Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 30th June 2022, 10:00am
Video-conferencing meeting on MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
Professor Geraint Rees (Chair); Professor Lynn Ang; Dr Paul Ayris; Mr Jeremy Barraud; Professor David Bogle; Mr Simon Cane; Ms Sarah Chaytor; Mr Andrew Cooper; Ms Sarah Cowls; Ms Donna Dalrymple; Mr James Davis; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Ms Megan Gerrie; Ms Claire Glen; Mr Alex Hall; Professor Stephen M. Hart; Professor Kate Jeffery; Ms Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally; Mr Benjamin Meunier; Mr Martin Moyle; Mr Ciaran Moynihan; Ms Aloma Onyemah; Professor James Phillips; Dr Francesca Scotti; Professor Cheryl Thomas QC; Mr Nicholas Tyndale; Ms Kirsty Walker; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Andrew Wills

Apologies:
Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE; Professor Jacqui Glass; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Mr Richard Jackson; Professor Sam Janes; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Ms Amy Lightstone; Ms Viktoria Makai; Ms Aloma Onyemah; Professor Deenan Pillay; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker

In attendance:
Professor Helene Burningham, Vice-Dean Research, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences
Ms Kimberly Cornfield, Interim Head of the UCL European Research and Innovation Office [for Minute 44]
Ms Grace Gottlieb, Head of Research Policy, RIGE
Ms Kat Hageman, Executive Head of Campaign and Supporter Engagement, Office of the Vice-President (Advancement)
Ms Rowena Lamb, Head of Research Integrity [for Minute 46]
Dr Magda Morawska, Research Policy and Governance Officer, Research Integrity Team [for Minute 42]
Dr Rokia Raslan, Vice-Dean Innovation and Enterprise, Bartlett Faculty of the Built Environment

Officer:
Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Preliminary Business

37.   Welcome

37.1.   Professor Rees welcomed all members to his first meeting as Chair of the Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee (RIGEC).

38.   Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2022

38.1.   RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 12th May 2022 [Minutes 27-36, 2021-22].

39.   Matters arising from the Minutes

39.1.   Arising from Minute 31.1.c, it was noted that the Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar was closely monitoring the issue of rejected applications for VISAs and ATAS Clearance for international students and staff. This issue was not currently proving to be as problematic as originally envisaged and therefore a working group to look into this matter would be formed if the situation changed.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

40.   Chair's Report

40.1.   The Chair gave an oral report on any relevant developments since the last RIGEC meeting and how he intended to run meetings moving forward. The key points made were:
  a.   The Chair considered that RIGEC was a forum for information sharing as well as for decision-making in its own right, rather than being a conduit to its parent committee, the University Management Committee.
  b.   It was anticipated to be a challenging time for research and innovation over the next couple of years but there would also be opportunities. The general challenges would be the impact of the (i) current invasion in Ukraine, (ii) post-Covid pandemic and (iii) inflation crisis.
  c.   In the research and innovation area, it was anticipated that the main challenges would be the cost of living for PhD students; the impact of inflation on the research and innovation supply chain; and Horizon Europe funding.
  d.   The current government was known to be very committed to the areas of research and innovation.

41.   RIGEC Sub-committee structure (Paper 5-17)

41.1.   The Director of RIGE Governance and Delivery introduced the paper setting out proposals to restructure RIGEC's sub-committees for more effective decision-making. The key points made were:

a.   RIGEC currently had a number of sub-committees and it was proposed to simplify the structure to make its decision-making easier and more transparent.

b.   Discussions had been held with the Chairs of those sub-committees that were proposed to be dissolved and it would be important to ensure any of their ongoing work and planned activities were captured under the revised structure.

c.   Subject to RIGEC approval, further detailed work would be taken forward on developing the proposed terms of reference and membership for the remaining sub-committees.

41.2.   The following points were raised in discussion:

a.   Members noted that it was intended that innovation and enterprise as well as global matters would fall under the RIGE Operations Committee (RIGE-OC) in the revised structure moving forward.

b.   It was intended that RIGE-OC would focus on operational matters rather than strategic matters.

c.   The Chair was keen for RIGE to work with the Life and Medical Sciences and BEAMS Research and Innovation (R&I) Boards to share critical views. The BEAMS Board had proved very successful and allowed for its Vice-Deans to share information but it was not a decision-making body.

d.   The Chair noted that committees were not the only vehicle to be used to share views and that consideration should also be given to communication between relevant groups.

e.   It would also be important to ensure the flow of information from RIGEC to its sub-committees and any other lower level groups.

f.   It was intended that each level of the proposed RIGEC governance hierarchy would have decision-making powers.

41.3.   RIGEC:

a.   Approved the proposed revised RIGEC governance structure as at Paper 5-17.

b.   Agreed to review the revised RIGEC governance structure in summer term 2023.

c.   Agreed that the SLASH and IOE Faculty Deans be invited to set up their respective R&I Board in line with other faculties.

42. New UCL Code of Conduct for Research (Paper 5-18)

42.1. The Research Policy and Governance Officer introduced the report from the UCL-wide consultation of the draft version of the new UCL Code of Conduct for Research. The key points made were:

a. A UCL-wide survey of the Code had been undertaken and the feedback received had been shared with the Advisory Group that were involved with the development of the Code.

b. The majority of responses to the survey were positive and some 90% of respondents found it was a clear document and easy to follow.

c. In terms of the breadth of the document, respondents expressed competing and contradictory views as some considered its remit was too broad and as a result not specific enough for their disciplines, whilst others felt it was it was too detailed.

d. In relation to concerns about the length of the document, it was intended that an interactive version of the Code would be prepared in PDF format that would be made available online.

e. The Code introduced the activities and behaviours that were divided into the categories of "you must" and "you should" which had generated much discussion. It was intended that behaviour standards would be changed to "you must", and that for actions marked as "you should" meant they were actions that normally must be taken unless there was an explicit reason not to do so.

f. A need for clarification on how the Code applied to professional services and technical staff was identified and the definition of "researcher" was expanded to make the connection clearer.

g. Only 50% of respondents were aware of the current version of the Code which raised concerns about the visibility of the Code to ensure students and researchers knew how to raise any issues.

h. Subject to RIGEC approval, it was intended that a final version of the Code be prepared for implementation in 2022-23 session as well as an interactive web version and that an associated information campaign would be developed to ensure it was communicated across the UCL community. Discussions would also be held with HR about it being included in the induction for new starters.

42.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. The Chair expressed his thanks to the Research Integrity Team for all their work in revising the Code.

b. It was noted that the Code was meant to be a living document that would allow for updates as necessary.

c. It was noted that there were only 251 responses to the survey that equated to just 4% of the UCL community and only 2% had actually read the current version.

    d.   In terms of communications and compliance, there were some 50 policies listed in the Code and it was unrealistic to expect staff and students to read all of those.

    e.   Concerns were raised about the distinction between "you must" and "you should" and it was proposed that this wording be revisited as part of the living document.

    f.   It was emphasised that the Code did not create a new set of musts as those were already in place.

    g.   It was also suggested that the Code should cross reference to the relevant core policy and use the same language as that in the policy itself.

    h.   It was proposed that implementation of the Code be overseen by RIGE-OC and that consideration be given to monitoring compliance with the Code.

42.3. RIGEC:

    a.   Approved the revised version of the UCL Code of Conduct for Research.

    b.   Agreed that implementation of the Code be overseen by RIGE-OC and that consideration be given to monitoring compliance with the Code.

43.   UKRI 2022-25 Budget Allocations and UCL opportunities (Paper 5-19)

43.1. The Director of Research Policy and Strategy and the Head of Research Policy introduced the analysis of the UKRI budget allocations to 2024/25 and the implications for UCL in terms of opportunities to increase its UKRI funding income. The key points made were:

    a.   UKRI's budget would increase by 14% between 2021/22 to 2024/25, rising from £7.8bn to £8.9bn. Core UKRI Council budgets would increase by 24% from £4.8bn to £6.0bn.

    b.   Whilst the budget allocation had increased by 14% overall, it was not evenly spread across the UKRI Councils. AHRC would receive £23m additional funding while Research England would receive some £910m additional funding.

    c.   There would be a new cross-UKRI approach to talent initiatives and the collective talent funding allocation had increased by 27%.

    d.   It was considered that UCL needed to be more strategic in applying for funding and there were opportunities to leverage increased funding income in the areas of: Innovate UK funding; training and fellowships; cross-disciplinary research; infrastructure funding; policy engagement and impact; and government department R&D funding.

    e.   Members were asked to consider what action needed to be taken for UCL to capitalise on increasing its funding income and if there was additional support required from RIGE.

43.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. It was noted that Innovate UK funding would grow by 54% and that UCL has had good success with this funding, securing a total of £39.5m across 272 projects.

b. Enhancing UCL's existing targeted support for researchers could generate an increase in Innovate UK income given the University of Nottingham had a dedicated service supporting proposals for such funding and had secured £141.9m across 422 projects.

c. UCL could be better equipped to interact with government and procurement funding areas. It was noted that governments were known to like match funding and UCL expectations needed to be managed in this area.

d. Members raised the issue of whether UCL Consultancy was the most appropriate place for work around tenders.

e. In terms of AHRC funding, it was noted that UCL had a number of collaborations in the arts and humanities areas but there was no clear co-ordination and some kind of platform was required.

f. There were opportunities for Arts and Humanities in the Future Leaders Scheme which they had not accessed unlike other UCL faculties.

g. In terms of UCL overhead recovery, it was noted that UCL Finance and Business Affairs were doing work in this area.

43.3. RIGEC:

a. Agreed that work to develop a paper on a UCL strategy for Innovate UK funding be taken forward by the Executive Director of Innovation and Enterprise with the Executive Director of RIS.

b. Agreed that discussion around tenders be taken forward by the Chair with the Executive Director of RIS, the Executive Director of Innovation and Enterprise and Professor Gerner-Beuerle.

44. Confidential: UCL European Research Council (ERC) Awards (Paper 5-20)

44.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

44.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

45. Research and Innovation Services Update

45.1. The Executive Director of Research and Innovation Services (RIS) gave an oral update report on current activities within RIS and the key points made were:

a. RIS was a very busy professional service and managed some £500m income each year; reviewed and submitted approximately 4k applications

each year; negotiated and set up 1500 new awards each year; and negotiated and placed 3200 contracts per annum.

b. To enable research, RIS had five levels of service activity with transactional processes at level 1 and strategy and policy at level 5.

c. RIS was building up the support for research related and innovation activity. This would include the creation of a new team to manage and have oversight of key audit, assurance and compliance activities relating to research and innovation activity across UCL.

d. RIS would be reorganised into 4 teams of Award Services; Contract Services; Planning, Insight and Implementation; and Compliance and Assurance. The new structure would be in place with effect from 1 July 2022.

e. A programme of engagement was underway to minimise the disruption to staff.

45.2. The following points were raised in discussion:
a. RIGEC expressed it support to the Executive Director for all her work in leading the current activities within RIS.
b. RIGEC also noted the increased workload for RIS in terms of research contracts given the volume received from the Life and Medical Sciences areas.

46.   Confidential: Research Integrity Training Update (Paper 5-21)

46.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

46.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

47.   UCL REF2021 Results (Paper 5-22)

47.1. RIGEC received the report on UCL's REF2021 Results.

48.   Confidential: UCL-Russia & Belarus: Research, Innovation and Education Partnerships (Paper 5-23)

48.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

49.   UCL Funding Allocation

49.1.   Under "Any other business" it was noted that the letter on UCL's UKRI GCRF and Newton Funding Allocation 2022/23 had been circulated to RIGEC for information yesterday.

50.   Date of the next meeting

50.1.   The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 21st July 2022 at 10:00am and be fully hybrid in the Council Room.

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