTEs had increased as well as the overall headcount, and that mean scores had also risen. These were best estimates, but subject to other factors. Ultimately the question was whether UWE might overtake other HEIs on the 'escalator', and UWE's research 'power' which would drive QR allocations from 2022.
RKEC20.10.5.1.5	The Board of Governors had been pleased to know that the submission was on course, and were interested to know about the strategy for engaging with the exercise going forwards.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.5.2	Business Engagement and Enterprise Update
RKEC20.10.5.2.1	The Director of RBI reported that the KEF Public and Community Engagement Narrative and Local Growth and Regeneration Narratives (available to members on the SharePoint site) had been submitted the previous week. These were commentaries alongside the data already provided, were optional but provided a context for the data and an opportunity to capture what the metrics cannot show. She noted that the tight wordcounts had meant that a lot of activity could not be included. The results of the exercise would be published in a few months' time, at which point the University would be in a position to compare its activity with other HEIs in the cluster.
RKEC20.10.5.2.2	Ongoing and recent activity in RBI included the Digital Innovation Fund, Scale Up 4 Growth Gloucestershire and Swindon and Wiltshire I4G. An expression of interest had been submitted by CAR to the ESRC Centres Competition.
RKEC20.10.5.2.3	Mrs John thanked members for engaging with PIMS. She reported that there were still issues to address in RBI but that good progress was being made with the system. Quite an increase in bidding was being seen, but this was the case across the sector, includes for tenders.
RKEC20.10.5.2.4	A review of research governance was currently being conducted by PwC. Mrs John thanked those who had indicated their willingness to be involved in the review and undertook to bring the report to this Committee. A further review of partnership PhDs was being conducted. This was a temporary pause only, and she encouraged members to ensure that development of these should not be halted.
RKEC20.10.5.2.5	Agreement had been reached with Marketing and ITS colleagues to begin a project to integrate and improve the University's research webpages. These would be complete by January and would be within the UWE website rather than as an adjacent micro-site.
RKEC20.10.5.2.6	Ahead of the early December deadline, requests would be sent to faculties to collect data for the HEBICIS submission. Members were asked to provide as much data and information as possible as this drives income.
RKEC20.10.6	ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
RKEC20.10.6.1	Professional Development Programme for Researchers
RKEC20.10.6.1.1	The Director of RBI presented paper RKEC20.10.04 on the Professional Development Programme for Researchers. She noted that there was good current provision for Early Career Researchers and PGR students, but that this should be broadened to meet the wider need for research

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
	active staff. The new programme aimed to provide action learning at all levels, delivered in a number of ways from bite-size to intensive boot camps. The programme aimed to target in particular the mid-career and established researchers. Some of the proposed activity was already being delivered while other was in planning. Members welcomed the recognition of the need for support and training throughout research careers. Mrs John acknowledged that the Researchers Forum did not yet have a clear fit to the programme and she would welcome any thoughts on how this might best be achieved.
RKEC20.10.6.1.2	The proposal to deliver some intensive 1:1 provision was particularly welcomed for some staff, along with increased availability of coaching support. At present some activity was programmed for the current year, but it would not be possible to deliver everything in the first year, and not desirable to offer the full programme every year. Timelines were still being worked on. RBI was working with the Learning and Development Centre to deliver the training, but equally looking to bring in external trainers where appropriate.
RKEC20.10.6.1.3	Professor Doran raised the issue of professional development for technical staff, many of whom are engaged in research. She acknowledged that not all were intent on pursuing a career in research, but that many would welcome the opportunity to do so. At present this cohort seemed to fall beyond current training schemes. Mrs John committed to reviewing this gap, including in relation to the Technicians Commitment. Action: Director of RBI
RKEC20.10.6.1.4	Members warmly welcomed the programme and suggested some thought might be given to a Professoriate Forum, development of the mentorship scheme for mid-career researchers working across faculties, and building in training on open access publishing to the publishing section.
RKEC20.10.6.1.5	The Chair thanked Dr Bond and her colleagues for their work on this initiative. Where requested the team would work with individual faculties to provide bespoke support.
RKEC20.10.6.2	UK Research and Development Roadmap
RKEC20.10.6.2.0	The Chair gave a short summary of the content of paper RKEC20.10.05. This was a very important document going forwards, effectively progressing the Industrial Strategy. The intention was to increase UK spend on R&D to match the European average, through generating significant funds from industry, but with an emphasis on universities and the private sector to deliver the strategy. Launched in the context of the economic impact of the pandemic, the key messages were around investment in new technology and cross-disciplinary issues, rather than blue skies research.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.6.2.2	In brief the roadmap represented a re-boot of the Industrial Strategy, with continuing flows of opportunities. It looked likely that EU Horizon funding would be replaced, but it was unclear if funding would be available to cover the regional development aspects of former EU funds. Overall the Chair was reasonably optimistic, and he encouraged members to follow the messaging from UKRI, UUK, etc and to keep an eye on the regular bulletins from RBI.
RKEC20.10.6.2.3	It was noted that one area in which UWE might struggle was the levelling-up agenda. To overcome this, academics might need to look further afield, where possible, and partner with colleagues from less affluent areas. Following the removal of impact pathways, the Government had announced that it plans to end the link between charter marks and research funding in a bid to reduce bureaucracy and to speed up the bidding/funding process. The roadmap should be viewed as at least as important as the Industrial Strategy. To be able to respond as quickly as possible it was good to have begun to put teams in place for joined-up, agile working. These might be organised around the beacons, or the sub-themes. It was important to anticipate where opportunities might present, and build on Challenge Fund activity. Members welcomed any opportunities to find out about the research of other academics in the University. While face to face networking was optimal, proxies for this such as the list of university-wide networks working with RBI were very helpful.
RKEC20.10.6.3	UWE Research Strategy and Community and Business Engagement Strategy - implementation
	The Chair reported that the UWE Research and Community and Business Engagement strategies had now been signed off by the Board of Governors, and it was now the time to move on to implementation. The Professional Development Programme discussed earlier in the meeting was one strand in implementation. Thought now needed to be given to the many different objectives and goals in the strategies and how these would be monitored. A number of events were planned to give staff the opportunity to feed into this process.
RKEC20.10.7	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
RKEC20.10.7.1	Research Governance Report
RKEC20.10.7.1.1	The Chair reported that the report (RKEC20.10.08) had been taken to and approved by Academic Board, and would be submitted to the Board of Governors as part of the University's assurance process.
RKEC20.10.7.2	Faculty Research Updates, Sub-Committee Updates, Library Services Report, External Bidding Details

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
RKEC20.10.7.2.1	The Chair noted that these reports contained a lot of information about research activity and successes in faculties and useful information from the sub-committees and the Library, and about current bidding activity. He hoped that members would read the detail in each.
RKEC20.10.7.2.	The FBL report included one particular item of note, relating to the closure of the Bristol Centre for Economics and Finance. Professor Kumar explained that the Centre was not functioning as well as it should, and a meeting had been held with all staff to discuss the position. As currently structured it was too broadly focussed and not serving the needs of the academics. It had been considered by Faculty Executive and agreed that it would be best to close the Centre and replace it with a number of research groups. Expressions of interest would be invited.
RKEC20.10.7.2.	The Chair welcomed the review of the Centre and the proposed way forward. He reminded members that the establishment of research groups are at the discretion of the faculties, but that it may be useful to run the criteria past this Committee (this might be done by email). This would provide an opportunity to ensure, through the criteria, that groups are cross-disciplinary and challenge-based.
RKEC20.10.7.2.	The Associate Deans (Research) for HAS and ACE (respectively) highlighted two additional items: the Department of Applied Sciences has been successful in its application for ATHENA SWAN Silver Award; Two Associate Professors, Dr Shawn Sobers and Ms Estella Tinknell, are members of the newly launched Bristol History Commission.
RKEC20.10.8	HEALTH AND SAFETY
RKEC20.10.8.1	The Chair noted the considerable efforts made by staff in the Health and Safety team and in Facilities to ensure that the University is a Covid-secure workplace in teaching rooms, laboratories, common areas, etc. He expressed his thanks to these members of staff. He reported that the University was now working to steer a path to enable research to commence and restart beyond the University campuses, within the restrictions imposed by the Government. This was a fast-changing landscape and any questions should be directed to the Associate Dean (Research) in the first instance and also to Philippa Shelton in RBI. It was to be hoped that as much research as possible could be facilitated in this way.
RKEC20.10.9	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
RKEC20.10.9.1	Dr Dragojlovic-Oliveira asked the Chair about the roles of the Faculty representatives on the Committee, stressing that she wanted to be an active member. The Chair acknowledged that this was an important question, and proposed that he discuss this with the Officer outside the

MINUTES OF THE MEETING	
	meeting and report back to the representatives. It was important to make the voice of the representatives heard. Action: Chair
RKEC20.10.9.2	The Chair announced the appointment of the new Chair of the Research Ethics Sub-Committee. He was delighted to report that Professor David Evans had accepted the role and would shortly be taking up the position. Professor Evans has a strong background in public health and as an academic researcher. Professor Boddy thanked Dr Woodley for acting as Deputy for the past months.
RKEC20.10.9.3	The Chair reported that the University has agreed to adopt Zoom as a platform for meetings, so it was likely that this would be used for the next meeting of this Committee.
	DATES OF MEETINGS 2020-21 (Venues to be confirmed) 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

RKEC 20.10.2.2	Agenda item on diversity in UWE research for January 2021 meeting	Officer
RKEC 20.10.3.2	The Officer to update the Business Plan to provide a clear timetable for reporting from sub groups	Officer
RKEC 20.10.6.1.3	The Director of RBI to review the gap in provision of professional research development for technical staff, including in relation to the Technicians Commitment.	Director of RBI
RKEC 20.10.9.1	The Chair and Officer to discuss the role of the representatives on the Committee and report back	Chair, Officer