

# UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**21/11** A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Wednesday 16 June 2021 at 9am on Microsoft Teams.

## **Present**

Dominik Zaum, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Chair)  
Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)  
Adrian Williams, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)  
Roberta Gilchrist, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)  
Phil Newton, Research Dean (Environment) [until 10am]  
Darren Browne, Commercial Director  
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian  
Richard Frazier, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Senate member  
Matthew Windsor, School of Law, Early Career Researcher member  
Rachel Wates, RUSU Diversity Officer, Students Union representative  
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

## **Apologies**

Sue Walker, Department of Typography and Graphic Communication, Senate member  
Dianne Berry, Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development  
Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource)  
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)

## **21/12 Welcome [item 1]**

The Chair welcomed members to the final meeting of the Board for this academic year. He highlighted changes to the membership for 2020/21 as a result of departures and new appointments.

- John Gibbs and Carol Wagstaff would be joining the Board as Research Deans for Heritage and Creativity and Agriculture, Food and Health respectively. The Research Dean for Heritage and Creativity would be a job share with Roberta Gilchrist.
- Adrian Williams, the current Research Dean for Agriculture, Food and Health, had been appointed as Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development, so would remain as a Board member.
- Dianne Berry would be completing her term as Dean for Postgraduate Studies and Researcher Development, so would no longer be a member of the Board. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked her for many years of service and contribution to the Board (and its predecessors), both as member and Chair.
- Other changes to membership could arise from changes to RUSU or Senate membership

## **21/13 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 January 2021 [item 2]**

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 January 2021. The meeting of 7 April 2021 had been cancelled.

### **21/14 Actions from the previous meeting [item 3]**

There were no actions outstanding from previous meetings.

### **21/15 Matters arising from the minutes [item 4]**

There were no matters arising that were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

### **21/16 Update on the Strategy implementation [item 5a]**

The Board received an update on the Expectations and Workload pathway, a 3-4 year programme (part of the Strategic Foundation Programme) considering academic expectations, the PDR process, workload and the data and systems to support them. The co-chair of the Expectations workstream, the Research Dean for Environment, provided an update on their work to date, including the introduction to a framework around expectations that was being shared with Schools for comment and contribution. The key points highlighted were as follows:

- It provided a nested framework for expectations of individual staff, drawing on role descriptions, School contextual statements and individual agreements through the PDR.
- Seven principles would be observed around fairness, equity, transparency, accountability.
- A broad set of indicators had been provided for consideration, ranging from some that could be measured unambiguously to those that were harder to quantify. Data ranged from quantitative indicators to peer assessment and self-assessment/narrative.
- As part of the broader consultations, Schools had been asked to work up the template around minimum and higher expectation for role and type of employment function.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- Ultimately, the role of the line managers would be critical to the successful implementation, so appropriate support and training should be provided, as well as introducing wider culture change in the understanding of the purpose and remit of line management.
- The workstream should be mindful of sector norms (where data available) when considering setting of appropriate expectations.
- The Board noted that addressing cases where staff were not meeting expectations would be part of the consideration of the PDR process. It was more important however to highlight the principle of fairness and a common understanding between the individual and the University, and what kind of institution we want to be.

Members were invited to feed back any further comments to the workstream Chairs.

### **21/17 Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) outcomes and update [item 5bi]**

The Board received information on the outcomes of the University in the recently published Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The sector-wide Framework combined knowledge exchange related metrics (primarily from the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS)) and a self-evaluation of public engagement. The results were available through online dashboards with the University compared against the sector and a benchmarking group, Cluster X (broadly the former 94 Group). The following points were highlighted

- The University was top 30% in the sector in research partnerships, business and local regeneration, but performed less well in public engagement. It was below the cluster average in public and research partnerships.

- This was a pilot year, with the potential for future outcomes to inform knowledge exchange funding. There was a potential for the exercise to be adjusted in future iterations.
- The outcomes provided a useful opportunity for the University to reflect on its strengths and weaknesses, for example inform how it could prioritise its local and regional engagement activity with reference to other institutions' narratives and performance.

#### **21/18 THE Impact Rankings 2021 overview [item 5bii]**

The Board received a report on the University's performance in the THE Impact Rankings in 2021, the first year in which the University had participated, and the second year of the rankings. The rankings are based on a combination of standard contextual metrics (size and shape), specific data (for example energy usage) and evidence of the existence of policies, procedures and engagement. Overall, the University was ranked in the 100-200 bracket of the 1115 participating institutions, performing particularly strongly in the following of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG): Decent work and economic growth (21 of 685), Reduced inequalities (28/669) and Responsible consumption and production (13/503). Research metrics were generally strong across all the SDG.

The preparation of the submission had involved colleagues from MCE, Estates and the Planning and Strategy Office. The University would reflect further on the learning from its participation this year to inform preparations for next year's ranking.

#### **21/19 QS World University Rankings [item 5biii]**

The Board received a summary of the outcomes for the University in the QS World University Rankings. The University was ranked at just outside the top 200, maintaining its position of 27<sup>th</sup> of included UK institutions. The Board was particularly encouraged by improvement in citations performance, whilst noting that this was in line with other UK institutions. Similarly, UK institutions performed strongly in the International criteria (proportions of overseas staff and students, collaboration on research outputs). The Board noted the decline in relative performance in the Student Staff Ratio, which reflected primarily the growth in student numbers in recent years.

#### **21/20 Research awards and applications 2020/21 FQ3 [item 5biv]**

The Board received a summary of the FQ3 outcomes for research awards and applications. The University received c. £24m in research awards YTD, somewhat down on the equivalent position in previous years. The impact of COVID partly explained these differences; the Board also noted some significant awards expected that had yet to be reported in this year. Application levels, however, had recovered from a lower year in 2019/20, and this demonstrated some resilience in a challenging external context.

#### **21/21 UKRI competitive funding decision 2015/16 to 2019/20 [item 5bv]**

The Board received for information a summary of the University's performance in competitive funding decisions with the UKRI constituent councils. UKRI had made available five years of comparable data at

<https://www.ukri.org/about-us/what-we-do/funding-data/decisions-on-competitive-funding/>

The Board noted the University's performance in 2019/20, in particular a creditable success rate overall (30%, top quartile) and in specific Councils, suggesting some impact of initiatives in these areas (for example peer review colleges in the arts and humanities). The total value of £14.6m was the highest since 2016/17. In discussion, members highlighted a potential difference in success for targeted against responsive mode for some Councils, notably NERC, such granularity not being reported in these data. Looking forward to 2020/21, recent success in 2020/21 ESRC early career

fellowships were highlighted, along with success in other (non-UKRI) schemes. It was suggested that there would be value in considering some headline messages from these data that could be shared through internal communications.

#### **21/22 Review of the Building Outstanding Impact Support Programme [item 6a]**

The Board received a review of BOISP commissioned from SUMS consultants, which outlined in particular lessons learned and the perception of the programme by academics and professional services. Commentary from the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) set the report in context, and how it would inform the approach to impact in the future, not only in developing REF impact case studies and impact culture, but also strengthening research as a result. The Committee for Research Impact and Public Engagement would scrutinize the detail of the report, with a small group being delegated to take a fresh look at the overall impact strategy.

#### **21/23 REF 2021 submission [item 6b]**

The Board received a report of the REF 2021 submission, along with the University's Institutional Environment Statement and COVID statement. The practical elements of the submission had involved c. 100 people, including UOA Leads, the REF Planning Group, and colleagues in Professional Services, many colleagues supporting the work in addition to their primary role responsibilities. The Board noted the contribution and thanked those involved.

The Chair of the REF Planning Group, Dominik Zaum, observed that the 2020 Research Plan had been focused on improving REF performance. On the basis of the University's best judgement, this had been achieved, but the Board acknowledged caveats relating to the panel's assessment and relative improvement of other institutions. There were increases overall against REF 2014 on hard metrics (income, doctoral completions), but the University's staff number had remained relatively static. The headline institutional outcome was dependent on the large units (for example, Business, Meteorology /Environmental science, Agriculture/Food, Psychology, REP/Built Environment, and Biomedical/Pharmacy), and associated QR income would also likely weight science subjects more heavily.

He also highlighted the development of the Code of Practice, which included the process by which independent research staff were identified and staff circumstances. In the latter, c. 25% of staff declared circumstances, and colleagues were given the opportunity for these circumstances to be shared with their Heads of School so that appropriate support could be provided.

The Board noted that reflections on the exercise had taken place with UOA Leads, REF Planning Group, and Professional Services staff to inform lessons learned for the next exercise.

The REF submission summary paper would be provided to Council and Senate.

#### **21/24 European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) [item 6c]**

The Board received a verbal update on ECMWF. The decision on the building of new HQ on campus would be taken by the ECMWF council in December; the UK government had renewed its commitment to the proposal. Based on a credible financial case (put together by the Commercial team) with reference to research and commercial engagement, the University (agreed by Council) had offered c. £30m over 15 years, including ECR posts and doctoral programmes to maximise synergies in climate-related science across a broad range of disciplines, conditional on the move to Whiteknights campus.

#### **21/25 Concordat to Support Researcher Development [item 6d]**

The Board received an update on activity relating to the Concordat. Progress had been made across a number of actions, including development of training materials and webpages. Implementation of some actions had been delayed by COVID.

**21/26 Research output prize for Early Career Researchers [item 6e]**

The Board received the list of Theme winners, which had been endorsed by Chair's action in March. A celebration event for the winners was planned for July.

**21/27 UKRI Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) budget reductions [item 7a]**

The Board received a paper outlining the impact on the University of government reductions to previously awarded GCRF Hubs and Newton grants. Not including those that had yet to start, there had been an approximately 2/3rds drop in funding, which had affected in particular disciplines in global development and space, and the Schools of APD and CFP.

The impact on the University had been mitigated by savings from other projects and absorbing overheads, such that no staff had been made redundant and projects could continue. It was assumed that funding could be restored in the future, but there was potential for future cuts in this budget.

**21/28 COVID research leave allocations [item 7b]**

The Board received a list of staff identified by Schools that had been allocated research leave as part of the funds made available by the University (co-funded by RETF and Schools) to support leave where research impacted by COVID. It was hoped that this would mitigate to some extent potential inequalities as a result of the pandemic. The Board noted that up to 5 had been made available to each School; some Schools had chosen not to put forward any staff.

**21/29 Annual statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity [item 8cii]**

The Board approved the annual statement of compliance for onward transmission to Senate and Council.

**21/30 Reporting committees [item 8]**

The Board received the following from its reporting committees.

- **Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies.** Minutes from the most recent meeting.
- **University Committee for Research and Innovation** summary highlights.
- **Committee on Open Research and Research Integrity.** The Board approved the annual statement on compliance with The Board received a verbal update from the Committee Chair.
  - A detailed plan on research integrity training was to be rolled out.
  - There had been good progress on the Open Research plan, notably an open research event and the appointment of 19 open research champions.
  - Increasing work on safeguarding in research, in response to government requirements, drawing on governance and external expertise.
  - Further consideration of using responsible metrics on research/promotion in consultation with UCRI and UCU

- **Research Travel Grants.** The Board received the annual report from the Subcommittee on Research Travel grants. The Board noted that the travel fund had had limited use as a result of a reduction in overseas travel. Increasingly, funds were being vired to online payments for conferences. It was recognised that the approach should be mindful of environmental concerns and alignment with the overall University travel policy in the future.