



## **Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee**

Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2023, 10:00am

South Wing Council Room with facilities to join the meeting online via MS Teams

### **Minutes**

#### **Present Members:**

Professor Geraint Rees (Chair); Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Professor Lynn Ang; Dr Paul Ayris; Jeremy Barraud; Michael Brown; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Sarah Chaytor; Andrew Cooper; Rebecca Edwards; Fran Hartop; June Hedges; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Professor Jacqui Glass; Claire Glen; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally; Ciaran Moynihan; Professor Courtenay Norbury; Professor James Phillips; Issy Smith; Professor Cheryl Thomas KC; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Emma Todd; Nicholas Tyndale; Dr Kathryn Walsh

#### **Apologies:**

Professor David Bogle; Marie Gallagher; Alex Hall; Martin Moyle; Professor Simon Walker-Samuel; Professor Andrew Wills

#### **In attendance:**

For Minutes 1-15: Gail Adams, Director of RIS Compliance and Assurance

For Minutes 1-15: Megan Gerrie, Director, Planning and Projects

For Minute 7: Stephanie Allison, Assistant Director, Research Ethics Service

#### **Officer:**

Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity

### **Part I: Preliminary Business**

#### **1. Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2023-24 (1-01)**

- 1.1. Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee (RIGEC) approved its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2023-24 session.
- 1.2. RIGEC agreed that the REF Strategy Group be added to the list of sub-committees reporting to RIGEC.

- 1.3. The Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee: Fran Hortop, Associate Director, Campaign Proposition, Office for the Vice-President (Advancement); June Hedges, Head of Liaison and Support Services, Library Services; Issy Smith, Students' Union Postgraduate Officer; and Emma Todd, Director of Research Culture.

## **2. Minutes**

- 2.1. RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2023 [Minutes, 42-52, 2022-23], subject to an amendment to the confidential minutes.
- 2.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

## **3. Matters Arising**

- 3.1. There were no matters arising.

## **Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion**

### **4. Chair's Report**

- 4.1. The Chair gave an oral report on any relevant developments since the last RIGEC meeting. The following points were made:
  - a. The UK had agreed a deal to associate to Horizon Europe in September 2023. The Chair expressed his thanks to UCL's European Research & Innovation Office for all their work to support researchers whilst the UK was outside the programme. It was considered that there were even more opportunities for projects given the push for bilateral arrangements with Europe and increased applications by UCL researchers for Horizon Europe Funding were to be encouraged.
  - b. UCL had performed very strongly in the third Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) results. UCL scored top marks in the areas of intellectual property and commercialisation, research partnerships, working with business and working with the public and third sector. There was room for improvement in the areas of: increasing commercial income; Continuing Professional Development, and; some aspects of community engagement.
  - c. The Chair had been part of a successful UCL visit to East Asia recently which presented numerous opportunities in the research space and significant commercial partnerships. It was noted that Tohoku University was the only candidate for the first round of the Japanese Government's 'University for International Research Excellence' scheme that would give access to the revenue from a JPY10 trillion fund managed for enhanced education and research activities.

- d. The Chair had attended all the recent UK party political conferences on behalf of UCL and undertook the panel work. This was a new initiative for UCL to attend such events. At ministerial level, it was important to indicate the work HEIs did around research, innovation and global engagement activities and asking how UCL could help tended to elicit more interesting responses.

## **5. Research Culture Programme Annual Report 2022-23 (1-02)**

- 5.1. The Director of Research Culture introduced the annual report on UCL's Research Culture programme during the 2022/23 academic year. The following points were made during the presentation:
  - a. In 2021, UCL began work to develop a more focused and aligned approach to improving its research culture, supported by Enhancing Research Culture funding from Research England.
  - b. This longer-term commitment had facilitated a move towards a more strategic and longer-term approach to shift culture.
  - c. UCL had started to lay the foundations for delivery of its 10-year Research Culture Roadmap which guided its work in this area that was published in January 2023. Delivery partners had been identified for the Roadmap's goals and themes to ensure they were achieved.
  - d. Faculties had prepared three-year delivery plans for initiatives to enhance local research culture whilst a number of cross-UCL projects that addressed common issues across the institution had been kick-started.
  - e. A specialist central Research Culture Team had been recruited whilst governance structures had been updated to ensure UCL was aligned and joined-up in its approach in this area of work.
- 5.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
  - a. It was noted that University of Glasgow was a trailblazer in this area whilst Leeds and Newcastle universities were in a similar position to UCL.
  - b. It was suggested that the Research Culture Team engage with the Research Support Community of Practice (CoP), which included professional services colleagues, as well as the Impact CoP.
  - c. The intersection of the culture work with the work of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team was noted. The culture work also linked to change and improvement with the Change and Digital portfolio managed by ISD.
  - d. It was suggested that research culture could also be covered in the regular monthly meetings of the faculty Vice-Deans (Innovation and Enterprise) to also ensure UCL was joined-up in this area and did not duplicate effort.
  - e. In relation to measuring success in research culture, it was considered that this was difficult but that components of UCL's performance benchmarked against peer institutions was important. At institutional level, UCL wished to develop a dashboard so faculties could measure progress

on their respective initiatives/projects and this would also be covered by UCL's REF Strategy Group.

- f. The Chair expressed this thanks to the Director of Research Culture and her team for all their work. Members were encouraged to consider internal excellence and research culture and to disseminate the report at departmental level.

5.3. RIGEC received the Research Culture Programme Annual Report 2022-23.

## **6. RIGE Funding Programmes Annual Report (1-03)**

6.1. The Director of Operations, RIGE, introduced the first annual report to summarise the competitive internal funding programmes managed by RIGE. The following points were made during the presentation:

- a. The report was a follow-up to the preliminary report provided to RIGEC in March 2023 which outlined the ambition to harmonise RIGE's portfolio of competitive funding programmes, increase the agility and efficiencies in the underpinning processes, and make the programmes more user-friendly.
- b. This led to a pilot in Autumn 2022 for the first harmonised campaign and application round for the schemes run by RIGE. £2.6m was allocated to 231 projects and the total allocation increased to £3.4m for 241 projects if the Translational Research Office (TRO) was included.
- c. 77 departments across all faculties received funding, of which 51 received two or more awards.
- d. In terms of the four-year period 2019/20 to 2022/23, £11.3m was allocated in 1,037 competitive awards to 112 departments. The funding originated from UCL (£3.3m) and external sources (£8.0m).
- e. Funding for international activities had contributed to securing at least £5m in external awards.
- f. The harmonisation process had highlighted four ambitions for RIGE funding programmes of: simpler processes and systems; greater consistency between schemes; better understanding of user needs; better understanding of the investment value and impact.
- g. The Group was submitting a request to the Research & Innovation Operations (RIO) Portfolio to begin a discovery exercise to understand current arrangements and analyse possible options to meet the business need.

6.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. RIGE managed a range of funding streams both internal and external that also included some streams for public policy engagement with their own external accountabilities.

- b. It was important to acknowledge the core funding contribution that the UCLH Biomedical Centre made to both the TRO and Academic Careers Office too.
- c. In Global Engagement (GE), it was noted that Early Career Researchers (ECRs) were encouraged to act as lead applicants for seed funding, and they started running workshops with faculty Vice-Deans (International) when calls opened to support those who wished to apply. GE aimed to ensure a minimum of 30% of its funding was allocated to ECRs, and was keen to explore how it might standardise practice across RIGE and develop stronger links into UCL's research culture activities.
- d. In relation to queries over the success rate data, it was noted that this varied between schemes which affected the overall average. It was intended, however, that the data to be shared with faculties would cover past awards only.
- e. It was suggested that the report findings could be used at Faculty Executive meetings.

6.3. RIGEC:

- a. Endorsed the approach for RIGE funding around the four ambitions to help inform their future development.
- b. Received the RIGE Funding Programmes Annual Report.

**7. Research Ethics Governance: Proposed Structure (1-04)**

- 7.1. The Director of Compliance and Assurance (Research and Innovation) introduced the paper setting out a revision to UCL's governance structure for research ethics. The following points were made during the presentation:
- a. At the last meeting RIGEC approved the proposed approach was to combine the strategic functions of the Research Ethics Strategy Board (RESB) and the current central REC (with revised membership and terms of reference) as a new central UCL REC; the review of high-risk research ethics applications to be divided between three new committees; and a new oversight committee for low-risk review and Local RECs (LRECs) would also be created.
  - b. RIGEC had noted the associated risks around the scale and pace of the proposed changes and further consideration had been given to the detail of the implementation.
  - c. It was intended that the revised structure be implemented in two phases, with the setting up and implementation of the new committees over Term 1 and Term 2 in phase 1. It was anticipated that the new committees would start work at the end of Term 2 or the beginning of Term 3.
  - d. In phase 2 as the Research Ethics Service (RES) moved to a new IT system and developed its reporting, the management information combined with committee reviewer experiences would enable the RES to

make informed decisions on the developing research governance structure and to predict future needs.

- e. It was proposed that given the numbers of applications for ethical approval involved global health research were relatively low, that the Life and Medical Sciences (LMS) REC could review those in phase 1. It was anticipated that this would be less burdensome than establishing a new committee for a relatively small volume of specialist research.
- f. It was noted that the current workload requirement for committee members of 5 hours per month was being exceeded and it was proposed that the time requirement be increased to one day per month.
- g. It was intended that an update on the operation of the revised structure be considered at a future RIGEC meeting.

7.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. It was noted that the Research Ethics Strategy Board had fed back on the revised proposal and were supportive of the proposed way forward to review global health research.
- b. In relation to current REC members and low risk reviewers, it was noted that there was a gender imbalance with a high number of females and that more males should be encouraged to be involved with this work.
- c. It was suggested that some kind of acknowledgement at faculty level on an annual basis to those involved could help to increase the number of male reviewers and committee members as well as raise the overall status of the activity.

7.3. RIGEC:

- a. Approved the proposed phased approach for the implementation of UCL's new governance structure for research ethics, and the overall proposed new direction for research ethics governance, set out in Paper 1-04.

**8. UCL Research Integrity Annual Statement 2022-23 (1-05)**

8.1. The Director of Compliance and Assurance introduced UCL's Research Integrity Annual Statement. The following points were made during the presentation:

- a. All HEIs were required to procedure an annual statement on their research integrity activities to comply with the requirements of the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity, as well as adherence to various funder requirements.
- b. The statement had been prepared by the former Head of Research Integrity and showed how UCL continued to promote and embed a culture of research integrity and support and enable researchers to ensure the rigour and integrity of research at UCL.
- c. Over the last session, particular highlights included: the launch of the new online Research Integrity eLearning course; the publication of the new

UCL Code of Conduct; as well as several research culture projects.

- 8.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
- a. It was noted that the two posts within the Research Integrity Team were currently vacant and it was intended that the staffing resource be moved to the Compliance and Assurance area in Research and Innovation Services (RIS). A summary about the move of UCL's research integrity activities would be finalised early in 2024.
  - b. However, the Team's training commitments were covered for the remainder of the current session and the position would need to be re-examined for next session.
  - c. It was suggested that a new section on Trusted Research be added to the statement.
- 8.3. RIGEC:
- a. Approved the Annual Statement subject to the addition of a short section on Trusted Research for approval by RIGEC via Chair's Action.
  - b. Noted that the revised Annual Statement then be submitted to the meeting of Council in February 2024 for formal approval and subsequent publication on the UCL website and submission to the signatories of the Concordat.

## **9. Declaration of Interest Compliance (1-06)**

- 9.1. The Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise (I&E), introduced the paper setting out an update on institutional declaration of interest (DoI) compliance. The following points were made during the presentation:
- a. The policy required all senior staff (grade 10 and above) to declare their interests annually and provided a framework for staff and PhD students to disclose and manage conflicts of interest.
  - b. The rate of compliance had increased from 65% in 2021-22 declaration year to 80% in the 2022-23 declaration year. The aim was to reach 95% compliance.
  - c. Compliance rates in the Institute of Education and the Faculty of Laws had improved by 110% and 43% respectively since the 2021-22 declaration year, and 6 of the 11 faculties now had a compliance rate of above 80%.
  - d. In recognition of the policy and support established by I&E and the improvements in compliance, KPMG awarded UCL an amber-green assurance rating in the most recent internal audit completed for declarations of interest.
  - e. The reasons behind the increase in compliance rates included: the introduction of a new DoI system feature in Inside UCL that was easy to use; the assistance of Directors of Operations to help the push to raise compliance; and communications from I&E and working with other senior stakeholders.

- f. One further suggested improvement to raise compliance related to internal staff being prompted to make a declaration upon being promoted.
  - g. It was intended that a review of the policy be undertaken in Autumn 2023 and that an internal audit focussing specifically on disclosure and management of conflicts be carried out in 2024. It was acknowledged that this aspect of the policy had a more complicated workflow and that greater clarity on data sharing was needed.
- 9.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
- a. The Chair commended the improvement in the rate of compliance and that the VP RIGE Office had not reached 95% compliance.
  - b. In relation to encouraging colleagues to make declarations, the Executive Director, I&E, intended to contact Organisational Development who were working on revising UCL's appraisal process about linking the policy into that process to help increase compliance.
  - c. It was noted that the new DoI dashboard on Tableau database was not publicly available but it was hoped that the visibility of compliance rates would drive those up across UCL for the 2023-24 declaration year.
  - d. In terms of disclosures of conflict, it was noted that RIS needed to review those when assessing grant applications but responsibilities for those checks rested with departments.
  - e. The Chair expressed his thanks to the I&E Team for all their work in this area. It was suggested that RIGE Operations Committee might consider the operational challenges in relation to the policy and that where faculties might wish to push this matter forward, they could use the update report.
- 9.3. RIGEC received the update report on institutional Declaration of Interest compliance.

### **Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information**

- 10. Confidential: Research Misconduct Committee Annual Report 2022-23 (1-07)**
- 10.1. RIGEC received the Research Misconduct Committee Annual Report 2022-23.
- 11. Confidential: Research Misconduct Procedure Annual Report 2022-23 (1-08)**
- 11.1. RIGEC received the Research Misconduct Procedure Annual Report 2022-23.



## **12. Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF3) Results Summary (1-09)**

12.1. RIGEC received the KEF3 Results Summary.

## **13. RIGEC Ways of Working**

13.1. Under “Any Other Business”, the Chair noted that RIGEC was operating well and the following points were made:

- a. Authors of papers to be submitted to RIGEC were reminded to make clear therein about the action(s) that were required of the committee and, in particular, the aspects that were for decision and/or approval.
- b. Members were encouraged to report back on the committee’s work to their respective faculties as necessary.
- c. Members were also invited to contact both the Chair and the Secretary with any thoughts about how the committee might work better as a team.

## **14. Appointments of UCL staff to public bodies**

14.1. Under “Any Other Business”, the Chair reported on recent activities with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and the following points were made:

- a. It was noted that the UK Secretary of State for Science had written to UKRI to request that it disband a newly formed equality, diversity and inclusion panel. It was alleged that panel members had shared “extremist views” on social media in relation to the Israel-Hamas war.
- b. The Secretary of State also challenged the process of appointing members to the panel and UKRI had conducted an immediate investigation into the appointment process.
- c. This in turn had led to further comment on social media with a range of views being expressed about academic freedom being threatened.
- d. One of the panel members was a UCL academic who was being supported by the Chair and their Faculty Dean as well as Media Relations.
- e. This situation had raised the issue of whether there should be limits for individuals to express their views when appointed onto a public body.

14.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

- a. UCL did not take a position around comments made by its staff and students on social media on matters that were outwith UCL as it supported free speech.
- b. It was noted that cyber activity increased when individuals were active on social media and UCL then became a strong cyber target which put individuals at risk.

**15. Date of the next meeting**

- 15.1. The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2023 at 10:00am-12 noon and be hybrid in the South Wing G12 Council Room.

Rachel Port  
Governance Manager: Research Integrity  
December 2023