⏛UCL

Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 8th December 2022, 10:00am

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

Minutes

Present Members:
Professor Geraint Rees (Chair); Professor Lynn Ang; Dr Paul Ayris; Jeremy Barraud; Professor David Bogle; Mike Brown; Professor Richard Bucknall (vice-Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker); Sarah Chaytor; Andrew Cooper; Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE; Professor Stephen M. Hart; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Professor Jacqui Glass; Claire Glen; Richard Jackson; Professor Kate Jeffery; Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally; Benjamin Meunier; Martin Moyle; Ciaran Moynihan; Professor James Phillips; Professor Cheryl Thomas KC; Nicholas Tyndale; Kirsty Walker; Professor Simon Walker-Samuel; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Andrew Wills

In attendance:
For Minutes 12-26: Adam Cresswell, Head of Reporting and Evaluation
For Minutes 12-26: Megan Gerrie, Director, Planning and Projects
For Minutes 12-26: Amy Lightstone, Head of Engagement and Operations (London)
For Minutes 16-26: Emma Todd, Director of Research Culture
For Minutes 17-18: Dr Magda Morawska, Research Policy and Governance Officer

Apologies:
Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Sarah Cowls; Donna Dalrymple; James Davis: Alex Hall; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Dr Francesca Scotti; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker

Officer:
Rachel Port, RIGEC Secretary

Part I: Preliminary Business

12.   Minutes

12.1.   RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2022 [Minutes 1-11, 2022-23].

13.   Matters Arising from the Minutes

13.1.   Arising from Minute 3.4, the Chair had liaised with the Head of Research Integrity about the pilot to test the research integrity training programme.

13.2.   Arising from Minute 4.3, the Chair and the Dean of the Faculty of Population Health Sciences planned to meet to discuss ways to build relations with middle level colleagues at the Wellcome Trust.

13.3.   Arising from Minute 5.3, the Chair had liaised with the Chairs of the Research and Innovation Boards about their reporting lines.

13.4.   Arising from Minute 6.5, the RIGEC Secretary had liaised with the Secretary to Academic Board (AB) and the compliance report on the revised UCL Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest policy would be submitted to the 8 February 2023 meeting of AB for information.

13.5.   Arising from Minute 6.4, the RIGEC Secretary would follow up with the Chief People Officer on progress by Information Services Division (ISD) to develop the associated system improvements in MyHR, including improvements to automated notifications.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

14.   Chair's Report

14.1.   The Chair gave an oral report on relevant developments in the areas of research income and Horizon Europe since the last RIGEC meeting. The key points made were:
   a.   The Chair observed that there had been a slight decrease in the number of applications for research grant awards.
   b.   There was anecdotal evidence that some Heads of Department were turning down applications to meet internal savings targets, whilst there was a supply side issue for some grant awards such as, for example, delays in The Wellcome Trust portfolio.
   c.   RIGEC considered that staff should continue to apply for Research, Innovation and/or Translation awards to make an impact on the world.
   d.   Research income was important to UCL and all levels of research income incurred expenditure.
   e.   In terms of the future of the European Research Council (ERC) funding scheme that was delivered under the EU's "Horizon Europe" programme, researchers were not applying to Horizon Europe at the same rate as previously given the current uncertainty in this area and consortia were not being supported.

f. The Horizon Europe funding guarantee had been extended to cover all calls that closed on or before 31 December 2022, but it was currently unclear if the guarantee would be extended.

g. It was noted that unallocated research grant income would need to be spent by HEIs by March 2023 in the three areas of research capital, QR and Talent.

h. In light of this, University Management Committee (UMC) had brought forward UCL's research capital spend for future years and was working with UCL Commercial and Procurement Services to be selective in allocating spend in this area by March 2023.

i. One priority project to look at better options for freezers that were needed to operate at minus 80 degrees had been identified given UCL spent some £1.8m per year in this area.

j. In terms of QR and Talent, the current financial forecasts were looking stable for AY 22/23 and suggestions were welcomed on possible areas of spend in these categories by March 2023.

14.2. During discussion, the following points were made:

a. In terms of research income, it was noted the Institute of Education had seen a slight decrease in the number of research grant applications submitted whilst the award value remained constant. Therefore, the underlying metrics were important.

b. There was a nuanced picture across UCL and that in some faculties there was a decrease in both grant awards and income which was of concern.

c. It was noted that there was a new UCL Tableau dashboard on staff trends that might be of interest to the committee.

d. It was suggested that this slight decrease in application rates could be attributed to workload issues. However, UCL set expectations around research, innovation, translation and teaching as well as outputs for academic staff and that the Academic Careers Framework should act as a guide for staff.

e. Overall, it was considered that UCL was still strong on research income but it needed to continue to thrive despite the current financial situation.

f. In relation to Horizon Europe, it was suggested that visas deterred individuals from making an application, although it was highly likely that such costs would be covered by Horizon Europe funding.

g. In terms of possible spend before March 2023 in the three above areas, it was suggested that under the 'Talent' category more resources could be assigned to support Early Career Researchers.

15. Confidential: Future REF Action Plan (2-08)

15.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

15.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

15.3. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

16. UCL Innovation & Enterprise Update (2-09)

16.1. Dr Kathryn Walsh, Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise (I&E), gave an update on the current external landscape, activities and challenges in the I&E area as well as a forward look on significant milestones over the coming months. The key points made were:

a. In terms of the external environment, Research England (RE) was increasingly focused on business engagement and commercialisation in the knowledge exchange policy area, whilst the increased success of University spin-out companies was noted.

b. RE had an accountability framework around Knowledge Exchange to monitor compliance.

c. The next report against the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC) action plan for UCL was due in early 2024.

d. The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) results were released last September and UCL performed at the highest level in perspectives of Research Partnerships, Intellectual Property and commercialisation, and Public engagement. The revised KEF narratives would be submitted in March 2023.

e. In relation to the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), data collection was underway for institutional sign off by February 2023 and a benchmarking report would be prepared, following the release of full sector data, to the July 2023 meeting of RIGEC.

f. The Disclosure of Conflict and Declaration of Interest policy was due for review in 2023 and the ownership of this policy would also be considered. This was especially important given the number of UCL staff who also held external roles.

g. The I&E interim strategy was due for refresh in 2023 and would come to RIGEC in Autumn 2023.

h. In relation to Knowledge Exchange funding schemes, I&E were administering elements of the UKRI Institutional Impact Acceleration award. Preliminary figures for the last round showed that UCL had been successful in its applications for funding.

i. UCL delivered part of the Innovate UK EDGE programme which supported high growth SMEs in the London area.

j. I&E were working with Student and Registry Services to establish the impact of changes to the start-up and innovator visas. The plan was for endorsement of visas that allowed students to remain in the UK to develop business ideas to be provided by private sector providers and the concern was that such providers could potentially over-charge students.

16.2. The Chair expressed his thanks on behalf of the Committee to the Executive Director and the I&E team for all the activities being undertaken in their area and noted the breadth of the team's work.

16.3. RIGEC:
   a. Noted that the Secretary would add the items shown in the proposed schedule of I&E business at Paper 2-09 to the annual planner for RIGEC.

17. Enhancing UCL's Research Culture: Roadmap and High-Level Delivery Plan (2-10)

17.1. Emma Todd, Director of Research Culture, introduced the draft Research Culture Roadmap and the associated High-Level Delivery Plan. The key points made were:
   a. The Roadmap set out the proposed framework that UCL would use to organise work to enhance its research culture over the next ten years. The Delivery Plan set out the approach to delivering against the Roadmap over the next three years 2022/23-2024/25 that would be funded by RE.
   b. The Roadmap identified five themes by which activities would be organised.
   c. The importance that individuals placed on the values of care and respect were recognised and were included in the environment needed to create the desired research environment at UCL.
   d. The Director of Research Culture was in the process of recruiting a dedicated specialist Research Culture team consisting of some ten members of staff to support effective delivery of research culture initiatives across faculties.
   e. Some 10 early projects (6 UCL projects; 4 collaborative with other institutions) had been identified as priorities and would form part of a first phase of work.
   f. Whilst progress had been made in research culture activities across UCL, the "how" would be challenging. Therefore, ensuring that both the governance oversight and engagement with this area of work was right would be crucial to rolling out the Roadmap.

17.2. During discussion, the following points were made:
   a. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Director of Research Culture for all her work and the progress made in taking forward research culture initiatives across UCL.
   a. In relation to the project on promotions review, this was in the discovery phase and considered to be a key issue in culture discussions.
   b. It was commented that within the Faculty of Laws, for example, there was a common view that career progression varied based on diversity and took time whilst gender equality varied across grades. Professor Carsten

Gerner-Beuerle accepted the invitation to join the early stages of the scoping project on promotions review.

c. All projects were to take a holistic approach and be wide in their scope. In response to the suggestion that the Academic Careers Framework be revisited as part of the above project, it was noted that this Framework was more suited for those in senior academic positions rather than at professorial levels where the banding was considered to be variable.

d. Whilst research culture was considered to be a shared endeavour, it was noted that I&E was covered in the REF and impact, but had limited coverage in the Roadmap given, for example, how the UCL brand impacted on culture would be an important consideration.

e. In relation to the Concordat for the Development of Researchers, it was noted that this document was owned by the Doctoral School but delivered by Organisational Development and progress was currently being measured.

f. It was intended that the Director of Research Culture would work with the RIGE Communications Team in January 2023 on the rollout of the Roadmap that would involve a short consultation before work started to deliver against the early priority projects.

17.3. RIGEC:
a. Proposed that the Director of Research Culture and the Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise (I&E) liaise about the inclusion of I&E across the Roadmap.

18. UCL Research Integrity Annual Statement (2-11)

18.1. Dr Magda Morawska, Research Policy and Governance Officer, introduced the draft UCL Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021-22. The key points made were:
a. All institutions that signed up to the UUK Concordat to Support Research Integrity were formally required to publish an annual statement to evidence their compliance to the commitments in the Concordat, as well as adherence to various funder requirements.
b. UCL's statement was prepared by the Research Integrity Team and adopted a narrative approach on its research integrity activities by showing the steps taken each academic year, following on from its previous statements, to ensure openness and transparency.
c. UCL's statement tended to focus on evidencing its actions towards promoting and embedding a culture of research integrity, as well as supporting and enabling researchers, to ensure the rigour and integrity of research at UCL.

18.2. During discussion, the following points were made:
a. It was suggested that the relationship between research integrity and

research ethics could be flagged more clearly in the statement, especially in relation to training. It was noted that more departmental level training information in relation to research ethics would be made available for 2022-23 as the local RECs would have to produce an annual report on low risk research and training at a departmental and/or faculty level.

b. It was noted that whilst research ethics was about compliance and assurance, it also covered academic endeavour.

c. It was proposed that an extra factual paragraph about research ethics be prepared for inclusion in the draft statement that could be approved via Chair's Action.

d. In relation to future statements, it was queried whether research integrity training at departmental level should be included. In response, it was noted that the Research Integrity Team were unaware of that work being undertaken given the size of UCL.

e. It was noted that work on Conflicts of Interest had a bearing on research integrity and that could be noted in future statements.

f. It was suggested that all the research integrity activities being undertaken across the institution be integrated more in future statements.

18.3. RIGEC:
a. Approved the draft UCL Research Integrity Annual Statement 2021-22, subject to the addition of material covering research ethics to be prepared by the Head of Research Integrity.

b. Agreed that the draft revised statement be submitted to the Chair for approval, on behalf of RIGEC, via Chair's action.

c. Noted that the revised statement would be submitted to Council for formal approval at its meeting to be held on 16 February 2023 and, subject to its approval, it would be subsequently published on the UCL Research Integrity website.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

19.   Confidential: Evolving UCL's approach to engagement with China (2-12)

19.1. RIGEC received the paper on evolving UCL's approach to engagement with China that had been considered by University Management Committee.

20.   ResearchFish at UCL: Plan for the 2022/23 submission period (2-13)

20.1. RIGEC received the ResearchFish at UCL: Plan for the 2022/23 submission period.

21.   Confidential: UCL Prize Nominations (2-14)

21.1. RIGEC received the paper on UCL academics nominated for national or international prizes.

22.   Confidential: Animal Welfare Strategy Committee Annual Report 2021-22 (2-15)
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22.1. RIGEC received the Animal Welfare Strategy Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

23.   Confidential: Research Ethics Strategy Board Annual Report 2021-22 (2-16)

23.1. RIGEC received the Research Ethics Strategy Board Annual Report 2021-22.

24.   Library Committee Annual Report 2021-22 (2-17)

24.1. RIGEC received the Library Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

25.   Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2021-22 (2-18)

25.1. RIGEC received the Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

26.   Date of the next meeting

26.1. The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 23rd March 2023 at 10:00am and be hybrid in the South Wing Council Room.

Rachel Port
Governance Manager: Research Integrity, Office of General Counsel
February 2023