Research Governance Committee
Tuesday 26th November 2019 at 10:00am

Minutes

Present members:
Professor David Price (Chair); Professor Lynn Ang; Ms Wendy Appleby; Dr Helene Burningham; Mr Andrew Cooper; Professor Alison Fuller; Professor Michael Heinrich; Ms Rowena Lamb; Mr Robert Maughan; Dr Magda Morawska; Dr Nick McNally; Professor David Shanks; Professor Cheryl Thomas; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Ian Zachary

Apologies:
Dr Matthew Blain
Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE
Dr Ivana Drobjnak
Dr Sarah Edwards
Professor Catherine Law
Mr Jim Onyemenam

Officer:
Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. Declaration of Interests

1.1. No interests were declared.

2. Terms of reference, constitution and membership (Paper 1-01)

2.1. Research Governance Committee (RGC) approved its terms of reference and constitution and membership for 2019-20 session.

3. Minutes

3.1. RGC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2019 [Minutes 35-49, 2018-19].

4.   Matters Arising

4.1.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part II: Items for Discussion

5.   Information Security Update (Paper 1-02)

5.1.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

6.   UCL Code of Conduct for Research (Paper 1-03)

6.1.   The Research Policy and Governance Officer introduced the current draft of the proposed revised UCL Code of Conduct for Research. The key points made were:

  a.   This second draft version had changed significantly since the previous draft version considered by RGC in March.
  b.   Some sections had been reordered while the wording in some areas had been made clearer and the Code easier to navigate.
  c.   In addition to the mandatory requirements (you 'must') and the recommended standards (you 'should'), an additional requirement level of you 'are expected to' had been created. This set out the actions that UCL researchers needed to follow but that might require additional consultation or negotiation, for example with external collaborators.
  d.   A chart had been developed setting out the connection and complementarity of the Code with respect to other UCL research expectations for researchers and students.
  e.   The revised version had also been presented to the Faculty Deans and Faculty/School Research Boards and received very positive feedback.
  f.   The final draft would be shared with the UCL branches of the Trade Unions, as recommended by Human Resources. Consultation with the UCL community would be conducted in early 2020.

6.2.   The following points were made in discussion:

  a.   In relation to the expectations for student supervisors for research students at paragraph 6.2 in the Code, it was noted that the Pro-Vice-Provost of the Doctoral School had been consulted. However, this was a complicated area as there were different types of supervision at UCL and the proposed wording set out one 'must' in this area around appropriate behaviour standards.
  b.   There was some discussion around whether there were other 'must' obligations that supervisors had to follow and it was felt that:

      i. UCL would be vulnerable if it did not require supervisors to ensure risk assessments were being undertaken.

      ii. Though being a postgraduate research (PGR) student supervisor was different compared to a taught student supervisor, care needed to be taken with the wording to ensure it did not give impression that supervisors did not have any mandatory duties.

      iii. In terms of a sanction for supervisors not fulfilling their obligations, there were HR processes for dealing with those.

      iv. This matter be revisited with relevant UCL officers as students required a clear framework about what to expect from their supervisors.

c. It was commented that by indicating a particular obligation as a 'must' could potentially give rise to research misconduct if it was not met.

d. It was suggested that if obligations were indicated to be a 'must', the wording in the Code needed to be linked to a UCL policy. This would allow researchers to have clarity as they were members of staff.

e. The inclusion of a table of relevant polices that applied for the 'musts' would be useful.

f. Guidance from UCL Legal Services would be required in relation to ensuring correct codification of obligations throughout the Code.

6.3.   RGC:

a. Approved the current direction and revisions to the Code.

b. Considered that the chart indicating the framework of UCL expectations of research practice was very useful.

c. Proposed that a meeting of the RGC Chair, Registrar, Pro-Vice-Provost of the Doctoral School and the Director of HR be convened to discuss the requirements for research student supervisors to determine what duties should be mandatory and those that should be best practice.

d. Proposed that Legal Services be consulted over the appropriateness of the 'musts' throughout the Code by determining whether they were covered by UCL policies and/or legislation.

e. Noted that the near final revised version of the Code be submitted to the June meeting of Academic Committee this session for formal approval. Prior to that it would be circulated to RGC for consultation either at its next meeting or subsequently via email.

7. Research Policy – Update Report

7.1.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

8. Annual Report on UCL's Research Misconduct Procedure (Paper 1-04)

8.1.   RGC received the Annual Report on the operation of UCL's Research Misconduct Procedure 2018-19 and noted that it would also be submitted to

Audit Committee for information.

9.   UCL Research Misconduct Procedure – Update Report (Paper 1-05)

9.1.   Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

10.   Correcting the Scientific Record (Paper 1-06)

10.1.   RGC received an update note on work around the transparency of the correction of the research record following proven cases of research misconduct. RGC noted that:

a.   A flowchart setting out the proposed process had been prepared by the Research integrity Team and was intended to be submitted to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) for discussion.
b.   It was considered that the support of COPE was required to give authority to this area as journals did not always act on the institution's advice following a misconduct verdict.
c.   A route for formal feedback from COPE had yet to be agreed while the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) had provided informal advice.
d.   Subsequent to the last RGC meeting, a meeting of relevant UCL officers had been convened to discuss further matters surrounding the process for correcting the scientific record.

10.2.   The Chair was keen to have responses from COPE and UKRIO on the proposed process by the next RGC meeting.

11.   Research Ethics Review – Policy Update (Paper 1-07)

11.1.   The Head of Research Integrity introduced an update report on the progress of the research ethics review project at UCL in relation to the revision of the new UCL Research Ethics Policy. The key points made were:

a.   The Steering Group had continued to revise the draft ethics policy document for further clarity and had also written the draft risk levels.
b.   Following additional feedback from faculties and the Steering Group, the policy has been further revised but there were still points that required additional review and clarification.
c.   Further work needed to be undertaken in relation to the professional practice and secondary data and archives exemptions and the wording finalised.
d.   The Head of Research Integrity was meeting with faculties but they were each at different stages of readiness to implement the devolved review process. The Faculty of Laws was ready to be devolved and the Institute of Education was second while other faculties needed more assistance and to undertake more mapping.

e. The online system for the devolved process would not be in place by September 2020.

11.2. Subsequent to the last RGC meeting, the Chair had written to all Faculty Deans about the planned implementation of the devolved ethical review structure with effect from September 2020. However, not all Faculty Deans had responded to this communication about the rollout as there were resource implications involved for them. It was acknowledged that this was a key priority for the Provost but more resources were being requested to take forward this work, and therefore the September 2020 rollout would not be possible for all faculties.

12. Research Integrity – Update Report

12.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

13. UCL Statement on Transparency in Research (Paper 1-08)

13.1. The Vice-Provost (Research) introduced the UCL Statement on Transparency in Research. The key points made were:

a. The Statement set out UCL's expectations of researchers with regards to ensuring transparency – and where appropriate, reproducibility – in their research.
b. It included a copyright statement as the UK Reproducibility Network was keen to adopt the Statement as a national standard.
c. It was approved by Academic Committee at its meeting held earlier this month.
d. It had been subsequently published on the UCL website and communicated to the UCL community via TheWeek@UCL newsletter.

14. Third Party Funder Notification Group – Update Report (Paper 1-09)

14.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

15. Report from UCL Research Ethics and Governance Committees (Papers 1-10, 1-11, 1-12)

15.1. RGC received the following reports:
a. Update report on UCL Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Bodies.
b. Institute of Education Research Ethics Committee Annual Report 2018-19.

      c.   Update report on any matters of interest contained in the minutes submitted to the RGC Secretary since the last meeting.

16.   Date of Next Meeting

16.1. The next meeting of RGC would take place on Tuesday 17th March 2020 at 2:00pm in the South Wing Council Room.

The meeting finished at 12 noon.

Ms Rachel Port, Secretary to Research Governance Committee
January 2020