

UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

23/06 A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Monday 12 June 2023 at 11am in Committee Room 2, Whiteknights House.

Present

Dominik Zaum, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)
Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Carol Wagstaff, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)
Adrian Williams, Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development
Daniella La Penna, Department of Languages and Culture, Senate member
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian
Richard Frazier, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Senate member
Anne-Marie Van Dodeweerd (Director of Research Services)
Oscar Minto, Education Officer (RUSU)
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

Apologies

John Gibbs, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)
Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource)
Mona Ashok, Business Informatics System and Accounting, ECR representative
Rahim Amin, Postgraduate Research Student Officer RUSU, Students Union representative
Rowan Sutton, Research Dean (Environment)
Tom Oliver, Research Dean (Environment)
Anne-Marie West (Finance Business Partner)

23/07 Membership and Terms of Reference [item 2]

The Board received the current membership and terms of reference and noted changes to membership in 2023/24. The term of current Senate member, Richard Frazier, would end in July 2023. The vacancy would be advertised through Senate, to which he would be open to reapply. Either way, the Chair thanked him for his contribution to the Board to date. The Chair also thanked Oscar Minto, the RUSU Education Officer, for whom this was his last meeting, and wished him well in the future.

23/08 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 April 2023 [item 3]

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 4 April 2023. It noted that whilst papers were circulated, the meeting was started but then postponed on account of the significant number of late cancellations, and the limited number of non-UCRI members in attendance.

23/09 Actions from previous meetings not covered elsewhere in the agenda [item 4]

21/38. International research partnerships. The Board noted that a new PVC (International) had been appointed and would be beginning in August 2023.

22/52 Research Endowment Trust. The agenda included a paper on the planned use of the fund in 2023/24 and 2024/25. Finance would work up a suitable financial report for the Board's first meeting of the next session.

23/10 Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda) [item 5]

There were no other matters arising from minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

23/11 Research culture [item 6a]

The Board received a verbal update from the PVC (R&I) on the University's ongoing work on research culture. It noted in particular the project being undertaken by colleagues in the Henley Business School. The pilot study earlier this academic year had highlighted some potential issues, including in relation to mid-career researchers, and how the University was communicating the research strategy, especially to professional services staff. The University Committee on Research and Innovation (UCRI) commissioned a more comprehensive survey on research culture, which launched in May/June to all academics and professional services colleagues supporting research. The outcomes would be reported to UCRI in September, with outcomes and planned actions to be reported to the Board in November.

23/12 QS World University Rankings by subject 2023 [item 6b]

The Board received a summary of the University's recent performance in the QS World University Rankings by subject. The University was ranked in the top 50 for two subjects, Agriculture and Forestry (16th) and Earth and Marine Sciences (46th), and in the top 100 for three other subjects: Archaeology, Built Environment and Environmental Sciences. At broad subject level, the highest-ranking subject was Arts and Humanities (109th), rising from 134th in 2022.

In discussion, the Board noted that:

- In the last year, the University had been consulting with the compilers to help better understand its current position and potential areas for improvement.
- The overall QS World University Ranking would be published at the end of June.
- The University's ranking in Agriculture (and Food etc.), whilst still very strong, had dropped off slightly in recent years; any available insight into contributing factors would be valuable to the Agri-food scoping project.

23/13 THE Global Impact Rankings [item 6c]

The Board received a summary of the University's recent performance in the THE Global Impact Rankings 2023. It noted that the University was ranked 61st out of over 1600 participating institutions, and 15th of 57 participating UK institutions. The rankings, which were established in 2019, used the UN's Sustainable Development Goals as a framework and included assessment of institutions' policies, practice and engagement with the goals, as well as metrics relating to teaching and research. The position represented a significant improvement on the University's 2022 performance (which was outside the top 100) in an increasingly competitive ranking. At individual SDG level, the University was ranked in the top 50 for 8 SDGs with top 10 global rankings for Responsible Production/Consumption (SDG12), Life on Land (SDG15) and Climate Action (SDG13). With regard to research measures, the University was in the top quartile in all but one of the SDGs.

23/14 Internal and Ringfenced funding to support research and innovation [item 7]

The Board received information about the available funding and planned use of the annual internal fund (RETF). It noted that in light of financial pressures, the allocation had reduced from £1.2m to £800k for the next three years. The PVC confirmed that there would be no impact on committed funds for 2023/24, and the fund would continue to operate existing schemes and support strategic developments in the future – including supporting strategic partnerships (e.g. museums), Fellowships and Open Calls, and Research Dean allocations – but with potential adjustments to budgets and restrictions on cost extensions and delayed projects. UCRI would also think further about how funding could also be better targeted, for example towards gaps identified in D&I report.

The Board noted that funding from this allocation for Open Access would be gradually phased out with costs passed to the Library budget through the planning process. The University Librarian highlighted some concerns and potential impacts of this changes, particularly around the University capacity to support Gold open access offering, as well as drawing attention to the current sector-wide challenges with regard to publisher practice and culture. It was agreed to bring a paper on the current situation with Open Access and publisher arrangements to UCRI and then to the Board/Senate for further discussion/reflection.

Action: University Librarian to prepare paper for UCRI on the current sector situation with Open Access and publisher arrangements.

More generally, the Board expressed regret that the fund had been reduced, whilst understanding the wider financial challenges. It noted, however, that the University continued to receive hypothecated funding allocations from Research England to support policy work, research infrastructure, innovation and impact, participative research, and research culture.

23/15 Current Research Information System [item 8a]

The Board received for information the business case for the Current Research Information System, a digital project that will have significant impact on how the University manages and supports research. The Chairs were pleased to report that the project had been identified as a priority in the digital strategy; the objective was to have the system in place in advance of the next REF submission. The project had requested information from potential providers as part of the first stage of the procurement process; they would be invited to present to the broad range of University stakeholders.

23/16 Strategic Foundations Programme [item 8b]

The Board received an update on research-related elements of the Strategic Foundations Programme, notably the individual expectations and workload pathway. The Board heard that drafts for the research, citizenship and teaching expectations framework by career stage were being finalized for approval by UCRI and UBTLS for Senate in the autumn, with the objective to align with role descriptions, promotions and professorial review criteria. Other elements of the pathway (institutional workload model/use of individual level data) had regrettably been paused, recognising that there were other more pressing current demands on time and resource.

In discussion, members highlighted that the paused elements could have helped support Schools/Departments in their management, for example workload models and how to evaluate relative performance in a fair and transparent way and with reference to career stage and contract-type expectations (e.g. TI v RI). It was hoped that the framework along with the disciplinary contextual statements would help support some of this, along with appropriate use of benchmarking/comparator data. In this regard, the Board would review summary data from the

forthcoming promotions process to identify any issues and differences between TI and other promotion cases.

The Board also noted the proposed establishment of Directorates in professional services, which might affect the way that research support is delivered in the future. The Chairs acknowledged concerns, but reinforced that UCRI and UBRI would continue to have strong input to ensure research priorities were not compromised.

23/17 Annual update on the Concordat for Researcher Development [item 8c]

The Board noted the contents and endorsed the University's Annual report on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers for approval by Senate, subject to the following suggested changes.

- The report to UKRI included references to 'Independent researcher'. The Board queried whether that was the REF definition or something broader. Generally, there were references to research staff/researchers/ECR and it might be helpful to define those populations in the document.
- There could be reference to the ongoing research culture work being undertaken by HBS (making use of the Research England research culture allocation).
- In the section referencing the Technicians, the report could usefully mention the Athena Swan Silver award, Technical Services being the first professional services team in the country to receive an award.

23/18 Independent Review of the UK's Research, Development and Innovation Organisational Landscape [Item 9]

The Board received the review for information, noting in particular its financial perspective and concerns around the sustainability of research funding. With reference to the University's activity, there were some interesting comments on the importance of collections, and the opportunities therefore afforded by the National History Museum, British Museum and Kew. The Board would revisit once the Government had responded to the review.

23/19 Research Division research awards targets and performance to FQ3 2022/23 [item 10a]

The Board received information about the approach taken to establishing five-year research award targets for Research Divisions, along with targets for approval. It noted that the targets set had been a bottom-up process, taking into account comparator performance in the REF; staffing levels and profile; judgements about future award acquisition potential; previous and current performance (University award value YTD £23.6m); performance to date; and appropriate levels of ambition. On review, UCRI had recommended uplifts for some Divisions from originally proposed targets, recognising the need for suitably aspirational targets to maintain competitiveness and alignment with the University's overall financial plans, and had informed Heads of School where relevant.

In discussion, the following points were raised:

- There remained a difference in some Schools between the targets and research income projections. This might be addressed in part by changes to the SMPCS targets to account for (amongst other things) inflation. In other areas, this could be explored through future planning processes.

- There was recognition that increased targets might necessitate further discussion with Heads of Schools around changes that might be required to help achieve stretching targets.

The Board approved the targets, subject to some further discussions with selected Divisions/Schools to confirm specific targets.

Annex 2 to these minutes includes the finalised targets for information, including uplift to the SMPCS Divisions.

23/20 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion data in research annual report [Item 10b]

The Board received a report covering some research-related diversity and inclusion data across the following areas: staff demographics; representation amongst Research Division Leaders and committee membership; research awards and applications; research students; research output volume. In particular, it noted the following:

- The University's proportion of female professors has grown and is higher than the sector.
- Research Division and research committee membership was broadly representative of the research community.
- Generally, Females' average research award and application values remain lower than Males, and the proportion of award/application value remain lower than the proportion of Females in Research Divisions.
- Generally, the proportion of research awards and applications from BAME staff is lower than the proportion of BAME staff in Research Divisions.
- There are differences in research student outcomes between characteristics, notably BAME/White.
- Based on CentAUR records, the proportion of outputs from Female staff is lower than the proportion of Females in the Research Divisions.

The Board noted that UCRI would scrutinize further, in particular the publications and awards gap, and consider what steps could be taken, or alternatively what objectives could be set to drive change, as well as linking up with findings from the research culture and decisions on allocation of internal funding. It would also be helpful to:

- Share the data more widely, perhaps in a dashboard format to enable easy and flexible access for users to explore in more detail, for example to identify whether particular Research Divisions were impacting Theme level differences.
- Analyse Co-I data and patterns and whether there were differences in distribution of Co-I and PI between characteristics.
- Consider research income (as opposed to value of award), which had a smoother profile and would more accurately reflect actual levels of Co-I contribution.

23/21 Preparations for REF 2028 [item 10c]

The Chair updated the Board on initial outcomes from the Funding bodies' Future Research Assessment Programme review, which included changes to staff data collection; changes to element weightings; and changes to how environment assessment was incorporated. The plans would be published shortly, some of which were final decisions and some of which would be for consultation.

23/22 Summaries and minutes from reporting committees [item 11]

The Board received minutes and summaries of recent meetings from the University Committee for Research and Innovation, the Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies, and the Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity. It noted from CORRI that the future approach to Open Research Champions was being discussed further.

23/23 Annual statement on research integrity [item 11cii]

The Board approved the annual statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity for onward transmission to Senate and Council.

23/24 Research Travel Grants Sub-committee annual report [item 11d]

The Board received the annual report from the Research Travel Grant Sub-Committee, which oversees the allocation of awards to support conference attendance and other research-related travel. In 2022/23 YTD, the scheme had supported 70 applications to a total of £28k against a budget of £55k, an increase of circa 30% on the same point in 2021/22. Notably, the relaxing of travel restrictions had resulted increased attendance at international conferences compared to the previous year.

23/25 Date of next meeting [item 13]

The Secretary would circulate dates for next year's meetings shortly. It was intended to continue with Teams meetings for the first three meetings, with an in-person/hybrid meeting for the final meeting of the year.

Annex 1: University Board for Research and Innovation: post 12 June 2023 meeting

Actions from 15 June 2022

22/33 Research Travel Grants

Research Travel Grant Sub-Committee to develop a proposal for the use of the fund by research students studying at a distance.

Status (June 2023): The Sub-Committee noted UBRI's response at its last meeting in the summer term and will be revisiting the action during the course of 2022-23.

Actions from 12 June 2023

23/14 Internal and Ringfenced funding to support research and innovation

University Librarian to prepare paper for UCRI on the current sector situation with Open Access and publisher arrangements.

Annex 2: Research Division research award value targets: June 2023

Research Division	Five year target 2022/23 to 2026/27	Relative to comparator range (Historical FTE contribution)	Achieved 2017/18 to 2021/22	Target 2017/18 to 2021/22	Achieved 2022/23 to Q3	% to target
Environment	£101,700,000		£93,574,478	£107,683,685	£10,972,092	11%
Built Environment	£6,000,000	Below	£4,636,347	£5,020,966	£173,956	3%
Chemical Sciences	£5,500,000	Below	£7,204,490	£11,751,196	£356,421	6%
Climate	£44,000,000	Above	£37,191,555	£34,185,297	£3,903,159	9%
Computer Sciences	£4,200,000	Mid	£2,699,696	£4,324,441	£0	0%
Earth Observation and Space	£14,000,000	Above	£15,798,060	£21,258,982	£2,291,499	16%
Ecology and Evolutionary Biology	£5,000,000	Below	£4,197,280	£5,341,453	£508,712	10%
Environmental Science	£6,500,000	Above	£7,046,411	£6,409,743	£387,934	6%
Mathematics and Statistics	£4,500,000	Mid	£5,352,717	£5,503,832	£613,810	14%
Weather	£12,000,000	Above	£9,447,922	£13,887,777	£2,736,601	23%
Agriculture, Food and Health	£65,200,000		£59,793,645	£74,566,679	£7,610,638	12%
Agri-Food Economics and Social Science	£8,500,000	Bottom	£8,409,211	£10,309,004	£2,462,904	29%
Biomedical Sciences and Biomedical Engineering	£10,000,000	Below	£7,849,017	£12,285,341	£406,170	4%
Food and Nutritional Sciences	£9,000,000	Mid	£7,945,870	£14,688,995	£1,580,517	18%
Pharmacy	£5,400,000	Bottom	£4,157,928	£7,478,034	£315,215	6%
Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences	£16,300,000	Top	£14,516,510	£16,024,358	£455,222	3%
Sustainable Agricultural and Food Systems	£16,000,000	Bottom	£16,915,110	£13,780,948	£2,390,610	15%
Heritage and Creativity	£12,950,000		£15,891,373	£14,094,280	£3,473,438	27%
Archaeology	£7,000,000	Top	£8,526,193	£6,409,743	£3,100,171	44%
Art & Typography	£1,200,000	Top	£1,418,007	£1,068,291	£0	0%
Classics	£500,000	Mid	£2,565,201	£881,340	£54,056	11%
English Literature and Language	£1,100,000	Above	£880,447	£1,201,827	£25,640	2%
Film Theatre and Television	£750,000	Mid	£179,057	£1,735,972	£10,500	1%
History	£900,000	Below	£815,416	£1,602,436	£44,355	5%
Modern Languages and Linguistics	£1,000,000	Bottom	£1,042,720	£660,526	£131,587	13%
Philosophy	£500,000	Bottom	£464,331	£534,145	£107,130	21%
Prosperity and Resilience	£15,200,000		£13,701,656	£16,288,354	£1,588,834	10%
Business Informatics Systems and Accounting	£1,300,000	Top	£1,014,799	£1,281,949	£37,041	3%
Economics	£1,200,000	Mid	£1,453,426	£633,283	£265,251	22%
Education Language Learning	£1,500,000	Top	£1,743,256	£2,670,726	£195,989	13%
Global Development	£4,000,000	Mid	£4,498,968	£3,556,681	£774,769	19%
ICMA	£1,100,000	Top	£804,332	£1,281,949	£0	0%
International Business and Strategy	£550,000	Above	£102,016	£1,281,949	£8,725	2%
Law	£1,000,000	Mid	£326,146	£801,218	£76,625	8%
Leadership Organisations and Behaviour	£1,600,000	Mid	£1,347,850	£1,281,949	£89,657	6%
Marketing and Reputation	£750,000	Mid	£602,639	£1,281,949	£55,099	7%
Politics and International Relations	£1,000,000	Below	£821,193	£1,148,412	£43,748	4%
Real Estate and Planning	£1,200,000	Below	£987,031	£1,068,291	£41,930	3%
University of Reading Themes)	£195,050,000		£182,961,151	£212,632,998	£23,645,002	12%
Other (IEA, UMASC, Prof Services)			£4,733,836		£882,932	
University of Reading			£187,694,987		£24,527,934	

More than 20% below previous achieved		Below comparator group range
10-20% below previous achieved		Towards bottom of comparator range
Between -10% to +10% difference to previous achieved		Middle of comparator range
10-20% above previously achieved		Towards top of comparator range
More than 20% above previously achieved		Above comparator group range