

UNIVERSITY BOARD FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

23/26 A meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation was held on Tuesday 7 November 2023 at 9.00am on Microsoft Teams.

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)
Carol Wagstaff, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Adrian Williams, Dean for Postgraduate Research Studies and Researcher Development
Mona Ashok, Business Informatics System and Accounting, ECR representative
Stuart Hunt, University Librarian
Karen Henderson, Director of Research and Innovation
Anne-Marie West, Finance Business Partner
Daniella La Penna, Department of Languages and Culture, Senate member
Nathan Helsby, Planning and Strategy Office [Secretary]

Apologies

Carol Wagstaff, Research Dean (Agriculture, Food and Health)
Adrian Bell, Research Dean (Prosperity & Resilience)
Sophie Jordan, Education Officer (RUSU)
Chris Jones, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Senate member

23/27 Disclosure of interests [item 2]

Board members were reminded of the requirement to disclose interests, and to inform the Chairs of any personal interest in agenda items at Board meetings. The Chair reported that she had joined the Board of Directors for Advance HE.

23/28 Research governance [item 3]

The Board received the current research governance structure, along with the Board's membership and Terms of Reference for 2023/24. The Board noted that there had been some changes to the Chairs of some research committees. The Board approved the Terms of Reference and the membership, noting the following:

- Parveen Yaqoob was now sole Chair of the Board. The previous co-Chair Dominik Zaum would remain as member by virtue of his new role as PVC (Academic Planning and Resource).
- Rowan Sutton would be the Research Dean representative for the Environment Theme. John Gibbs would be the Research Dean representative for the Heritage & Creativity Theme.
- Karen Henderson, Director of Research and Innovation, would replace the Director of Research Services, Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd, on the Board. The Chair welcomed Karen and thanked Anne-Marie for her contribution to the Board as member over recent years.
- Chris Jones (Biomedical Sciences) had been appointed as a Senate member on the Board.

23/29 Minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2023 [item 4]

The Board approved the minutes of the previous meeting held on 12 June 2023.

23/30 Actions from previous meetings [item 5]

21/38. International research partnerships. The Board noted that Caroline Baylon had been appointed as PVC (International) in the summer. Their immediate priority was recruitment, but the Chair would suggest her attending the summer Board meeting to discuss international research matters.

22/33 Research Travel Grants fund use by research students studying at a distance. The Research Travel Grant Sub-Committee had yet to consider the question. The new Chairs would make a decision during this academic year.

23/14 Internal and Ringfenced funding to support research and innovation: Open access funding. The Board noted that this action would be addressed substantially by item 9c on this meeting's agenda.

23/31 Matters arising from the minutes (not covered elsewhere on the agenda) [item 6]

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

23/32 Research culture survey [item 7a]

The Chair reported initial findings from the research culture survey conducted at the University by over the summer 2023. The outcomes had been reviewed at the University Committee for Research and Innovation's (UCRI) away day in September, and headlines presented at the Research Division Leads termly meeting. The November all-staff briefing would also include a section on the survey key findings. This Board would consider the detailed report and action plan at its January meeting.

23/33 Research Performance Data: Research awards and applications 2022/23 [item 7bi]

The Board received a summary of the end of 2022/23 research award and application activity. The University had received c. £36m in award value in 2022/23, in line with the previous year, and c. 18% towards the five-year target against the 20% milestone. There was some evidence of a general decline in application levels, and research income (at £34m) was down c. £4m from the previous financial year.

In discussion, the Board acknowledged that there was more context required to understand the outcomes, for example in relation to changes in staff profiles (grade, EDI), distribution of grant size, changes to funder behaviours, factors outside University control, and other competing demands in Schools. With regard to the latter, the Chair highlighted the forthcoming Strategic Alignment Process sessions with specific Schools, at which a broad range of Teaching, Research, Marketing and Financial information would be considered.

23/34 Research Performance Data: Research and innovation KPI updates [item 7bii]

The Board received a summary of the most recent University performance against the two research and innovation owned Key Performance Indicators and targets for 2026. For KPI-4, to be top 25 in the UK in THE World University Rankings by 2026, the University remained at 26th, although was now outside the top 200 globally. For KPI-7, the University's performance in the recently published

KEF3 outcomes had improved with two of seven perspectives in the top quintile (against a 2026 target of 3) and 4 of 16 metrics in the top quintile (against a 2026 target of 8).

23/35 Individual Expectations and Workload [item 8a]

The Board received the draft Academic Career Framework for comment. The Framework was intended to outline institution-wide expectations and was linked to the individual expectations framework and disciplinary statements, which were piloted in the previous academic year. The Board noted that such overall frameworks were common in the sector, and this framework had drawn on sector examples as well as other internal documents across the University, such as promotions criteria and job descriptions.

The Framework had already been reviewed by Senate, who had made some suggestions and comments. It recommended the establishment of a small group to review their comments and those from other boards/committees to help finalise a draft for review by Senate in the New Year.

In response to specific comments and discussion points, The PVC (APR) highlighted the following:

- There would be further consideration of how the Framework would be used as part of other processes. HR had made some initial comments as part of this consultation and would be represented on the working group.
- The discussions around the Framework might stimulate consideration of promotions/personal titles, for example the criteria/compulsory criteria, and the balance and expected contribution across the three areas (research, teaching, citizenship). The principle that the balance could vary was embedded in the process.
- Data and benchmarking (where possible/appropriate) against the sector would be undertaken primarily through the disciplinary statements, in which the principle of ranges was broadly welcomed.
- Expectations around Scholarship were currently not laid out. It was anticipated that it would be incorporated into Teaching rather than Research. Members felt it would be helpful also to reference in the Research section in order to clarify distinction between Scholarship and Research, particular in the context of a potentially broader range of staff being able to contribute outputs to the next REF exercise.

23/36 Current Research Information System update [item 8b]

The Board received background information and an update on progress with the implementation of Current Research Information System at the University. The system was planned to be in operation by 2025 in time to support the University's REF preparations. Whilst there had been a slight delay to the procurement process, there had been an extensive requirements process undertaken, and there would be further opportunities for users/stakeholders to feedback as part of the tendering process.

23/37 Research output prize for Early Career Researchers [item 8c]

The Board approved the call text and proposed assessment process and timings for the prize; the prizes would be presented at the research celebration event in the summer. The Chair reported that there had been discussion at UCRI of a mid-career prize in light of issues highlighted in initial focus groups on research culture at the University. The Committee concluded that there were alternative mechanisms that would better address some of the concerns of this constituency, and would consider these in the New Year.

23/38 Research Excellence Framework 2028 [item 9a]

The Board received for information a summary of the Funding bodies' initial decisions and issues for further consultation, alongside the University's response to the consultation. In particular, the Board noted the reduction to the outputs weighting, and a broadening of the groups of staff that could contribute outputs, and a bolstering of the environment weighting and research culture narrative and evidence requirements. The University response highlighted several areas for further consideration and clarification. The Funding bodies would review responses and outcomes from other sector engagement with a view to providing more detail and further decisions by the end of the year.

The Board also received the University's initial plans for the development and management of the submission, recognising that the activity overlapped and interacted with business as usual. Workstreams, led by Research Deans, would focus on the three principal elements (outputs, impact, environment) with separate workstreams focusing on research culture and the data and system requirements. UOA leads would be appointed in early 2024, with the initial focus on SWOT and risk analysis for their UOAs. It was planned to make strategic use of external input as appropriate, for example output review.

With regard to Governance, the Board approved the proposal that the REF Planning Group report directly to UBRI. A risk register for the 'project' would be brought to the next meeting.

23/39 KEF3 data and outcomes [item 9b]

The Board noted the publication of KEF3 data by UKRI and received a link to the published dashboard, which highlighted the University's performance on a set of innovation and engagement measures relative to the sector and its benchmark cluster. As per agenda item 23/34, one of the University's KPI targets is linked to KEF outcomes.

23/40 Closure of the University Gold Open Access Fund for journal publications [item 9c]

The Board noted that UCRI had decided to close the University Gold Open Access Fund (from RETF) for journal publications. The fund covered non-UKRI research publication and was established at a time where there was limited other support for publishing open access. However, costs and demand had increased considerably and was increasingly unsustainable. The fund to support open access publication of monographs would remain open, and members were reminded of the availability of transformative agreements from publishers and other open publication routes/strategies. There had been communications to RDLs and Schools/Departments to provide further information (including the presentation provided in the meeting papers), and Library colleagues were available to run sessions with groups of staff as required, for example Communities of Practice. In discussion, the following was highlighted:

- The University would continue to monitor the impact of the withdrawal of funding.
- There would be consideration of a mechanism for special cases being made for significant outputs for REF submission, where there was no alternative funding/publication venue.
- There was concern amongst staff that the appetite for transformational agreements was diminishing, and therefore removal of the Gold fund would mean limited options and difficult decisions.
- Similarly, staff were concerned about the visibility of some journals in the field. It would be important in communications to provide reassurances to colleagues along with information

about the journal checker tool and Scifree. Library staff would also be available to provide guidance on an individual basis.

23/41 Research England funding for providers 2023/24 [item 9d]

The Board received for information a summary of the University's funding allocation from Research England for 2023/24. The University had received c. £18.2m in research funds, £3.5m in knowledge exchange funds, and c. 2m in capital funds. Funding was slightly lower (c. 2%) than 2022/23 on account of changes to underlying data. Other specific funding streams had been maintained at similar levels for 2023/24: the Policy Support Fund, Participatory Research Fund, and Enhancing Research Culture Fund.

23/42 Research Endowment Trust Fund (RETF) [item 9d]

The Board received a report from the research Finance Business Partner showing budget awarded to projects and expenditure in 2022/23 and allocated budget for 2023/24. The main headline was that spend often lagged behind allocation. The Chair would review in more detail with the Business Partner and bring back further information to the Board at its next meeting.

Action: Chair to review RETF budget and expenditure detail and bring back further information to the Board at its next meeting.

23/43 Reporting committees [item 11a-c]

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

- Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies. The Board noted the following
 - Two key initiatives were outlined for this academic session: the process around confirmation of registration and the policy and process around Graduate Teaching Assistants
 - Coaching and careers support had been highlighted as a need in the recent research staff survey.
- Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity
- University Committee for Research and Innovation

23/44 Any other business [item 12]

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the University Librarian for his contribution to the UBRI and wished him well in his new role at Durham University.

23/45 Date of next meeting

26 January 2024, 9am.