

ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 (2.00pm – 3.50pm).

Present: Professor P Hagan (Convener), Dr J Blackwood, Dr S Christie, Professor K Cooper, Professor S Duthie, Professor R Flin, Dr E Gillibrand, Professor D Gray, Professor C Kennedy, Professor R Laing, Dr A Lamb, Professor L Lawton, Professor J McCall, Mr C MacLean, Mr C Moule, Professor J Njuguna, Professor S Pedersen and Professor N Wiratunga.

Apologies: Professor S Vertigans.

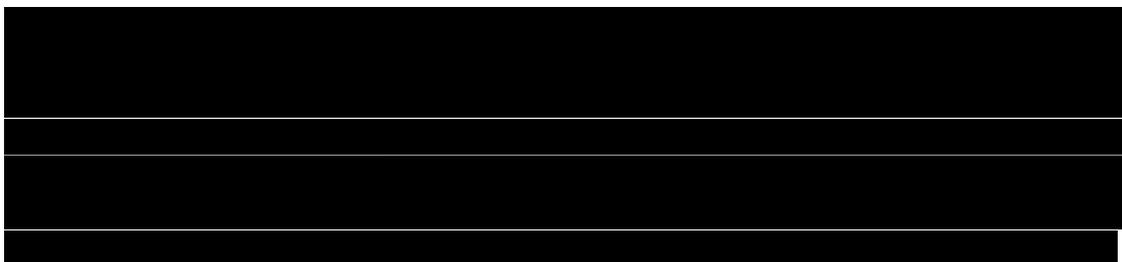
In Attendance: Ms K Fraser, Ms C Kenny, Mrs F McLean Whyte (Secretary) and Mr A Pratt.

	Action
<p>1. MINUTE</p> <p>The Committee approved the <i>Minute of the meeting held on 27 May 2020 (RC/20/3)</i> and considered matters arising from the minute.</p>	
<p>1.1 Carnegie Scholarships [RC/20/3/1.1]</p> <p>The Head of the Graduate School and the Head of Research Strategy and Policy would liaise with the new Vice-Principal for Research on his arrival to support the identification of potential candidates as early as possible in order that they might be supported and nurtured through the application process.</p>	<p>Dr A Lamb, Dr E Gillibrand & Prof N Fyfe</p>
<p>1.2 Key Performance Indicators [RC/20/3/4.3]</p> <p>The internal Research Leaders' Network was now well established and operating effectively, led by the Research Funding Manager.</p>	
<p>1.3 Concordat to Support Research Integrity [RC/20/3/6.1]</p> <p>An updated Annual Statement had been agreed to meet the requirements for <i>Concordat to Support Research Integrity</i>, and would be updated to the University's website shortly.</p>	<p>Dr E Gillibrand</p>
<p>2. RESEARCH COMMITTEE</p> <p>The Committee considered and confirmed its satisfaction with its remit and composition as contained in <i>Organisational Regulation O4</i>. The <i>Membership List</i> for the Research Committee for Session 2020-21 was noted.</p>	
<p>3. RESPONSE TO COVID-19</p> <p>The Convener provided an update on the status of the response to the pandemic and the Scottish Government Framework. At the time of the meeting it was considered likely that Scotland might be placed in a more intensive lockdown. The Scottish higher education sector was committed to staying open, particularly to facilitate the health and wellbeing of students and staff, as well as research activities and the work of research students.</p>	

Currently, the University had 89 reported cases, and none were due to on-campus transmission but were from disparate locations across the city and shire.

The Graduate School was continuing to support research students and monitoring, in particular, extra support needs.

4. **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021**



The Head of Research Strategy and Policy was currently overseeing the issue of letters to staff. The majority of these were being issued to staff by email, with the remainder delivered by hand. The Appeals Procedure would then commence, with appeals being considered by a Panel consisting of the Head of Research Strategy and Policy and representation from the Human Resources Department. The Vice-Principal for Research was not on the Appeals Panel.

The Convener urged unit of assessment leads to submit their impact case studies as soon as possible, as he would spend the remainder of his time at the University focusing on these, prior to his departure on 30 November 2020.

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Secretary's Note: On 20 November 2020, the four UK higher education funding bodies responsible for the REF had confirmed that the submission deadline of noon on 31 March 2021 remained in place, following a review of current COVID effects on REF preparations.

5. **RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH INVESTMENT**

5.1 **Research Strategy and Investment**

The Convener advised the Committee that he had made a presentation at the Board of Governors Strategy Event on 29 October 2020. The Board had been very supportive and commended the actions being taken to deliver to the *Research Strategy* and encouraged the University's management to continue doing what they were doing. Inevitably, the research investment had to be phased and this would be reviewed once final student number income was known.



█ [REDACTED]
 █ [REDACTED]
 █ [REDACTED]

The National Subsea Centre had recently completed the recruitment of two professors, both of whom brought a wide range of skills and expertise:

- Professor Li Zhang, who specialised in artificial intelligence and affective computing and was joining the University from the University of Northumbria;
- Professor Jinchang Ren, from the University of Strathclyde, and who specialised in intelligent information processing, visual computing and multimedia signal processing.

5.2 **RGU Orkney**

Consideration was given to the *Orkney Project Annual Report 2019-20* that summarised the considerable progress and achievements during the past year, and the following was highlighted by the Research Funding Manager:

- following the rebranding to *RGU Orkney*, the position of Orkney Development Manager had been made a permanent position, demonstrating the University's commitment to the islands;
- there were 23 Graduate Apprenticeships, working in partnership with local public and private sector organisations;
- work was continuing to contribute to the Islands Deal proposition across the Deal themes, that would see a total of £100m investment from both the Scottish and UK Governments combined, and that also demonstrated the University's commitment to working collaboratively with the islands.

5.3 **Key Performance Indicators**

The Committee considered the *Research Activity Analysis* which showed a healthy pipeline over the COVID-19 period, and some COVID-19-related proposals submitted or in development. The reports covered the periods 1 August 2019-31 July 2020, and from 1 August 2020 to 28 October 2020.

In summary, from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020:

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

The current trajectory for external funding was good but it remained dependent on a small number of individuals. Progress was being made to bring more active researchers and early career researchers into the pipeline. An increasing number of projects were inter- or cross-disciplinary.

Currently, the Vice-Principal for Research scrutinised all proposals and applications prior to release to ensure their quality as far as was possible and reduce the reputational risk. This had been an effective process, as shown by the increased success in obtaining funding. In light of his impending departure, however, it would even more important to ensure Schools engaged with the peer review process and forwarded applications to the Research Strategy and Policy team as early as possible. It was also not certain what the new Vice-Principal for Research would do in this regard.

Worktribe did have a module available for peer review and members were urged to contact the Head of Research Strategy and Policy if they wished pilot the system.

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It was acknowledged that, in many areas, Employee Performance Reviews (EPRs) were completed by staff who had a teaching focus, and Committee members were encouraged to continue emphasising the value of research in EPRs to their respective Heads of School, especially for early career researchers. The Head of Research Strategy and Policy was currently developing guidance for line managers who were not research-active themselves, and Professor Lawton and Professor Duthie offered to assist with the development of the guidance. Development of a University Workload Model was also continuing.

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Dr E Gillibrand,
Prof L Lawton &
Prof S Duthie

There was a perception that not all of the Professional Support Departments had a clear remit to support research, and research was not built into all of the University's structures. The Convener **agreed** to raise this at the forthcoming Executive Away Day. Dr Lamb confirmed it was still his intention to implement a University-wide *Research Culture Survey*, as this had been delayed over recent months due to the pandemic.

Prof P Hagan

A new *Researcher Development Programme for 2020-21* had just been launched, and the Committee wished to commend Ms Sledzinska for her considerable efforts in unifying and expanding the provision, and increasing engagement, in such challenging times. Committee members were encourage to engage and promote the *Programme* within their areas.

Ms P Sledzinska

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6. RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ETHICS

6.1 Research Ethics and Risk Management

The Head of Research Strategy and Policy confirmed development of the University's ethical review processes remained work in progress. Consideration was being given to using a University of Dundee *Research Integrity Training Module* for cascading training to staff.

7. RESEARCH POLICIES

7.1 Research Data Management

The Committee considered and **approved** an updated *Research Data Management Policy* and draft *Research Data Management Standard Operating Procedure*.

Ms J Williams

It would be challenging to ensure legacy research data was stored in a means compatible with the *Policy* and *Procedure* and it was likely additional resource would be required to transform and transfer the data, as well as determine what was required to be retained. This would need to be considered in detail with the Project Lead – Research Asset Management. It was acknowledged that changes in the University's IT systems since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic had helped considerably.

Ms J Williams &
Dr E Gillibrand

7.2 **Safeguarding for International Development Research Policy**

The Committee considered and **approved** a *Safeguarding for International Development Research Policy*, and a *Due Diligence Questionnaire for International Collaboration*. The *Policy* and *Questionnaire* were mandatory requirements and would ensure appropriate due diligence was undertaken on research conducted overseas. It had been based on the UKRI suggested best practice and, in light of recent changes to the UK Government's foreign aid practices, a higher degree of auditing was expected in future. Committee members were asked to read and submit any comments to the Research Team Leader.

RC Members to
Mr A Pratt

8. **SCOTLAND EUROPA AND OTHER EUROPEAN ENGAGEMENT**

The Head of Research Strategy and Policy advised the Committee that little was known about what might be in place after 31 December 2020 when the Brexit transition period ended. Scotland Europa, of which the University was a member, was working hard to ensure that Scottish research interests were represented and to have a clear picture of the types of research currently in progress across Scotland. The organisation was a valuable resource and members were urged to engage with them as much as possible. The Head of Research Strategy and Policy **agreed** to circulate the most recent information received.

Dr E Gillibrand

It was currently expected that *Horizon 2020* projects would continue from 1 January 2021. Engagement with Erasmus+ was not, however, being encouraged.

9. **DEPARTURE OF VICE-PRINCIPAL FOR RESEARCH**

Interviews for the new Vice-Principal for Research were taking place on 17 and 18 November 2020 and it was understood there had been a very competitive field of applicants.

Until the new Vice-Principal for Research could take up post, current authorisations had been distributed to other members of the Executive and the Head of Research Strategy and Policy.

The Convener wished all Committee members best wishes for the future.

RC Members

Secretary's Note: Professor Nick Fyfe had been appointed as the new Vice-Principal for Research, and would be commencing in post on 1 March 2021.

9. **DATE OF MEETING: SESSION 2020-21**

Wednesday 10 February 2021, 2.00pm, N204, Sir Ian Wood Building
Wednesday 12 May 2021 at 2.00pm, N204, Sir Ian Wood Building

Dr E Gillibrand, V-C