

# UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

**22/01** A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Wednesday 25 January 2022 at 9am on Microsoft Teams.

## **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)  
Phil Newton, Research Dean (Environment)  
John Gibbs, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)  
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  
Mona Ashok, Business Informatics System and Accounting, ECR representative  
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian  
Richard Frazier, Department of Food and Nutritional Sciences, Senate member  
Ainur Bulasheva, Postgraduate Research Student Officer RUSU, Students Union representative  
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

## **Apologies**

Darren Browne, Commercial Director  
Mark Fellowes, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning & Resource)

## **22/02 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 October 2021 [item 2]**

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 October 2021.

## **22/03 Actions from previous meetings [item 5]**

The Board noted the completed actions from the previous meeting. See annex for information.

## **22/04 Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda) [item 6]**

**21/34 UBRI membership.** The Chair welcomed Mona Ashok to the Board as the ECR representative.

## **22/05 Academic staffing in a research-intensive university [item 5a]**

The Board received three papers relating to academic staffing levels, a position paper and two proposals: on the approach to research overhead incentive, and on recruiting excellent researchers. The papers, which had been reviewed and discussed by the University Executive Board (UEB), had been prompted by a review of the Academic Investment Programme (in advance of REF 2014) and a wider consideration of staffing changes in the sector. The overall conclusion was that, in comparison with other universities, the size of the University research base had not grown; our REF 2021 staff FTE submission was in line with our REF 2014 submission and, irrespective of quality outcomes, this could place us at a financial disadvantage.

The papers set out two initial specific proposals, the reintroduction of 5% of overheads from research grants being awarded to investigators (formerly known as the PVC incentive) and the recruitment of Early Career Researchers. The former had been approved in principle by UEB, while

the PVCs (R&I) would be working with Research Services and other colleagues to take forward approaches to address fellowships: a start- up fund for ECR fellowships to attract candidates; guaranteeing a permanent appointment at the end of the fellowships; and targeting fellowship holders with strong track records in strategic areas.

The Board noted that further proposals to strengthen retention and recruitment processes were under development and would be presented to Staffing Committee.

In discussion, the following points were highlighted

- It was important to highlight the levels of infrastructure available and needed to support researchers, for example, Digital Humanities, IT, and the Library.
- Targeting staff with industry background should also be considered. The Board noted that separate proposals were under development to strengthen industry research in general with focus on specific areas, for example an industry research overhead incentive, professors of practice, and use of GTA roles.
- Members felt that there should be greater involvement of Research Deans in the process whereby Teaching intensive staff apply for a contract change to Teaching and Research.
- The broader issue of the segmentation of teaching from research was raised, and associated tension and workload challenges for individual staff in balancing those demands.
- It was suggested that more use was made of exit interviews to understand reasons for leaving.
- Whilst supportive of ECR recruitment, it should be recognised that there was additional investment and support required from Schools, particularly when set against the loss of more experienced staff.

The Board noted that the topic would be discussed at a future Leadership Group meeting with specific agreed proposals to be communicated to the wider University in due courses

#### **22/06 Strategic Foundation Programme: Expectations and workload pathway [item 5b]**

The Board received a verbal update on progress with the Expectations and workload pathway, in particular the individual expectations workstream. Since the previous meeting of the Board, the expectations framework had been presented to the Strategic Foundations Programme Board, which had agreed the establishment of an implementation group. The group would develop an implementation plan, to include the running of pilots in Meteorology and Education from this September.

#### **22/07 Research Endowment Trust Fund (RETF) allocation to support research in 2021/22 and 2022/23 [item 5c]**

The Board received an outline of the planned priorities for use of RETF (c. £1.2m) for the remainder of 2021/22 and 2022/23.

The Board noted that there was not significant change from the previous year, with the exception of an increase to the Research Dean's strategic funding budget to £25k to support inter alia pump priming in their Themes. The proposed RETF allocation included the maintenance of larger schemes, open calls and research fellowships (including the alignment of the public engagement fellowship with other schemes). There was also a placeholder for the current research information system (CRIS) alongside other digital infrastructure, for example the potential replacement of CentAUR. It was highlighted that Industry engagement, for example the creative entrepreneur and

the KTC, was covered by HEIF, and that research infrastructure was only supported from RETF where it was part of externally funded grant applications.

In discussion, it was suggested that there was potential for greater demand for Open Access funding in the future. Whilst RETF could cover some of this demand, it was recommended that the planning group consider how such costs could be planned for in a different way.

The Board was content with the priorities and approved the proposed allocations.

#### **22/08 European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) [item 6a]**

The Board noted the recent decision by the ECMWF Council to relocate the HQ to Whiteknights campus, and received the related paper that was submitted to University Council on 24 November 2021.

In particular, the Board noted the following

- The project was now a government project; building work would not start for a year or two.
- The relocation to the site at Earley Gate would entail estates implications for Art and Agriculture, notably the move of the Art Department to the Pepper Lane entrance.
- Discussions were ongoing with the ECMWF director of science about the joint research programme: £30m investment over 15 years. The programme would address mutually high priorities, and involve the input and expertise from other disciplines, notably mathematics, data science and artificial intelligence.

#### **22/09 Updates on University concordats [item 6b]**

The Board received updates on the following concordats

##### **Concordat to support research integrity**

- Progress had been made on developing training materials for research integrity following the gap analysis.
- Etienne Roesch and approximately 15 Reading researchers had attended a Vir2tue train the trainer course and were now delivering training at the University in research integrity. CORRI would receive an update at its next meeting.

##### **Concordat to support researcher development**

- UCRI had approved RETF funding for a post to support the implementation of the Concordat at Reading. The post was advertised before Christmas.
- Implementation work was drawing on best practice examples from other universities presented on the Concordat portal.
- Plans were underway for the resubmission of the HR excellence in research award.

#### **22/10 Research output prize for Early Career Researchers [item 6c]**

The Board received an update on progress with nominations and ratified the selection processes being proposed in the Themes. It noted that the Theme winners would be approved by Chair's action in February.

The Chair highlighted that there were various prizes and ways of recognizing staff that were producing as well as supporting research. The PVCs (R&I) were looking at the current prize/reward

mechanisms in the research portfolio in the round and would bring back a more developed set of proposals.

## **22/11 Acceptance of research and related funding [item 7a]**

The Board received for discussion and approval the University policy for the acceptance of research and related funding. The policy had been developed in response to the publication of the University's investment policy and the exclusions highlighting therein of particular sectors (e.g. tobacco, fossil fuels, gambling) and recommendation from the Fundraising Ethics Committee on harmonization of policies on acceptance of funding between Fundraising and research funding.

The Board noted the broad principles: approach to particular areas e.g. fossil fuels, armaments, tobacco, conflicts of interest; a due diligence process with prompts and criteria for staff to evaluate; alignment with investment policy and acceptance of gifts; and the escalation approach to the Director of Research Services and then the PVC (R&I).

In discussion, the following points were highlighted.

- There was an important distinction between the nature/purpose of the project and the source; it was sometimes challenging to disentangle in evaluating specific projects.
- There was a continuum in cases. Whilst some cases were clear cut, others required more consideration and diligence.
- The policy should not be considered a barrier to seeking out funding sources. New funders to the University would continue to go through financial checks, with additional due diligence proposed on other aspects.
- There were potential ambiguities around funding from international countries, for example human rights issues, which also related to research collaboration and Education policy, for example government funded studentship. This would require a University wide approach beyond the research funding policy.

The Chair thanked members for a helpful discussion, which highlighted some concerns and inherent ambiguities. In particular, he acknowledged there was a need for some strengthening or clarification and to embed within a discussion of the wider institutional approach. To that end, the Director of Research Services would be asked to check alignment against other policies that reference acceptance of funding. Informed by this check, the policy, along with the Board's comments, would be taken to UEB and then brought back to the Board for final approval.

**Action: Chair to ask Director of Research Services to undertake a check of alignment against other policies. Chair to take policy to UEB for further review and bring back to UBRI for final approval**

## **22/12 UKRI open access policy [item 7b]**

The Board received a verbal update on sector developments and related University activity. It noted the following

- UKRI updated its policy before Christmas. The mandate for articles would be in two months with monographs two years away.
- The criteria for eligible costs for the block grant had been set out, notably allowing APC costs for journals in transformative agreements with JISC (not hybrid journals) but no allowance for long form publications.
- Diversity and inclusion would be expected to be considered when funds were allocated.

- UKRI would be reporting at a sector wide event on 24 February, which would be attended by University OA team members.
- The working group on Open Access would be developing internal communications to staff.

#### **22/13 Update on Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 [item 7c]**

The Board received information on ongoing activity with regard to REF 2021, notably:

- REF Results day was confirmed as 12 May 2022, with results released to institutions under embargo on 9 May.
- The Funding bodies REF team audit was drawing to a close. Recent audit areas had included eligibility of impact case studies, and evidence to support claims made in Environment statements.

The Board noted those colleagues currently serving on panels. It would be important to draw on their insight (with due regard to panel confidentiality) as part of the University's post REF review.

#### **22/14 Reporting committees [item 8]**

The Board received minutes from the recent meetings of the following Committees/Groups.

- Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity

The Board received a verbal update on the main topics discussed at meetings of the University Committee for Research and Innovation since the previous meeting of the Board. The Committee had

- Received updates on the review of ROSS and quality assessment of research outputs as part of the review of 2020 Research plan. The review would draw on sector insight and internal consultation/surveys.
- Approved the tender for development training with Advance HE.
- Reviewed success rates for British Academy small grant schemes.
- Considered approaches to strengthening industry funded research with further consultation to be undertaken with UEB and the Committee for Research Impact and Public Engagement.
- Developed its approach internally to specific Research England funding streams: Participatory Research, Strategic Fund and Research Culture. To date, the latter would involve commissioning work from colleagues in HBS; potential deployment of other internal and external expertise; offsetting relevant RETF costs. It was unclear at this stage which of these funds would be recurrent.
- Reviewed common themes from Research Division operational plans.
- Evaluated RETF open call applications and approach to monitoring RETF fellowships.
- Received information on the governance of NIRD and the approach to allocating associated funds, for example agriculture and food related research funded through RETF.
- Received an update on the development of the Impact strategy.

#### **22/15 Any other business [item 9]**

Members raised the following items of any other business.

- Some specific issues were highlighted in relation to Teaching intensive staff
  - It was felt that some clearer guidelines and/or confirmation of the process were needed on the process for Teaching intensive staff to apply for Teaching and Research status, and who should be involved in the decision. There was different understanding amongst Schools.
  - It was challenging for Teaching intensive staff, given their teaching responsibilities to have the opportunity to demonstrate credentials against the research criteria.
  - Making study leave available to Teaching intensive staff, e.g. for scholarship work, placed pressures on Departments, since there was unclear policy at University level. It was noted that such issues would be explored through the expectation and workload pathway.
- The RUSU Postgraduate Research Student Officer asked for clarification of University policy on ownership status of IT equipment funded by research fees. It was recommended to take this question to the Committee on Researcher Development and Postgraduate Research Studies.

**22/16 Date of next meeting**

5 April 2022, 9am

## **Annex to the UBRI minutes of 25 January 2022**

### **Actions from 27 October 2021**

#### **21/33 Disclosure of Interests and Risk Register**

Secretary to provide Board feedback to the Risk Management Group

Status: Completed

#### **21/38 THE World University Rankings**

Chair/Secretary to invite Paul Inman (PVC International) to a future meeting to discuss international collaboration.

Status: Completed. Paul Inman (PVC International) to attend Board's meeting on 15 June 2022.

#### **21/39 Individual Expectations Framework**

Secretary/Workstream Chair to feedback Board comments to Pathway Project Manager

Status: Completed.

#### **21/44 Responsible metrics and Open Research in promotions**

Co-Chair of this Board and Chair of CORRI (Parveen Yaqoob) to liaise with the University Secretary to coordinate the establishment of the working group

Status: Ongoing

#### **21/46 RETF allocation**

Co-Chair (Dominik Zaum) to bring RETF paper outlining planned priorities to the next meeting

Action: Completed.

### **Actions from 25 January 2022**

#### **22/11 Acceptance of research and related funding**

Chair to ask Director of Research Services to undertake a check of alignment against other policies. Chair to take policy to UEB for further review and bring back to UBRI for final approval