Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 20th July 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 Lynn Ang; Dr Paul Ayris; Jeremy Barraud; Professor David Bogle; Michael Brown [Minute 46 onwards]; Sarah Chaytor; Andrew Cooper; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Professor Jacqui Glass; Claire Glen; Professor Susan Hamilton (vice-Professor Jennifer Hudson); Dr Jane Kinghorn; Sarah Lawson; Martin Moyle; Ciaran Moynihan; Professor James Phillips; Issy Smith; Professor Cheryl Thomas KC; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Professor Simon Walker-Samuel; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Andrew Wills

Apologies:
Professor Stella Bruzzi; Sarah Cowls; Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE; Rebecca Edwards; Alex Hall; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Dr Nick McNally; Professor Courtenay Norbury; Dr Francesca Scotti; Nicholas Tyndale

In attendance:
For Minutes 42-51: Megan Gerrie, Director, Planning and Projects
For Minute 45: Gail Adams, Director of Compliance and Assurance
For Minute 45: Stephanie Allison, Assistant Director, Research Ethics Service
For Minute 46: Mark Hopwood, Assistant Director (Service Improvement)
For Minute 48: Nicolas Ulloa Olguin, Data Manager and Management Information Analyst

Officer:
Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity

Part I: Preliminary Business

42. Minutes

42.1. Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee (RIGEC) approved the minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March 2023 [Minutes, 27-41, 2022-23].

43. Matters Arising

43.1. There were no matters arising.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

44. Confidential: Evolving UCL's Strategic Approach to Engagement with India (4-30)

44.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

44.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

44.3. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

45. Research Ethics Governance Structure (4-31)

45.1. The Director of Compliance and Assurance introduced the paper setting out a revision to UCL's governance structure for research ethics. The following points were made during the presentation:

a. The central Research Ethics Committee (REC) continued to face a large and growing volume of applications, especially around high risk, which created an administrative burden as well as capacity and timescale issues.
b. Global health research was an important research area for UCL but the central REC had struggled for capacity to give such complex applications due consideration within a reasonable timeframe.
c. It was important to develop reviewers as well as a resilient pipeline of reviewers and committee members with suitable experience.
d. The proposed approach was to set up a long-term structure to effectively re-purpose and 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. This would operate as the lead strategy and oversight committee for research ethics with the review of high-risk research ethics applications divided between three new committees.
e. A new oversight committee for low-risk review and Local RECs (LRECs) would also be created to provide quality assurance, a supportive network and sharing of best practice in devolved review.
f. The proposed structure reflected best practice at other peer institutions. It would allow for an increased ability to develop a pipeline of experienced reviewers and REC members and to distribute the workload to the new committees to allow them to respond in a timely way.

45.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. Members queried the key risks in revising the governance structure and how they would be mitigated, especially where the new structure was being developed alongside the current arrangements.
b. It was considered that there was a resourcing risk for the new structure in terms of staffing the committees, which had also been noted by RESB, as well as the administrative support.
c. RESB unanimously supported the proposal noted the need for training for new reviewers and communications about the changes across UCL. It was noted that there had already been considerable change in this area and LRECs had taken on greater responsibilities.
d. In relation to innovation research projects, it was suggested that a different workflow was needed and that would be signalled in the associated documentation about the new structure.
e. It was suggested that the proposed new system could be stress tested with a previously considered complex application for ethical approval to see how it worked.
f. It was intended that the new UCL REC would not routinely review high risk applications but would consider more complex or controversial ones to allow for UCL REC members to keep trained up.
g. In terms of the proposed reviewing committee names, it was suggested that they be named around disciplinary areas.
h. It was envisaged that applications involving non-NHS clinical research overseas would be considered by the new Global Health REC, although it was suggested that more detail was required on the committee's remit and that the appropriateness of the committee name be reconsidered.

45.3. RIGEC

a. Noted the report setting out the proposed new research ethics governance structure at UCL.
b. Approved the proposed direction of travel to revise UCL's governance structure for research ethics in 2023/24.
c. Noted that a more detailed proposal including details of the committee terms of reference, membership, recruitment and training and development would be presented to the next RIGEC meeting.

46. Confidential: Research Cost Recovery (4-32)

46.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

46.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

46.3. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

47. Knowledge Exchange Concordat (4-33)

47.1. The Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise, introduced the paper setting out a progress update on the Knowledge Exchange Concordat (KEC) implementation. The following points were made during the presentation:

a. The KEC supported a continuous approvement approach to Knowledge Exchange (KE) and the development and embedding of a KE culture within institutions.
b. As part of the development year, UCL committed to the principles of the KEC and to completing a self-evaluation, Innovation and Enterprise established a programme to implement the improvement plan which comprised 16 actions that UCL had committed to deliver.
c. The next KEF submission was anticipated in Spring 2024 when it would become mandatory for all institutions in receipt of HEIF funding.
d. Overall progress was good with 6 out of the 16 actions completed that included the training and development framework for I&E. Of the remaining 10 actions, 9 were being addressed within defined projects or as part of ongoing work with a status of either green or amber/green.
e. One area that was yet to be actioned concerned Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. A key risk was associated with those actions where delivery was dependent on teams outside I&E.

47.2. The following point was raised in discussion:

a. In relation to the development of a UCL framework and clear guidance around due diligence and ethical requirements for partnering organisations and the governance of this, it was noted that it would be important to ensure that any KEC requirements read across to the existing Third Party Due Diligence project.

47.3. RIGEC received the KEC Narrative Statements.

48. Higher Education Business and Community Interaction (HEBCI) Benchmarking (4-34)

48.1. The Executive Director, Innovation and Enterprise, and the Data Manager and Management Information Analyst introduced the paper setting out the underlying HEBCI data 2021-22 included in the metrics of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) perspectives, using the KEF cluster V institutions for benchmarking. The following points were made during the presentation:

a. The dataset was a statutory HESA data return that had grown since it was first introduced in 1999 to now include 120 data points.
b. The data collection came from the sponsored research ledger, Worktribe, UCL Business and UCL Consultancy and involved some 200 departments to include their facilities and equipment, CPD, graduate start-ups and community engagement activities.

c. The HEBCI data was normalised so on occasions UCL could appear to be performing less well than its peer institutions.
d. In terms of public funding, UCL was ranked 1st with £76m. In terms of cash contributions as a proportion of public funding, UCL was ranked 5th at 19%.
e. The benchmarking dataset was very large and suggestions were welcomed on how to make the data more accessible and informative to users.

48.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
a. The data was largely at Faculty level and it was noted that Faculty Deans used to meet with the former Vice-Provost (Enterprise) regularly where discussion included the data they wished to see for their respective area.
b. It was suggested that Faculties could be invited to engage with the benchmarking data at Faculty AwayDays. Given the breadth of the data, it was suggested that it could be made bitesize to cover particular topics to encourage discussion.

48.3. RIGEC received the HEBCI benchmarking report.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

49. RIGEC Governance Update (4-35)

49.1. RIGEC received the Governance Update.

50. KEF Narratives (4-36)

50.1. RIGEC received the KEF Narrative Statements.

51. African Health Research Institute

51.1. Under “Any Other Business”, it was noted that the Chair had approved the request for UCL’s current research ethical approval process to include an exemption for research undertaken by UCL secondees at the African Health Research Institute (AHRI), so that future responsibility for all ethical approvals for this research was vested in AHRI. This change took effect from 1 June 2023. The UCL-AHRI Programme Board would report annually to the RESB and any major breaches of ethics or very significant protocol changes would be reported to RIGEC.

52. Dates for meetings in 2023-24

52.1. RIGEC noted the dates for meetings in 2023-24 session as follows:

Thursday 2nd November 2023
Thursday 14th December 2023
Thursday 8th February 2024
Thursday 18th April 2024
Thursday 23rd May 2024
Thursday 18th July 2024.

All meetings to be held hybrid at 10:00am-12 noon in the South Wing G12 Council Room.

Rachel Port
Governance Manager: Research Integrity
October 2023