



Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2025 in Room 7X111 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Amanda Coffey (Chair), Amanda Conway, Fiona Cramp, Olena Doran, James Green, David Greenham, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Tracey John (Secretary), Jessica Lamond, Jenna Pandeli, Philippa Shelton, Danielle Sinnett, Noelle Quenivet

Apologies: Gareth Edwards, Andrew Geary, Khadiza Hossain, Helena Lewis-Smith, Daniela Paddeu, Robin Thorn

In attendance: David Young (Officer), Steph Constantine (item 4.2), Jane Hallet (item 4.5).

RKEC.25.04.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

RKEC.25.04.1.1 Members were welcomed to the Committee, particularly Yarden Woolf, the newly recruited PGR representative who will also attend LTSEC and Academic Board. Apologies were noted.

RKEC.25.04.1.2 No declarations of interest were noted.

RKEC.25.04.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RKEC.25.04.2.1 Previous minutes
Paper RKEC.25.04.01 was received.

RKEC.25.04.2.1.1 Members received the minutes of the meeting held on 30 January 2025. They were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

RKEC.25.04.2.2 Action sheet and matters arising
Paper RKEC.25.04.02 was received.

The following items were noted:

- RKEC.25.04.2.2.1 ***RKEC.23.11.5.2.3*** - *To review and report on monitoring of central and College-led investment schemes*
UPDATE: item can now be closed.
- RKEC.25.04.2.2.2 ***RKEC.24.02.3.3.3*** - *To investigate internal allocation of where QR funding is spent, accompanied by funding modelling up until the next REF*
UPDATE: item can now be closed as a three-year plan is in place.
- RKEC.25.04.2.2.3 ***RKEC.24.02.4.2.2*** - *To liaise on developing research partnerships from existing international academic (learning and teaching) partnerships*
UPDATE: item can now be closed.
- RKEC.25.04.2.2.4 ***RKEC.24.02.7.1.2*** - *To address access to staff email addresses for PhD students*
UPDATE: REE indicates that all PGRs should now have email addresses. Closed as an immediate action but to note, in the long term, that the implementation of Banner keeps this a live issue.
- RKEC.25.04.2.2.5 ***RKEC.24.07.3.3*** - *To establish a working group to consider how we could be more strategic in relation to research income generation. The group will report to the RKEC committee*
UPDATE: item can now be closed as will form part of PVC RKE priorities.
- RKEC.25.04.2.2.6 ***RKEC.25.01.5.1.3*** - *The Secretary/ Director of REE introduced a paper proposing a moment-in-time "sense-check" of UWE's risk appetite in the research space*
UPDATE: item still in progress.

Matters arising:

- RKEC.25.04.2.2.7 2.2.1 Health and safety assurance and the role of RKEC
The Chair verbally assured the members that Health & Safety risk management remains a priority and that RKEC will revisit the issue at future meetings.

RKEC.25.04.3 THEMATIC DEEP DIVE

RKEC.25.04.3.1

Beacons of excellence and the RISE agenda

Presentation was received.

RKEC.25.04.3.1.1

The Director of REE presented the latest draft version of the promotional document demonstrating how UWE Bristol is shaping the future of research, innovation, skills and enterprise (RISE).

RKEC.25.04.3.1.2

Entitled *Transforming Tomorrow, Today*, it places emphasis on both UWE's legacy of regional collaboration and its current and future impact on the local economy, with UWE highlighted as a significant driver of growth (£500m. annually). At the centre of the campaign is the plan for growth of the "RISE" agenda:

- **R**esearch with purpose
- **I**nnovation with impact
- **S**kills that empower
- **E**nterprise that fuels progress

RKEC.25.04.3.1.3

The proposition utilises deliberately jargon-free language to show how the growth in RISE is reflected in a set of active and sharply articulated "Beacons" that provide the University with a platform to demonstrate its world-leading strengths in sustainable, practice-led research.

RKEC.25.04.3.1.4

The following further observations were made:

- 1) The presentation represents a call to action.
- 2) It addresses the need to talk about the centrality of research and innovation to UWE Bristol in a joined-up way that speaks to both domestic and international audiences.
- 3) The Beacon areas can be adjusted for different constituencies. The campaign is designed to be consistent while retaining the flexibility to take out and slot in different examples (a repository of Beacon examples now exists).
- 4) More work will be seen in the coming months.

RKEC.25.04.3.1.5

The following comments were made in the discussion:

- 1) The simplicity of the message is effective.
- 2) The content fits well with some of our international partners (e.g. Villa College in the Maldives).
- 3) The campaign fits well with the REE research film.
- 4) RISE-Beacons needs to be owned by the entire research community at UWE.

RKEC.25.04.3.1.6 The Committee endorsed the draft presentation and welcomed future discussion, including the sharing of any marketing collateral. The presentation will be submitted for consideration at the Academic Board meeting on 7 May 2025.

RKEC.25.04.3.1.7 Mindful that the examples of the Beacons can be adjusted for different audiences, the slide deck to be circulated to RKEC members and their respective teams [**Action:** Committee Officer].

RKEC.25.04.4 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

RKEC.25.04.4.1 College research updates – thematic feedback and highlighted best practice for supporting research
Papers RKEC.25.04.03-05 were received.

RKEC.25.04.4.1.1 The College Deans of Research and Enterprise were invited to comment on the activities to support research culture and environment.

RKEC.25.04.4.1.2 The CATE Dean reported on the College’s strategy to grow and sustain a positive research culture and adaptive landscape, building into a strong REF narrative. The College aims to take the culture outside, facilitating external engagement and impact opportunities.

RKEC.25.04.4.1.3 The report from the CHSS Dean highlighted the celebrating of staff and PGR success, integrating the Concordat, actively supporting the EDI agenda, working with the University on establishing regular promotion and progression, and collaborating with the Future Space and the Enterprise Zone. It was further noted that research is being linked to education/workforce development through the Integrated Care Academy and other entities and initiatives.

RKEC.25.04.4.1.4 The reports were positively received, with emergent narratives being developed for REF 2029, while also noting that there is more work to be done to strengthen the research culture.

RKEC.25.04.4.1.5 In response to comments made by the PGR rep, a discussion took place on ways to bring the PGR community together in terms of spaces and events, as well as across Colleges. The Committee noted that integration efforts have taken place, but that identification of the student audience, and the students’

subsequent attendance, was often patchy. RKEC agreed on the importance of ensuring that PGR students are treated consistently as fully embedded members of the research groups and centres. Further work to be done in this area that feeds into the Research Concordat.

RKEC.25.04.4.2

Research metrics and bidding data

Paper RKEC.25.04.06 was received.

RKEC.25.04.4.2.1

The Business Intelligence Analyst (RBI) introduced an insight piece into latest research bidding activity. It was noted that the success rate has dropped over the previous two years, and fewer bids being made.

RKEC.25.04.4.2.2

After a demonstration of the additional functionality on funders analysis now featured within the live bidding activity PowerBI report, members were invited to workshop ideas. The following comments and observations were made:

- 1) UWE has experienced a relative lack of success in UKRI funding calls, and the reasons for this merit further exploration.
- 2) Success can be inhibited by the often tight timing of funding calls.
- 3) The “negative” messaging surrounding fewer submissions ought to change. Where external funding awarded remains favourable, the number of bids is not relevant. Moreover, fewer bids can indicate the exercising of more strategic thought.
- 4) It is expected that research income will fluctuate year on year, but the variability should be smoother than currently evidenced.
- 5) How do you influence trends? You only need one or two noticeable successes to build momentum.
- 6) UWE needs to continue to develop longitudinal and sector-comparison analyses. Use of sector data could help UWE build on success and strengths.

RKEC.25.04.4.2.3

From a corporate scorecard perspective, it was concluded that RKEC should look at trends from across the research and KE data to ascertain a sensible stretch-target across the Colleges. The Committee should also consider whether a more meaningful and more holistic corporate KPI might be total external RKE income, rather than just research income [**Action:** Secretary].

RKEC.25.04.4.3 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers – draft action plan

RKEC.25.04.07 was received.

- RKEC.25.04.4.3.1 The CHSS Dean in Research and Enterprise, the institutional Concordat lead, presented the draft of the action plan that will need to be published in the summer of 2025 as part of UWE's institutional commitment to the Concordat.
- RKEC.25.04.4.3.2 It was noted that this draft has incorporated previous RKEC comments, together with the ongoing regular checkpoints of the working group.
- RKEC.25.04.4.3.3 The Chair commented that significant work had been done. Detailed feedback for the finalised draft to be communicated offline.
- RKEC.25.04.4.3.4 RKEC to fully scrutinise and then endorse a publishable, auditable version of the implementation plan at its final 12 June meeting [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer]. Approval will then be sought from the 2 July Academic Board, potentially via Chair's action, to fit in with the timescales for publication. It was noted that the publicly published version may not need to contain all the detail presently in the full plan.

RKEC.25.04.4.4 Spotlight on research centre: Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments (SPE)

Paper RKEC.25.04.08 was received.

- RKEC.25.04.4.4.1 The Director of the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments informed fellow RKEC members about the Centre's aspirations, ambitions and priorities. They were as follows:
- RKEC.25.04.4.4.2
 - 1) Generation of external research income – all staff aspire to secure external funding, with mentoring and peer review support offered to them. There is a priority to recycle unsuccessful grants where appropriate.
 - 2) Doubling of the SPE's contribution to REF 2029 and to ensure all staff have submitted at least one 3/4* output.
 - 3) Development of staff and PGRs – supporting the pipeline development of researchers.
 - 4) Being more strategic in the approach to external networks.
- RKEC.25.04.4.4.3 Related to the above priorities, the Director argued for the expansion of the eligibility for the VCECR award to include RAs,

together with the opportunity for flexible bundles to be available mid-year to support funding calls. Also mentioned in discussion with RKEC members was the WHO Collaborating Centre, and the need for a further funding mechanism to ensure that appropriate administrative support is obtained.

RKEC.25.04.4.5 Update on Research Excellence Group (and REF preparation work)

Paper RKEC.25.04.09 was received.

RKEC.25.04.4.5.1 The Head of Research Excellence updated members on the activities of the Research Excellence Group (REG) since the last report.

RKEC.25.04.4.5.2 As part of early REF 2029 preparations and to inform future strategic decisions, an institution-wide review of current portfolio of outputs and impacts was undertaken in February-March 2025. The following key outcomes were noted:

- 1) REF submissions are “a collective endeavour,” and it is important that senior staff support preparations through internal reviewing.
- 2) The production of outputs of the very highest quality should be submitted to maximise the number of 4* the University is able to submit. Discussion then took place on the desirability for positive and supportive interventions, as opposed to the use of formal scrutinising processes, to increase the quality of papers and 4* outputs.

RKEC.25.04.4.5.3 The Committee were assured on current REF 2029 preparations. The update will be submitted for consideration at the Academic Board meeting on 7 May [**Action:** Committee Officer].

RKEC.25.04.4.5.4 The Chair noted that VCE has been advised by REG that the REF 2029 Code of Practice needs to be submitted by the December 2025 deadline. It was further noted that decisions on UoA configurations ideally need to be made by early summer 2025 to fit in with future HESA returns. This means significant decisions need to be made earlier in the REF cycle.

RKEC.25.04.4.6 Research Strategy risk descriptor

Paper RKEC.25.04.10 was received.

RKEC.25.04.4.6.1	The Chair reported that RKEC was the academic assurance committee for research strategy risk, managing controls on behalf of Academic Board.
RKEC.25.04.4.6.2	It was noted that failure to attract external funding was currently listed as a 4 risk.
RKEC.25.04.4.6.3	It was further noted that the present register was incomplete, and the latest version of the descriptor would be brought to a future meeting.

RKEC.25.04.5 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

RKEC.25.04.5.1 PRES update

Paper RKEC.25.04.11 was received.

RKEC.25.04.5.1.1	The Academic Director of the Doctoral Academy introduced a brief overview of top-level data for the 2025 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).
RKEC.25.04.5.1.2	208 of 511 eligible doctoral students responded to the survey, a rate of 41% (representing a general 23% increase from 2023, and an improved rate in all but one area of the PRES). In the key metric of "Overall Satisfaction," the PRES 2025 scored 82% (an 8% increase from 2023).
RKEC.25.04.5.1.3	RKEC members responded positively to the overall pleasing set of results, and commended the excellent work of staff, students and the new PGR rep (and Chair of DocSoc) to improve turnout.
RKEC.25.04.5.1.4	The Doctoral Academy Sub-Committee (DASC) will take a coordinating role for the next steps, with actions owned by both the Doctoral Academy and College RKECs. Where areas can be improved, students to be kept firmly in the loop.

RKEC.25.04.6 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

RKEC.25.04.6.1 Chair's actions

Paper RKEC.25.04.12 was received.

RKEC.25.04.6.1.1	The following items were noted as being approved under Chair's action since the last meeting on 30 January 2025:
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1. Previous minutes from 17 October 2024.

2. College PGR Committee Terms of Reference.

RKEC.25.04.6.2

External environment scan

Paper RKEC.25.04.13 was received.

RKEC.25.04.6.2.1

The Committee noted a scan of recent external factors that potentially impact upon research, knowledge and enterprise at UWE, and which would merit attention going forward. Specific factors included:

- 1) The impact of FIRS (the Foreign Influence Registration Scheme).
- 2) Confirmation of R&D funding trailed in 2024 Budget.
- 3) Work being done to improve the cost recovery of research.

RKEC.25.04.6.3

Update from University Ethics and Integrity Committee

Paper RKEC.25.04.14 was received.

RKEC.25.04.6.3.1

Members noted the decisions, debates and escalations undertaken in April 2025 by the University committee with oversight of research governance and academic ethics and integrity.

RKEC.25.04.6.4

Library and Learning Services report

Paper RKEC.25.04.15 was received.

RKEC.25.04.6.4.1

The Committee noted updates on the UWE's Research Publications Policy and the HE sector working with JISC to develop new agreements to create more equitable, financially sustainable publishing systems.

RKEC.25.04.6

RKEC BUSINESS

RKEC.25.04.6.5

Audit of Chair's actions

Verbal update.

RKEC.25.04.6.5.1

The Chair of UEIC volunteered to undertake the annual audit of decisions taken by Chair's action.

RKEC.25.04.7

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

RKEC.25.04.7.1

The Open Research Services Manager noted that the Library will be leading on coordinating UWE's response to UKRI's new research data policy.

RKEC.25.04.7.2

The Chair noted that, from June 2025, Professor Darren Reynolds will join VCE as Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC) Research & Knowledge

Exchange. He will be an *ex officio* member of RKEC and Deputy Chair

RKEC.25.04.8

DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)

RKEC.25.04.8.1

Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:

- Thursday 12 June 2025