

THE ROBERT GORDON UNIVERSITY

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minute of the meeting held on 8 May 2019 (2.00pm – 4.45pm).

Present: Professor P Hagan (Convener), Professor S Duthie, Professor R Flin, Dr E Gillibrand, Professor D Gray, Professor C Kennedy, Professor R Laing, Dr A Lamb, Professor J Njuguna and Professor N Wiratunga.

Apologies: Dr J Blackwood, Professor L Lawton, Mr C MacLean, Professor J McCall, Mr C Moule, and Professor S Pedersen.

In Attendance: Ms L Dickson and Mrs F McLean Whyte (Secretary).

	Action
<p>1. MINUTE</p> <p>The Committee approved the <i>Minute of the meeting held on 13 February 2019 (RC/19/2</i> and considered matters arising.</p>	
<p>1.1 Professional Teaching Framework [RC/19/2/1.1]</p> <p>The Head of the Graduate School confirmed that a meeting with the Convener and the Director for Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Access to progress plans regarding research featuring in the <i>Professional Teaching Framework</i> and in academic staff induction had yet to take place.</p>	<p>Dr A Lamb, Prof P Hagan & Mr J Dunphy</p>
<p>1.2 Peer Review [RC/19/1/1.2]</p> <p>The Convener reinforced the need to ensure effective peer review was completed. The majority of proposals he reviewed had been signed-off by the respective Head of School, which was also necessary for budget purposes, and therefore he assumed they had been subject to internal School review processes. He wished to avoid the need for a compulsory formal sign-off on peer review. It was agreed, therefore, that he would raise the matter with the Heads of Schools.</p>	<p>Prof P Hagan</p>
<p>1.3 Doctoral Supervision [RC/19/2/1.3]</p> <p>The Convener confirmed that, following the work undertaken by a working group, convened by Professor Elizabeth Gammie on workload modelling, he had had discussions with the Human Resources Department and was currently reviewing data. It was evident there was diverse practice across Schools.</p>	
<p>1.4 School Research Plans [RC/19/2/1.7]</p> <p>A template for <i>School Research Plans</i> had been circulated to all Committee members a week ahead of the meeting. Although early drafts had been received from the Aberdeen Business School and the School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, there had been insufficient time for them to be discussed within the respective Schools. It was agreed all Schools would be asked to submit finalised Research Plans for the Committee's next meeting (23 October 2019).</p>	<p>Research Committee Members RC Holding File [23.10.19]</p>

2. RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021

The final touches were being made to the draft *Code of Practice* prior to its being issued to all staff, and the trade unions, for consultation. Thereafter, it would require to be submitted to the Scottish Funding Council for approval by 7 June 2019, and feedback would be received in August 2019. Members were asked to reinforce to staff that no decisions had yet been made on the number of people to be returned per unit of assessment.

[Redacted]

It was also challenging to address the requirements of the *Guidance on Submissions*, as the REF team had confirmed that only one rule could be applied across an institution's entire submission, and institutions could not selectively use different rules for different units of assessment. It was understood some institutions had changed the contracts of employment for their researchers in order to optimise their returns, but this had not been an option for the University.

[Redacted]

External reviews of outputs were nearing completion and the next steps varied by School and unit of assessment. Another external review, with a new independent reviewer, would be undertaken towards the end of 2019. Some Schools had also completed internal reviews. It was noted that if outputs were not submitted in the next few months then they probably be too late for REF 2021.

The Research Strategy Manager and the Research Development Coordinator were currently working on an equality impact assessment.

The Health Panel Chair had confirmed there had been no bias against systematic reviews in REF 2014, and the Research Strategy Manager **agreed** to circulate this feedback to relevant Committee members.

It was also **agreed** consideration would be given to holding monthly meetings with REF Coordinators.

3. RESEARCH STRATEGY AND RESEARCH INVESTMENT

3.1 Recent Developments

[Redacted]

Research Committee Members

Dr E Gillibrand

Prof P Hagan & Dr E Gillibrand

In order to manage the overall budget, major project bids had been reviewed. Heads of School had been successful in making a significant in-year savings. Whilst prudent budget decisions were required, the University would be continuing to invest where necessary.

The strategic investment in research has been revised accordingly. [REDACTED]

The University paid for membership of various Scottish Graduate Schools, and members were asked to reflect on how the University could make greater use of its memberships and how to increase the engagement of RGU research students in these programmes.

Research
Committee
Members

Members were also reminded to identify outstanding students that might be appropriate for submitting for Carnegie scholarships.

Research
Committee
Members

In respect of the University's governance of research ethics and integrity, it was confirmed that the Research Integrity and Ethics Sub-Committee would shortly be re-established, albeit with a different composition. It was recognised there was variable quality in School-based ethics review processes and so training would be organised in the next six months.

3.2 Key Performance Indicators

The Committee considered a report of *Research activity: August 2018 – April 2019*.

It was **agreed** that incorporating year-on-year trend analysis would be particularly useful for future reporting. It would also be helpful to identify what types of funding generated high quality outputs.

Dr E Gillibrand

It was understood that where the University was the lead institution in a collaborative project then the whole bid was included in the analysis, but the Research Strategy Manager **agreed** to confirm if this was the case. After the data was checked she would re-circulate the report to Committee members.

Dr E Gillibrand

It was also **agreed** that the Committee would, at its next meeting, consider the application/funding success rates in Schools.

RC Holding File
[23.10.19]

3.3 Orkney Project

The Committee received a report of current activities relating to the Orkney Project. Whilst the extensive efforts of the Orkney Project Development Manager and the Research Funding Manager were helping maintain a high level of activity, and there was a wealth of positive feedback and optimism, this was not materialising yet into new projects. The Orkney Project Development Manager was currently capturing the impact the University is having in Orkney, and this was proving very useful. For instance, there had recently been extensive media coverage of the work investigating the mental health of farmers.

4. RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT

Ms Lesley Dickson, recently appointed as Research Training Coordinator, updated the Committee on recent developments. She had met with research leads and a number of priorities were identified, such as development of mid-career researchers as well as ensuring appropriate development and support for early career researchers. The Researcher Development Framework (RDF) Planner, NVivo and online training were all being considered. Where possible any development workshops would be open to all if space permitted. She was happy to meet any of the Committee members to discuss development needs.

Research
Committee
Members

It was confirmed the original Early Career Researcher Network had been formed from researchers self-identifying as early career. More formal arrangements were required to ensure accurate reporting to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). It was likely this would reflect the REF criteria for early career researcher. It was suggested that the Network would benefit from face-to-face meetings, rather than operating as a virtual network.

It was suggested there would be value surveying opinions of how the University's research culture and attitudes were perceived.

Ms L Dickson

The Head of Graduate School informed the Committee he had met with the Research Strategy Manager, the Research Development Coordinator and the Head of Teaching and Learning to discuss mentoring for supervisors. It was likely this would not be discipline-specific. The success of a mentoring scheme would require the commitment of senior researchers. It was noted the recent Accelerator Programme had involved a significant and enthusiastic mentorship scheme that had proven very effective. The Committee also considered the differences between mentoring and coaching. The Head of Graduate School **agreed** to reflect on the points raised in discussion, and consider auditing current practices within Schools.

Dr A Lamb

5. COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT: SESSION 2018-19

The Committee's *Annual Report: Session 2018-19* was considered.

The Convener reminded members that the Committee's membership had originally been selected on the basis of including active and engaged researchers. This had meant, however, that not all Schools were represented, and would not be particularly effective ahead of the REF 2021. The Committee **agreed** the Committee's membership should be extended to ensure representation from all of the academic Schools. Academic Council would be asked to approve an amendment to *Organisational Regulation O4* accordingly.

Prof P Hagan &
Mrs F McLean
Whyte
AC Report
[18.06.19]

6. **DATE OF MEETINGS: SESSION 2019-20**

23 October 2019, 2.00pm, SC1, Garthdee House
26 February 2020, 2.00pm, H230, The Ishbel Gordon Building
13 May 2020, 2.00pm, SC1, Garthdee House

7. **AOCB**

The Committee discussed appropriate means of incentivising staff to supervise more research students and ensuring appropriate recognition and attribution for doctoral supervision, depending on how funding was secured.

Professor P Hagan, C