



Academic Board

## RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024 in Room 7X111 on Frenchay Campus.

**Present:** Amanda Coffey (Chair), Amanda Conway, Fiona Cramp, Gareth Edwards, Olena Doran, James Green, David Greenham, Bernhard Gross, Tracey John (Secretary), Helena Lewis-Smith, Daniela Paddeu, Jenna Pandeli, Noelle Quenivet, Philippa Shelton, Danielle Sinnett, Robin Thorn

**Apologies:** Andrew Geary, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossain, Jessica Lamond

**In attendance:** David Young (Officer), Catherine Bingham (item 5.3), Steph Constantine (item 5.3), Jane Hallet (item 5.2)

### RKEC.24.10.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

RKEC.24.10.1.1 Members were welcomed to the committee and apologies were noted.

Particular welcome was extended to new members of the committee: Gareth Edwards, the newly appointed CBL Dean of Research and Enterprise; Daniela Paddeu, the elected research-active representative for CATE; Jenna Pandeli, the elected research-active representative for CBL; and Khadiza Hossain, VP Education in the Students' Union.

RKEC.24.10.1.2 No declarations of interest were noted.

### RKEC.24.10.2 RKEC BUSINESS

**RKEC.24.10.2.1 RKEC terms of reference and membership**  
*Paper RKEC.24.10.01 was received.*

RKEC.24.10.2.1.1 Members received and endorsed the terms of reference.

RKEC.24.10.2.1.2 The current vacancy for the PGR student representative in the

committee membership list was noted. Members were informed that the Students' Union are working with the Academic Director of the Doctoral Academy to make PGR more effective as part of the ongoing Reimagining Student Representation Project.

#### **RKEC.24.10.2.2**

#### **RKEC business plan**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.02 was received.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.2.2.1**

Members endorsed the indicative business plan for 2024/25 with the priorities for the academic year including strategic preparation for REF 2029, embedding Beacon, internal allocation of QR funding, the PGR voice, and creating a dynamic relationship with UEIC.

There will be standing items on REG and REF preparation, and progress on the Research Concordat. To improve efficiency and effectiveness, the Colleges will be asked to provide more thematically and strategically focused updates.

##### **RKEC.24.10.2.2.2**

Future deep dives will include PRES implementation (in January), 2024 KEF results, and REF audit outcomes and learnings.

#### **RKEC.24.10.2.3**

#### **Sub-Committee Terms of Reference**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.03 was received.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.2.3.1**

Minor revisions to the Terms of Reference and membership of the Doctoral Academy Sub-Committee (DASC) were made to reflect the move to Colleges and Schools and focus its work more clearly on quality matters. These changes were approved under Academic Board Chair's action on 29 July 2024 and formally noted at this meeting.

#### **RKEC.24.10.3**

#### **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

##### **RKEC.24.10.3.1**

##### **Previous minutes**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.04 was received.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.3.1.1**

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024.

##### **RKEC.24.10.3.2**

##### **Action sheet and matters arising**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.05 was received.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.3.2.1**

*RKEC.23.11.5.2.3 (internal investment schemes)*

Action in progress on the reviewing and reporting of the monitoring of central and College-led investment schemes.

RKEC.24.10.3.2.2	<i>RKEC.24.02.3.3.3 (Research and knowledge exchange environment)</i> QR and HEIF funding position to be discussed under item 6.1
RKEC.24.10.3.2.3	<i>RKEC.24.02.4.2.2 (College research updates)</i> Action in progress. Liaising taking place on the development of research partnerships from the existing international (learning and teaching) partnerships part of 2024/25 business plan.
RKEC.24.10.3.2.4	<i>RKEC.24.02.6.1.2 (Funding open access monographs to meet UKRI requirements)</i> Work to consider the implications in detail and develop recommendations on meeting the UKRI requirements is underway. Action closed.
RKEC.24.10.3.2.5	<i>RKEC.24.02.7.1.2 (Access to staff email addresses for PhD students)</i> Action in progress. See RKEC.24.10.7.2.2 below for update.
RKEC.24.10.3.2.6	<i>RKEC.24.07.3.3 (External Bidding data)</i> Action in progress to be more strategic in relation to research income generation. College support for external bidding to be discussed under item 5.4.

#### **RKEC.24.10.4      THEMATIC DEEP DIVE**

##### **RKEC.24.10.4.1      Beacons / RISE**

*Presentation was received.*

RKEC.24.10.4.1.1      The Director of RBI introduced a presentation on the three UWE Beacons of Excellence: Healthy Futures, New Creatives and NetZero. These Beacons will be used to power economic growth, social impact and prosperity through research, innovation, skills and enterprise (RISE).

Members were informed that the Beacons have been formulated to provide a clear unambiguous framework for communicating UWE's narratives of excellence: stories that we can coalesce around as an institution and communicate to partners and stakeholders.

RKEC.24.10.4.1.2      The following comments were made during the discussion:

- 1) A significant amount of work is underway on developing the regional strategy (e.g. working with WECA, who value

the manner of our expertise), with innovative thinking on how UWE Bristol can lead on research and enterprise.

- 2) Although the Beacons have been around for a long time, the challenge is now to articulate them (e.g. through the forthcoming workshops).
- 3) The Beacons need to be outwardly focused and inspiring, not exclusive.
- 4) The University does not want the Beacons to be ambiguous, i.e. all things to all people. Nevertheless, they purposely embrace both technology and the arts, constituting cross-disciplinary bridges of excellence that enable the University to speak to different audiences.
- 5) UWE is engaging with other stakeholders beyond research, having dialogue with multiple groups. However, Beacons *must* be underpinned by research, contextualising research strengths and achieving real alignment with skills and industry.
- 6) UWE Beacons have been benchmarked against competitors, with some standard terms used. Nevertheless, the uniqueness will be in our approach and making the Beacons work for us (for example, furthering the Skills agenda in a uniquely "UWE" way).

## **RKEC.24.10.5**

## **STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

### **RKEC.24.10.5.1**

### **External environment scan**

*RKEC.24.10.06 was received.*

#### **RKEC.24.10.5.1.1**

The Academic Governance Manager introduced a paper summarising developments in the wider educational, political and economic environment that create potential challenges and opportunities for UWE Bristol in the fields of research and knowledge exchange.

#### **RKEC.24.10.5.1.2**

The paper noted the following:

- 1) If the collaborative framework accompanying the current Skills England legislation is effectively realised, UWE is well placed to be a leading player in the development of a highly skilled homegrown workforce.
- 2) The focus within the English Devolution Bill on regional industrial strategies may benefit those HEIs that actively seek to promote collaborative strategies in high growth sectors.

- 3) Universities UK's published blueprint for the future provides potential learnings on sustainability, research area focus, and strategic commercialisation.
- 4) Research England's recently published data on KEF4 demonstrates UWE's continued high levels of engagement in knowledge exchange while indicating perspectives of possible improvement.
- 5) Based on recently predicted growth figures, 2025 may see a potential (if modest) uptick in research and knowledge exchange funding via UKRI and Research England.
- 6) Transnational educational (TNE) partners are increasingly vocal in seeking research opportunities for their staff and students.
- 7) Research export license controls (e.g. on software, tech) might inhibit future partnership and collaborative growth with China.
- 8) The UK Science Minister has announced a new Regulatory Innovation Office aimed at helping speed up approvals for new technologies, including UWE areas of expertise such as biotechnology, autonomous vehicles and digital healthcare.

RKEC.24.10.5.1.3      The comment was made that the external scan was too focused on the national and the global, and that many of the key external impacts in research and knowledge exchange happen at the local or regional level. Future horizon scans should reflect this. [**Action:** Academic Governance Manager].

**RKEC.24.10.5.2      Update on Research Excellence Group (and REF preparation work)**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.07 was received.*

RKEC.24.10.5.2.1      The Head of Research Excellence introduced an update from the Research Excellence Group on its meetings and activities since the last report.

RKEC.24.10.5.2.2      The REG approved its 2024/25 Terms of Reference, with three new professorial research leaders nominated by PVC Heads of College.

RKEC.24.10.5.2.3      Research England provided an update on the use of data in the HESA staff record to determine the volume measure for REF 2029. There will not be a REF census date this cycle. There will be an institution-wide review, with the University required to make "significant responsibility for research" (SRR) determinations for all eligible staff contracts in the reporting period. The requirement to report the Units of assessment (UOA) of each staff contract to

HESA will require timely strategic decisions and active monitoring of FTE. Information submitted for the 2024/25 reporting period will be treated as a pilot year and will not be used for REF 2029. Information submitted for the 2025/26 and 2026/27 reporting periods will be averaged to determine our volume measure for REF 2029 (i.e. two years beforehand).

RKEC.24.10.5.2.4 The REG approved an amended timetable for a University-wide review of the current state of REF preparedness. This internal REF review will hopefully inform thinking on size and shape.

RKEC.24.10.5.2.5 In discussion, members commented that:

- 1) Both RKEC and VCE needs to be assured about REF planning. Seeing as how there are several factors in play, how does the University put its best foot forward as regards the volume of submission?
- 2) It is up to institutions to define, and codify in their Codes of Practice, the criteria for SRR.
- 3) UWE's REF 2021 Code of Practice needs to be updated and approved for REF 2029, but what will that flex look like?
- 4) The Academic Careers Pathway and the ongoing Workload Model Review will be tracked through the University Transformation Project.

### **RKEC.24.10.5.3 2023-24 research metrics and bidding data**

*Presentation was received.*

RKEC.24.10.5.3.1 The Senior Business Intelligence Analyst (PBI) and the Business Intelligence Analyst (RBI) introduced a summary of 2023-24 research income and bidding data.

RKEC.24.10.5.3.2 The research income reported for 2023/24 was reported to be lower than expected. The broad trends indicate that the University is starting to see the impact of lower funding during the post-Covid period. This is also shown by the net funding data secured by the Colleges, with the potential end of large project income awarded to CATE pre-2019-20.

RKEC.24.10.5.3.3 Regarding 2023/24 external bidding data, UWE is £1.7m ahead in net research funding awarded. UWE is £4.7m behind in knowledge exchange net funding, although long term KE data tends to be more volatile, so it is not unusual to have a down year after a successful one. 2024/25 net funding of successful bids is already ahead of this point last year.

The distribution of 2023/24 bids by volume and value (to UWE) is skewed to the bottom of the scale (£0-£250k), with stable success rates in the mid-value brackets, and the success rate of large awards falling from 56% in 2022/23 to 19% in 2023/24. Despite that, the four successful awards in the +£1m bracket still accounted for 32% of distribution value.

#### RKEC.24.10.5.3.4

Discussion ensued on how to boost success rates in the larger research bids.

- 1) UWE needs to ensure it is targeting the right funding bodies most relevant in the different years.
- 2) Early-career researchers tend to rely on smaller bids, so the professoriate is obliged to continue to support that. However, RBI would be very helpful in developing, through the sharing of good practice, the early-career researcher inclination to target bigger bids.
- 3) Is there a more formal mechanism to capture why big bids have failed?
- 4) The Chair reported that there is a corporate KPI on research income which evaluates how close UWE Bristol is to achieving £32m annualised income. The feasibility of this KPI was discussed at Academic Board, and the target was revised to £25m per annum.
- 5) RKEC needs to assure Board of Governors that there is a plan on research income, and that the University acts strategically in supporting colleagues trying to raise this income.
- 6) Even though income overall is dropping, there should be recognition that some areas are doing very well. Nevertheless, we need to understand why it is dropping in certain other areas, and our response needs to be more nuanced.

#### RKEC.24.10.5.3.5

The Senior Business Intelligence Analyst (PBI) also introduced a presentation into new Power BI reporting. This will replicate Excel in terms of the navigation of data fields and data from Worktribe. However, it goes beyond Excel by presenting “live” data so successes can be known in real-time. It provides extra opportunity for data consolidation, flexibility and functional visuals.

All relevant staff will have access to the main Power BI app, with some permission groups for different areas. Access lists to be

checked for those staff who need to quickly action this data.  
[**ACTION:** Senior Business Intelligence Analyst (PBI)].

**RKEC.24.10.5.4**

**College research updates – thematic feedback and highlighted best practice for supporting research**

*Papers RKEC.24.10.08-10 were received.*

RKEC.24.10.5.4.1

The Deans of Research and Enterprise were invited to comment on the activities their Colleges are undertaking to support research in the following two thematically focus areas: external bidding and research centre implementation.

RKEC.24.10.5.4.2

The SADM School Director of Research and Enterprise reported on behalf of the CATE Dean of Research and Enterprise. The College is providing active support for external bidding through initiatives that draw on support from RBI, core funded time and QR supported schemes. Significant income is still in play even though there has been a slight dip in success rates. Staff are being supported with targeted support. The Accelerator programme has helped develop individual bidding strategy.

Eight Research Centres have this far been recommended by the CATE RKEC with one final centre in the School of Architecture and Environment expected to be reviewed at the end of November 2024.

The SADM School Director of Research and Enterprise requested clarity regarding UWE plans to engage with the UKRI recognition of 'research professionals' and whether they would be "directly allocated" or "directly incurred." The Assistant Director RBI has asked Finance, who evaluate the UKRI terms and conditions, to consider how the University should cost bids. A written update has been requested for the CATE RKE on 18 December.

RKEC.24.10.5.4.3

The CBL Dean of Research and Enterprise reported on efforts the College is making to ensure the external bidding process is less opaque for staff members. These include research mentoring and peer-reviewing of funding bids. Support is also offered to staff as regards QR funds. The single Research Centre in CBL – the BLCC – has been positively reviewed and confirmed.

RKEC.24.10.5.4.4

The CHSS Dean of Research and Enterprise reported on some large and complex UKRI bid success, made possible by excellent support from RBI. There has been an allocation of College QR funds to Research Centres for strategic research activities including



large-scale bidding. There has also been complementary funding for some large grant applications to increase their competitiveness. Furthermore, a post has been established to support grant applications. CHSS has six new approved Research Centres following the completion of the July 2024 review.

#### **RKEC.24.10.5.5**

#### **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

*Verbal update.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.5.5.1**

The CHSS Dean in Research and Enterprise reported on progress of actions made so far in the first year of UWE Bristol's institutional commitment to the Concordat (signed 22 July 2024).

- 1) A senior manager champion (CHSS Dean in Research and Enterprise) has been appointed and a working group with relevant representation across UWE has been established. The aim of the next meeting (November 2024) will be to approve the terms of reference of the group.
- 2) A gap analysis will be reviewed by the working group in November.
- 3) A draft action plan has been produced and is expected to be finalised by February 2025, then published on the UWE Bristol website.
- 4) Systematic and regular gathering of views. There will be discussions with College and Schools Senior Leadership Teams, online and live forums for researchers, School-specific and Research Centre-specific events, and forums related to EDI.
- 5) The regular communication of the Concordat's visibility (e.g. School Directors, School comms, Research Bulletin, UWE news), the championing of its principles within UWE, and links to other University-wide initiatives (e.g. Athena SWAN).

##### **RKEC.24.10.5.5.2**

The Chair commented that the Concordat is beyond a mere research project. It will enable the University to gather an institutional-wide view of research careers, development and training opportunities.

#### **RKEC.24.10.5.6**

#### **Health and safety**

*Verbal update.*

##### **RKEC.24.10.5.6.1**

No areas of concerns were raised.

#### **RKEC.24.10.6**

#### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**RKEC.24.10.6.1      Quality Research (QR) and Higher Education innovation fund (HEIF)**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.11 was received.*

RKEC.24.10.6.1.1      The Director of RBI introduced a presentation on the current position of the QR and HEIF funding allocation.

Analysis shows the exact allocation of QR funding is £6,701,433. Over half of the funds are spent on PhDs, followed by College strategic allowances, then early career researchers, impact fund and RBI support. Data was looked at by theme and activity, with the greatest thematic allocation in the last two years being researcher support (52% in 2023-24, 58% in 2024-25) followed by the funding allocation to Colleges.

The Alignment to Research England QR category definitions was then examined to discuss the strategic implications of allocating funding through a Research England (RE) lens.

RKEC.24.10.6.1.2      The following points were made in the discussion:

- 1) How can UWE Bristol make the funding more impactful?  
Can we be smarter and more strategic with the allocation?
- 2) RE will pose "the impact question," especially with HEIF.
- 3) It may be inevitable that, in investing QR over time, spending will be increased in one area rather than others.
- 4) RE allocation is not done within Colleges, so with any prospective alignment, the University would need to agree the overall themes and categories and then look at internal allocation.
- 5) Is the University confident that it can use these funds to effectively bridge the researcher talent pipeline (i.e. from PhD to early career academia)?

**RKEC.24.10.7      ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**RKEC.24.10.7.1      Update from University Ethics and Integrity Committee**

*Paper RKEC.24.10.12 was received.*

RKEC.24.10.7.1.1      Members noted the decisions, debates and escalations undertaken in September 2024 by the University committee with oversight of research governance and academic ethics and integrity.

**RKEC.24.10.7.2      PGR update**

*Verbal update.*

RKEC.24.10.7.2.1 The Academic Director of the Doctoral Academy updated members on current PGR trajectories.

Current work and developmental/news updates were noted in the following areas: January implementation of the exam board regulations; the PGR offer that UWE Bristol can offer in the international (TNE) space; development of a central system that will allow PGR student reps to more effectively emerge; PGR funding applications (ESRC open now, SWW DTP opening late November).

RKEC.24.10.7.2.2 The Assistant Director RBI updated the committee on the ongoing RKEC item on PhD student access to staff e-mails. RBI is meeting with IT Services in November with a view to working towards a long-term solution.

**RKEC.24.10.7.3 UWE Research Publications Policy updated October 2024**  
*Paper RKEC.24.10.13 was received.*

RKEC.24.10.7.3.1 The Head of Library Research and Internal Communications introduced an update to the REF Open access policy, now renamed the UWE Research Publications Policy. It was noted that, according to the Academic Board policy framework (and attendant powers of delegation), RKEC has oversight of this policy and can approve amendments.

RKEC.24.10.7.3.2 The current revisions include a more equitable rights retention, to make it easier for researchers/PGRs to publish open access. College RKECs have been consulted on the changes.

RKEC.24.10.7.3.3 RKEC members approved the amendments to the policy. The UWE Research Publications Policy to be noted at the Academic Board meeting on 11 December 2024. [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer]

## **RKEC.24.10.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

RKEC.24.10.8.1 None to note.

## **RKEC.24.10.9 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:

- Thursday 30 January 2025
- Thursday 3 April 2025
- Thursday 12 June 2025

