

University Board for Research and Innovation

24/31 A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Monday 10 June 2024 at 11.00am in Whiteknights House, Committee Room 2.

Present

Parveen Yaqoob, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) [Chair]
Dominik Zaum, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource)
John Gibbs, Research Dean (Heritage & Creativity)
Rowan Sutton, Research Dean (Environment)
Adrian Williams, Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)
Mona Ashok, Business Informatics System and Accounting, ECR representative
Karen Henderson, Director of Research and Innovation
Chris Jones, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Senate member
Daniella La Penna, Department of Languages and Culture, Senate member
Sue Egleton, University Librarian
Robert Darby, Research Data Manager [item 24/40 only]
Kate Hough, Strategic Project Lead [item 24/41 only]
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

Apologies

Claudia Murray, Co-Chair of Research Staff Committee
Carol Wagstaff, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Anne-Marie West, Finance Business Partner

24/31 Minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024 [item 2]

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 April 2024.

24/32 Actions from previous meetings [item 3]

The Board noted ongoing actions from previous meetings. Under 24/28, the updated paper on the Research Development Fund had been provided to University Executive Board.

24/33 Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda) [item 4]

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

24/34 Governance [item 5]

Board membership

- Daniela La Penna's term as Senate member on the Board ended on 31 July 2024. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked her for her input and contribution to the Board's business.
- The Board approved the appointment on to the Board of Caroline Knowles, Head of Research Communications, and Guy Hembury, Director of Knowledge Exchange, Commercialisation and Partnerships.

- The Board discussed whether there was sufficient representation from the range of academic career levels and role types. This would be revisited once Senate membership was confirmed for 2024/25 session.

Terms of reference

- In advance of formal approval at the first meeting of the next session, the Board reviewed Terms of reference. It suggested more explicit recognition of the Innovation remit, for example oversight of the Knowledge Exchange concordat, as well as the Technician commitment.

Research committees ways of working

- The Board welcomed the ways of working document, which outlined roles on committees, expectations of members and inclusive ways of working approach. It would be provided to Board/committees at the start of each session.

24/35 Update from the Chair [item 6]

The Board received the following updates from the Chair:

- **University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI) away day.** Amongst other things, at its away day UCRI would be discussing the development of the Knowledge Exchange strategy and refreshing the research strategy.
- The **Personal Research Planning and Research Division Operating Plans** templates had been updated. In Research Division Operating Plans (RDOPs), Divisions would be asked to reflect on the characteristics of high performing units in relation to their Division's activities.

24/36 Research awards and applications FQ3 2023/24 [item 6cii]

The Board received an update on the University's research awards and applications performance as of FQ3 2023/24, noting the following.

- Award value was £20.3m, some way below previous years, with the University 29% towards its five-year target (against 35% milestone).
- Application value was higher than most previous years (£114m) at this stage in the cycle. Some high value BBSRC applications were also in the pipeline.
- Income was in line with the previous reporting year, which was a drop against earlier years.

The Board highlighted the following in discussion:

- This year's RDOP process will represent an opportunity for Research Deans and Research Division Leads to reflect/comment on progress to date, recognising that there was significant variation in performance between Divisions. These would be shared with UCRI to address next steps where required.
- Growth in staff to support planned student number growth in some disciplines would include staff with research responsibility. There was also institutional focus through investment in specific STEM areas: AFESS and AgriFood.
- Recognising the need for balance of small grants and larger grants, and differential success rates, it was planned to reinvigorate the large bids/major grants process to provide necessary institutional support, including use of Professional Services staff.

24/37 Research culture: Framework and Priorities [item 7a]

The Board noted the University's initial plans for developing research culture priorities. The University proposed to adopt the framework developed by Vitae (Research Culture Framework — Vitae Website), which contains 13 elements, with adaptation to be specific to the University's priorities and gaps. A Research Culture manager would be starting in June to support the programme. Members highlighted the following:

- Research culture was broader than REF requirements to support the preparation of the People, Culture and Environment element of the submission
- Other related University activity was underway or in place, including understanding career pathways, leadership programmes, and preparations for Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter Marks submissions.

24/38 Current Research Information System update [item 7b]

The Board received an update on progress with the implementation of a Current Research Information System. The project was at Evaluation of Tender stage with agreed supplier to be determined by the end of the summer.

24/39 Research Excellence Framework 2029 [item 7c]

The Board received an update on progress with the University's preparations for REF 2029, noting the following

- The University had finalised its response to the Funding body consultation on Open Access.
- Vitae would be running workshops/surveys as part of the Funding bodies project to develop indicators for the People, Culture and Environment element.
- UOA leads had been appointed and were developing their ways of working for the submission.
- Amongst other things, the CRIS system was planned to be implemented in time to facilitate the University's REF submission. The Board noted that the University could adapt the approach/processes used in previous REF submissions should the system not be in place in time. A REF tool had been developed to support the output selection element of the submission.

24/40 Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) action plan [item 8a]

The Board approved the publication of the University's CoARA five-year action plan in the CoARA repository as part of its signatory of the Agreement to Reforming Research Assessment (in summer 2023). C. 700 institutions worldwide and 10-12 in the UK have also signed up. The Plan had been iterated in consultation with UCRI and CORRI and other stakeholders; it publicly set out a direction of travel for the University to follow, but was open to further development and refinement, including learning from other CoARA institutions. The Plan will be overseen by a working group, which will report annual progress to the Board.

In discussion, the Board highlighted the following

- There were challenges in operationalizing the commitment, including
 - raising awareness and developing guidance/training
 - Understanding what it means practically for individuals and recognising disciplinary nuances.

- Driving adoption of an institutionally driven commitment at individual/community level.
- Breaking down the currency of certain metrics (for example impact factors/H-index) in some disciplines to evaluate performance.
- There was intersection with research culture and research integrity and the importance of broader and fairer view of individual contributions and performance.
- CoARA differed from DORA in that it was action driven and broader than just publications.

24/41 Agrifood futures: Research Strategy and Investment Opportunities [item 9a]

The Board received the final report, Agrifood Futures: Research Strategy and Investment Opportunities ahead of its presentation to Senate.

The Board commended the report, encouraged by the opportunity for investment in facilities and skills and clarity about where to focus. It noted the following in discussion.

- The Strategy should reach out beyond the core disciplines, and explore
- There was a risk that the significant investment might divert attention away from pursuing external funding; however, in principle it should put the University in a better position to leverage external funding.
- A significant aspect to be determined through implementation was the structures through which the strategy would be delivered. There would be ongoing consultations with relevant School/Departments.
- The implementation of the strategy should be responsive to external activity and context, for example the Agritech Centre and development of AI.
- There would be further communications in the autumn, including a white paper

24/42 Annual Concordat reports [items 10bii, 10di]

The Board noted the contents and approved the University's Annual report/statements for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity for onward transmission to Senate. It suggested that there would be value in a forum considering the various University concordats/agreements together to ensure consistency and reducing burden.

24/43 Reporting committees [items 10a, 10bi, 10di]

The Board received minutes and/or summaries from the recent meetings of the following Committees.

- Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies
- University Committee for Research and Innovation
- Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity

24/44 Research Travel Grant Sub-Committee: Annual report [10c]

The Board received the annual report from the Research Travel Grant Sub-Committee, which oversaw the allocation of awards to support conference attendance and other research-related

travel. In 2023/24, the scheme had supported 120 applications to a total of £43k against a budget of £55k.

With regard to the Sub-Committee proposal to raise the limits to geographical locations, the Board was broadly supportive, subject to more detail being provided. Should the requirement be time sensitive, the Board was happy for the Chair to approve by Chair's action rather than wait until the October 2024 meeting.

Action: Chair to approve by Chair's action the raising of limits to geographical locations, subject to further detail from the Sub-Committee.

24/45 Date of next meeting

23 October 2024, 11am.