



Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2021.

Membership:

Present: Prof M Boddy (Chair), Prof R Bolden, R Bond, L Brown, Dr G Christopher, A Conway, Prof M Conway, Prof O Doran, Prof D Evans, A Geary, Dr D Greenham, Prof J Hancock, Prof D Harcourt, Prof C Hobbs, T John, Dr M Kirjavainen-Morgan, Dr S Klein, Prof V Kumar, A Oliver, Prof M Rose, P Shelton, Prof M Smith, A Vaughton (Officer).

Apologies: A Chidinma Nnajofofor, Prof A Coffey, Dr S Dragojlovic-Oliveira, V Jones, H Moyes, N Rothwell-Warn, Prof N Willey.

In attendance: G Scott (HR)

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RKEC21.03.1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
RKEC21.03.1.1	The Chair welcomed Louis Brown as the second postgraduate research student representative. Apologies were received from A Chidinma Nnajofofor, Professor Coffey, Dr Dragojlovic-Oliveira, V Jones, H Moyes, N Rothwell-Warn, and Professor Willey.
RKEC21.03.2	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING
RKEC21.03.2.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2021 as a full and accurate record. Minor corrections were made to the attendance.
	Matters arising
RKEC21.03.2.2	RKEC21.01.3.1.3 Promotions round for Professors and Associate Professors. This was now live after several years in preparation, and

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	very much to be welcomed. It was confirmed that following 'sold out' initial workshops, further events were scheduled to assist staff in making applications.
RKEC21.03.2.3	RKEC21.01.3.1.4 Research webpages. Phase 1 was now complete and set to go live imminently. The pages were designed as a showcase for UWE research, built around the four research beacons and would be added to as time went on.
RKEC21.03.2.4	RKEC21.01.4.1.3 Transferable governance procedures. This matter was being looked into by colleagues in Academic Governance.
RKEC21.03.2.5	RKEC21.01.5.2.3 Risk Register. The Chair reported that no issues had been raised by members to date. The Committee would be receiving these reports three times a year going forwards.
RKEC21.03.2.6	RKEC21.01.5.3.4 Open Access Policy. The Chair confirmed that UWE's IP manager was happy with the policy from an IP viewpoint and Mrs Conway was organising the formal approval by Academic Board.
RKEC21.03.2.7	RKEC21.01.6.1.1 Research Centre commentaries. The Chair reported that these would be reviewed by RSIG.
RKEC21.03.3	STANDING AGENDA ITEMS
RKEC21.03.3.1	Chair's report
RKEC21.03.3.1.1	The Chair reported that the University's REF submission had been made on Monday 22 nd March. He believed that the submission represented UWE's research in the best possible way. As previously advised it had comprised the work (over 900 outputs) of 400 members of staff, 41 impact case studies and 14 environment statements. Professor Boddy expressed his huge thanks to all those involved in the submission, including the leads for the 13 units of assessment, and particularly to REF Manager Richard Bond, and REF technical support Jane Newton.
RKEC21.03.3.1.2	The Chair alerted members to the forthcoming committee effectiveness review. This was an opportunity for members to reflect on whether the Committee has met its objectives as part of the annual assurance reporting process.
RKEC21.03.3.1.3	Professor Boddy noted that this was Richard Bond's final RKE Committee meeting prior to his retirement. He wished to record the formal thanks of the Committee for his immense contributions to the University over a period spanning five research excellence exercises, and for his very many contributions to the University.

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RKEC21.03.3.2	REF2021 Update
RKEC21.03.3.2.1	As UWE REF Manager, Mr Bond formally notified the Committee of the University's submission to REF2021, confirming that the size and shape of the submission were as reported at the previous meeting. There remained a number of follow up actions to be taken, as stated in paper RKEC21.03.16. The equality analysis of the exercise would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee. An external review of the process had been announced as part of a wider review of research bureaucracy.
RKEC21.03.3.2.2	Mr Bond reflected on a long and arduous process, which despite the Stern Review's intention that the burden should be reduced, had resulted in an increase in the workload which Mr Bond estimated to have doubled, with a potential increase of the overall sector-wide cost of the exercise approaching £500m.
RKEC21.03.3.2.3	Professor Boddy took the opportunity to thank Jane Newton, also retiring at the end of March after 34 years at UWE, for her fantastic service to the University.
RKEC21.03.3.3	Business Engagement and Enterprise Update
RKEC21.03.3.3.1	Mrs John reported some recent major funding successes including a prestigious EPSRC collaborative bid (Caleb-Solly), and noted ongoing work to secure a Leverhulme Centre bid (McCartan). A new investigator award workshop was planned shortly with the intention of reaching out to targeted staff. A Climate Network meeting was due to be held on 12 April, focusing on the cross-disciplinary aspects of climate resilience research and identifying potential funding opportunities. A monthly Research Huddle would be launched in early May, details to be found in the weekly research bulletin.
RKEC21.03.3.3.2	Mrs John noted that the reduction in Government overseas aid would impact on research projects with ODA allocations. All affected PIs were being contacted by RBI, estimated to be 15-20 across the University. There was an expectation that all GCRF and ODA funding would stop by the end of July. UKRI reductions were also looking likely and again, RBI colleagues would contact those likely to be impacted. The Chair noted that the cuts in ODA were particularly disappointing and damaging both to this country and to third world countries and questioned how this would reinforce the UK's position as global Britain.
RKEC21.03.3.3.3	The University had received its (embargoed) KEF results, which were looking good overall, but with no comparative information available as yet. The full results were not expected to be published until May. (Note, results were published on 1 April).
RKEC21.03.3.4	Of further note was a second reading for ARIO with a huge budget (although it was not yet clear if this would come from the UKRI

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	budget). The expectation was that the tender route would be used to access funds, and schemes would need to be reacted to very quickly. Areas across the University should be identified, that would need to be rallied to be able to respond fast enough.
RKEC21.03.4	ITEMS FOR APPROVAL
RKEC21.03.4.1	RESC Guidance on obtaining recording and transporting consent and data
RKEC21.03.4.1.1	This guidance (paper RKEC21.03.01) had been circulated to members, and the Chair of RESC thanked those who had commented. The guidance had arisen from the impact of Covid on researchers' ability to conduct interviews, focus groups, etc, and was in response to requests for advice. Professor Evans further noted the need to balance issuing messages and advice quickly alongside consulting widely. Consequently, he proposed that in order to road-test guidance in a real world situation, any further guidance notes might be published in draft form for a month during which time comments would be invited. The guidance could then be finalised following consultation and road-testing. The Committee agreed that this was a sensible proposal and formally approved the present guidance.
RKEC21.03.4.1.2	The RESC Chair further raised the question of the provision of ethics advice generally. Currently there was a lot of information published across a range of different documents, making it difficult for researchers to find the information they need. He was in the process of reviewing all of the documentation and hoping to find a smarter way of presenting information with a single pathway on the webpages.
RKEC21.03.5	ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION
	Gerry Scott joined the meeting for agenda items 5.1-5.4
RKEC21.03.5.1	Technician Commitment
RKEC21.03.5.1.1	Miss Scott gave a presentation on the progress of the Technician Commitment and an update on the action plan, which had been extended from two to three years. The Chair noted the major contribution by technical staff during the pandemic in being the delivery arm to maintain activity during the lockdowns and enabling the opening of labs etc. The contribution of this staff group, while recognised previously, was now fully acknowledged, raising their visibility and importance.
RKEC21.03.5.1.2	One member raised the issue of the title 'technician', and the sense that their expertise may not be recognised, particularly by some students. Whilst acknowledging that there may be an issue with the title technician, one objective of the Technician Commitment was to

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	raise recognition for this group of staff. There was commitment on the part of the University to make progress, and huge enthusiasm from colleagues. The Chair noted the very hard work by Miss Scott on this initiative and thanked her. This was a key part of the University's research, teaching and learning.
RKEC21.03.5.2	Diversity in UWE Research
RKEC21.03.5.2.1	Paper RKEC21.03.02 provided equality analyses of internal research support schemes: the VC Challenge Fund, VC Early Career Researcher scheme, and internal Faculty funding. In due course the data relating to REF staff with significant responsibility for research would be available and would come to the Committee.
RKEC21.03.5.2.2	Professor Hobbs, Co-chair of the Athena SWAN Steering Group (ASSG) welcomed bringing together this data and noted the importance of continuing to monitor it. While it was difficult to read a lot from it, the overall message appeared to be that there was nothing significant that was not being addressed, though there was variation between the sets of data and from year to year. She thought it would be helpful for the report to be sent through to the ASSG, and the Chair also agreed to share it with Professor Olomolaiye and the Equality and Diversity group. Action: Chair
RKEC21.03.5.2.3	Members stated that while a useful exercise, the data highlighted the under-representation of staff with protected characteristics at the University. There were also intersectionality issues, and – in the context of the ECR data, some uncertainty about the comparative data. The Chair hoped to bring further data to the next meeting. This was a very useful exercise, and was recognised that there were many issues which would need to be considered, for example bidding, Directors of Studies, the outcome of the professorial merit pay scheme and the new promotion round.
RKEC21.03.5.2.4	The Officer provided early indications of the range of applications received for the next VC ECR round, which comprised a 50/50 split on gender and 66/34 split on white/non-white. Female/non-white applicants represented around 22% of the total, and male/non-white applicants around 12% of the total. The full equalities data would be brought to the next meeting. Action: Officer
RKEC21.03.5.2.5	Professor Harcourt noted that CAR had been working hard to make their recruitment more diverse, and suggested a possible role for RKEC working with EDI to do something similar across the University. She would be happy to share CAR's work on this. It was acknowledged that the issue was not only about recruitment but also about staff retention, and addressing the attainment gap.

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RKEC21.03.5.2.6	The Chair stated that the Committee would review the full REF data at the next meeting. Action: Chair
RKEC21.03.5.3	Women in Research Mentoring Scheme (WRMS)
RKEC21.03.5.3.1	Professor Rose presented a report on the WRMS (paper RKEC21.03.03) noting that the scheme had been running since 2013, and reaches 50% of the University's research community. There is an unbundled commitment by both mentees and mentors. This period of mentorship (usually one year) had been extended to the end of 2021 to address some of the issues raised by the pandemic. Professor Rose noted that Covid had had a significant negative impact, particularly on women (as evidenced in a webinar with Professor Olomolaiye), with individuals stating that their research had had to be halted due to caring responsibilities, lack of access to childcare, etc. The WRMS was commissioning research from a MSc student, gathering evidence across UWE staff, of the impact of Covid on research. In summary Professor Rose noted the fantastic support for the scheme from Fiona Watt in RBI, and proposed that the roles of the Chair and Co-chair for the scheme should be acknowledged with workload bundles.
RKEC21.03.5.3.2	It was known that significant work was being undertaken in faculties to identify the impact on women of Covid, but action to address this remained a problem. There were concerns around the timing of the newly announced promotion scheme. There was a danger of women's professional lives going backwards. One initiative instigated in DAS was highlighting ongoing research projects and encouraging staff who may be able to contribute, but not currently in a position to lead on projects, to act as co-researchers and therefore be named on outputs.
RKEC21.03.5.3.3	The Chair stated that thinking was being given to measures for recovery and significant effort had been made in securing extensions for stalled projects, and with strong support for PGR through the Graduate School. He noted the analogy with maternity leave (which may be equally detrimental to careers). Consideration might be given to running an event on diversity in research at UWE, bringing together best practice, and would be timely as we enter next REF cycle. Further consideration would be given by RSIG.
RKEC21.03.5.4	Athena SWAN – Annual report
RKEC21.03.5.4.1	Professor Hobbs, Co-chair of the Athena SWAN Steering Group presented the annual assurance report (paper RKEC21.03.04) and noted that the Group would be reporting to Professor Olomolaiye's group going forwards, which would likely be a better fit for Athena SWAN. The main achievements of the year were the successes in two departments, including a silver award for DAS, reflecting the huge amount of work involved; and bronze award for ABE. The Steering Group was well placed to make an institutional application in 2022.

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	Professor Hobbs reported that two people had been identified to take over the roles of Co-chairs, and that the Steering Group would benefit from having a change and a refresh. It was pleasing to feel that the University had now mainstreamed equality, diversity and inclusivity, though there remained much still to do.
RKEC21.03.5.4.2	The Chair recognised the importance of achieving awards, but noted that the impact of this work and taking the University forward was equally important. It is what changes in practical terms that matters. He expressed his thanks to Professor Hobbs and Dr Rogers, and sent congratulations to Dr Wilkinson for her work in securing the DAS silver award.
RKEC21.03.5.5	UWE Research Strategy implementation
RKEC21.03.5.5.1	Consultation events on the Research Strategy 2030 had been held in February and March and were very well attended. The Chair was now pulling together all the comments into themes and would produce a report for a way forward. The findings had already shared with the VC and DVC. Professor Boddy was aiming to get additional investment for research in 2021/22. He would be taking a paper to the Directorate with proposals for investment, including new starter support, more general support for Lecturers and Senior Lecturers, for Professors and Associate Professors as research leaders, and career development opportunities across the board. He hoped to have something to share relatively quickly after discussion with the Directorate, and expressed the need for buy-in across the University.
RKEC21.03.6	ITEMS FOR INFORMATION
RKEC21.03.6.1	Faculty Research Updates, Sub-Committee Updates, Library Services Report, External Bidding Details
RKEC21.03.6.1.1	The Chair commended the starred reports to members. They contain a lot of detail and information, are important reports and well worth a read.
RKEC21.03.6.1.2	The bidding report (paper RKEC21.03.15) demonstrates that bidding success at this stage of the year is ahead of comparative periods in the previous two years. UWE was not, therefore, as yet, seeing a Covid impact on bidding. RBI colleagues continued to be very busy with bidding.
RKEC21.03.7	HEALTH AND SAFETY
RKEC21.03.7.1	No issues were raised. It was noted that the labs had now been open again for a while, along with other research spaces, and were working effectively for staff, PGR and Undergraduate students needing access

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	to complete their courses. Colleagues had done a great job, especially the technical staff.
RKEC21.03.8	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
RKEC21.03.8.1	No other business was raised.
	DATES OF MEETINGS 2020-21
	<p>Wednesday 21 October 2020, 14:00-16:30</p> <p>Wednesday 20 January 2021, 14:00-16:30</p> <p>Wednesday 24 March 2021, 14:00-16:30</p> <p>Wednesday 16 June 2021, 14:00-16:30</p>

Actions

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.	Chair
RKEC21.03.5.2.4	The Officer to bring the full equalities data for the 2021/22 VC ECR round to the next meeting.	Officer
RKEC21.03.5.2.6	The Chair to bring further data, including the final REF data, for review, to the next meeting.	Chair