Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 13th October 2022, 2:00pm

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; Mr Jeremy Barraud; Professor David Bogle; Mr Mike Brown; Ms Sarah Chaytor; Mr Andrew Cooper; Ms Donna Dalrymple; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Professor Jacqui Glass; Ms Claire Glen; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Mr Benjamin Meunier; Mr Martin Moyle; Mr Ciaran Moynihan; Professor James Phillips; Dr Francesca Scotti; Professor Cheryl Thomas KC; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Mr Nicholas Tyndale; Ms Kirsty Walker; Dr Kathryn Walsh

In attendance:
Ms Megan Gerrie; Ms Amy Lightstone

Apologies:
Professor Stella Bruzzi; Ms Sarah Cowls; Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE; Mr Alex Hall; Professor Stephen M. Hart; Mr Richard Jackson; Professor Kate Jeffery; Ms Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally; Ms Aloma Onyemah

Officer:
Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Preliminary Business

1. Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2022-23 (1-01)

1.1. Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee (RIGEC) approved its Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2022-23.

1.2. It was noted that the membership had been revised to take account of some of the Pro-Vice-Provost positions having been abolished while the Pro-Vice-Provost (International) role was currently vacant as the postholder had retired. The Third Party Notification Group currently remained as a sub-committee of RIGEC and updated terms of reference and membership for this Group as well as plans for managing notifications at UCL would be considered at a future meeting.

1.3. The Chair welcomed the new members to the Committee.

2.   Minutes

2.1. RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30th June 2022 [Minutes 37-50, 2021-22].

3.   Matters Arising from the Minutes

3.1. Arising from minute 41.3.c, the Arts and Humanities (A&H), Institute of Education (IOE), Laws and Social and Historical Sciences (SHS) Faculty Deans had agreed to set up School level Research and Innovation Boards in line with other faculties.

3.2. Arising from minute 43.3.a, the Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise, confirmed that the preparation of a paper on a UCL strategy for Innovate UK funding was in progress pending some further data analysis.

3.3. Arising from minute 43.3.b, a meeting had been held with UCL Consultancy about tendering through them for AHRC funding by the faculties of A&H, Laws and SHS. It was intended that colleagues from SHS would be linked into those conversations.

3.4. Arising from Minute 46.2.e, the Chair would follow up with the Head of Research Integrity about the outcome of the pilot to test the online research integrity programme, as well as the plan for rolling it out across UCL and the tools required by faculties to monitor compliance. It was considered that both The Wellcome Trust and the UKRI would be interested in the development of the programme.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

4.   Chair's Report

4.1. The Chair gave an oral report on any relevant developments since the last RIGEC meeting and the operation of the committee. The key points made were:
   a. UCL's REF 2021 submissions had achieved a very successful outcome, particularly in the areas of translation and environment. A future plan of action for the REF by UCL would be prepared for University Management Committee (UMC) and RIGEC would have strategic oversight of that activity.
   b. UCL had also achieved a successful outcome in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) where UCL scored well on translation .It was

intended that a similar future plan of action be prepared for UCL's participation in that exercise.

c. UCL had also been successful in securing continued funding for research culture at £1m for both 2022/23 and 2023/24 as well as being awarded Impact Acceleration Awards.

d. The current political situation was proving challenging. One of the main issues facing higher education institutions (HEIs) was the future of the European Research Council (ERC) funding scheme that was delivered under the EU's "Horizon Europe" programme. UCL's Horizon Europe Response Group that was chaired by the RIGEC Chair met regularly. While the future of this funding remained unclear it was anticipated that there would be a gradual reduction of this funding stream to HEIs. There was also anecdotal evidence that researchers were not applying to Horizon Europe at the same rate as previously given the current uncertainty in this area.

e. Consequently, there had been an increase in the number of rapid calls to UCL's Research Facilitators from researchers seeking a fast turnaround to issues which had created pressure on that Team. It was noted that there were caps on the number of research funding awards UCL could make, especially under its Future Leaders scheme.

f. The Chair noted that it was important for RIGEC to cover all areas that fell under the remit of RIGE and that any business intended for discussion was strategic rather than being for noting. Secondly, RIGEC would need to be agile to respond to changing needs as well as taking a joined-up approach to work conducted between its meetings.

g. External Affairs would also be very important to RIGEC and it was noted that there a new UK government Minister for Science and Investment Security. In terms of global work, how UCL's Faculties were projected externally was crucial to secure strategic investment.

h. Moving forwards, it was anticipated that UCL would concentrate its global activities on certain regions, and elements of that work would be considered by RIGEC as well as other senior UCL committees.

4.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. In terms of Horizon Europe funding, one member commented that all HEIs were in the same position. Currently, EU partners were tending to lead bids for such funding rather than the UK as the perceived association was considered to be too complex by UK HEIs. However, it was felt that UCL should continue to apply for ERC grants as there was cautious optimism that the situation would reach a successful resolution.

b. In response to a suggestion in relation to UK research funding, whereby it was proposed that UCL should link with those who led on research streams at The Wellcome Trust, amongst others, the Chair noted that colleagues in RIGE had been tasked to identify the senior colleagues across all the UK Research Councils with a view to meeting them regularly to help build relationships with UCL.

c. In terms of UCL's confirmed allocation of Research Culture funding of £1m in both 2022/23 and 2023/24 (and highly likely for 2024/25), the monies would be allocated by Research England by end October 2022. It was intended that 20% of the overall monies be allocated at faculty level and it would be divided across the faculties based on their amount of research activity, as previously.

d. The process for proposing research culture activity would be similar to last year with proposals expected to demonstrate how they: met funder criteria; aligned with UCL priorities; and would help progress local priorities.

e. Given the funding was confirmed for at least the next two years, faculties would be encouraged to take a longer-term approach to planning their research culture initiatives.

f. The Chair noted the high volume of research culture activity last year as well as some duplication of activity across faculties. It was hoped that spend on external consultancy in connection with planned activities be reduced to focus more on activities to be delivered by UCL.

g. The Head of Research Culture was building the Research Culture Team as well as working on a Roadmap and associated delivery plan for the next three years.

4.3. RIGEC:

a. Agreed that the Chair and Dean of Faculty of Population Health Sciences discuss ways to build relations with middle level colleagues at the Wellcome Trust.

5. RIGEC Governance: sub-committee structure (1-02)

5.1. The Director of Governance and Delivery, RIGE, introduced the paper setting out a proposed revised structure and terms of reference for the sub-committees of RIGEC. The key points made were:

a. RIGEC had considered and approved a high-level paper to revise its sub-committee structure at its meeting in June 2022. It was proposed that the structure be simplified with each sub-committee having a primary focus on one of three areas: operations, strategy, or compliance.

b. Since the last meeting, the RIGEC Secretary and staff from RIGE Governance and Delivery Team had met with the sub-committee chairs and other stakeholders.

c. This had resulted in a revised structure and revised draft terms of reference for the RIGE-Operations Committee (OC). Some of the activities overseen by the former Research Strategy Implementation Group would be transferred to RIGE-OC.

d. It was anticipated that some future restructuring could occur as recommendations were expected from the Research Ethics Strategy Board (RESB) to RIGEC later this session, whilst RIGEC would consider

a proposal for revised arrangements for third party notifications in due course.

e. Members could view the terms of reference for the sub-committees on the MS Teams site for RIGEC.

5.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. In relation to a query about research strategy and policy being covered by RIGEC and how that fitted in with UMC, it was noted that not all business items would be submitted to UMC as was the case under the former structure with the Provost's SMT.

b. In relation to the primary focus for each committee, it was suggested that a fourth category of "Academic" be added. The Chair did not wish to over-formalise structures and it was noted that, for example, issues around Early Career Researchers reported into different bodies but that any matter of significance would be submitted to RIGEC.

c. In terms of the School level Research and Innovation Boards, the Chair had membership of them all with representation from Innovation & Enterprise and Global Engagement aswell. It was noted that informal communications took place between the Boards and the Chair was keen that they did not have a formal reporting line but would take that forward with the Board Chairs.

d. During the Covid pandemic an informal research finance group had been convened that was considered to be of high value. The Chair and the Commercial Director were looking at both the allocation of research capital in the financial planning round and ways to help faculties recover costs from funders.

5.3. RIGEC:

a. Proposed that the Chair liaise with the Chairs of the Research and Innovation Boards about their reporting lines.

b. Approved the proposed changes to the RIGEC sub-committee structure as set out in Paper 1-02.

6. UCL Disclosures of Conflicts and Declarations of Interest: Policy and Compliance Report 2021-22 (1-03)

6.1. Dr Kathryn Walsh, Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise (I&E), introduced the UCL Disclosures of Conflicts and Declarations of Interests: Policy and Compliance Report 2021-22. The key points made were:

a. The policy was fundamental to research integrity; managing innovation projects; and to assure external funders that the institution had such a policy in place.

b. UCL's current policy was developed in light of a 2017 KPMG Audit of disclosures of conflict and declarations of interest that was approved by Council in 2020.The associated online submission system was housed within UCL MyHR.

c. The Audit identified six risk areas to be reviewed. There were several audit report actions that were outstanding relating to reporting and data handling around disclosure of conflicts and declarations of interest.

d. Compliance with the policy required improvement. The completion rate for required individuals across UCL stood at 63% in 2021-22 which represented a significant improvement on the 46% compliance rate achieved in 2020-21. It was also a major improvement on completions prior to introduction of the new policy and systems, when the completion rate stood at less than 10% of required individuals.

e. In relation to disclosures of conflict, 207 conflicts were submitted across UCL in 2021-2022 which represented a 6% increase on the previous financial year. Of the 105 disclosures begun or made in July 2022, 59 were yet to be reviewed by the relevant member of staff.

f. It was noted that it could take some time for disclosure to be reviewed even with the range of automated messages reviewers received when a conflict required action within MyHR.

g. I&E were developing guidance for conflict management plans having consulted with Heads of Department and senior Professional Services staff to understand how they currently developed such plans and required additional support.

h. A number of issues still to be addressed including getting the systems and processes prioritised across UCL to deliver on the outstanding audit report recommendations. A business case had been submitted to ISD to prioritise data handling and reporting and feedback was awaited. UCL-wide agreement on where both responsibility and support for the system should reside also needed to be addressed.

6.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. The Chair expressed his thanks to the I&E team and noted the efforts involved to reach 63% compliance despite the issues with the MyHR system and the system improvements to be made by Information Services Division (ISD).

b. The Chair considered that in the longer term, the ownership of the policy needed to be addressed. This was considered to be culturally important as I&E involved working with colleagues who held multiple responsibilities. Also, while the data currently resided in the MyHR system, HR colleagues could not access the data. The policy ownership would be discussed further once the proposed new Compliance Team was established within the Office for General Counsel (OGC). However, it was noted that I&E were keen to retain a close interest in the policy as well as RIGEC.

c. In terms of ways to increase compliance rates, it was suggested that this issue could be escalated to Academic Board and that it receive a report later this session that would also cover the planned review of the policy.

d. It was noted that Audit Committee was concerned about monitoring for any undisclosed interests with UCL's external partners. There was no

process for monitoring such non-disclosures and Research and Innovation Services did not have the resources to check every research grant funding application to ensure any disclosures of conflicts and/or declarations of interest had been made.

e. In relation to the use of Worktribe to capture any conflicts, the assessment module in that system was not ideal and it would not prevent the workflow even if such information was captured. RIS tended therefore to rely on departmental knowledge.

f. The overall risk was amber on UCL's Risk Register, with the risk being owned by Council.

g. Under the revised policy, it was noted that it did not provide any operational support for the associated online system. Therefore, I&E currently conducted spot-checks on the returns made.

h. The Chief People Officer was a member of the ISD Planning and Agile domain and would follow up on progress with the system improvements within MyHR, including improvements to automated notifications. The Chair added that it was important for ISD to implement the required developments so that compliance rates could be monitored.

6.3. RIGEC:
a. Proposed that the RIGEC Secretary liaise with the AB Secretary about AB receiving a report on the revised policy and compliance later in the 2022-23 session.

b. Agreed that the Chief People Officer report back to the next RIGEC meeting on progress by ISD to develop system improvements within MyHR.

c. Supported the prioritisation and escalation of outstanding actions from the KPMG Audit report.

d. Noted the requirement for a review of the policy in 2023.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

7. Research Culture and Environment Survey (1-04)

7.1. RIGEC received the Research Culture and Environment Survey.

8. RIGE Operations Committee: Annual Planner Feedback (1-05)

8.1. RIGEC received the RIGE Operations Committee: Annual Planner Feedback.

9.   Confidential: Research Misconduct Committee Annual Report 2021-22 (1-06)

9.1.   RIGEC received the Research Misconduct Committee Annual Report 2021-22.

10.   Research Misconduct Procedure Annual Report 2021-22 (1-07)
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10.1.   RIGEC received the Research Misconduct Procedure Annual Report 2021-22.

11.   Date of the next meeting

11.1.   The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 8th December 2022 at 10:00am and be hybrid in the South Wing Council Room.

Ms Rachel Port
Governance Manager: Research Integrity, Office of General Counsel
November 2022