

**Minutes for the fifth meeting of the Research & Enterprise Committee for the
2020/21 Academic Session, held on Wednesday, 19th May 2021, 2.00pm via
Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Prof A Westby	Vice-Chair
Prof P Griffiths	Director of Research & Enterprise (GRE)
Prof B Cronin	PVC (BUS) Nominee
Prof R Pacella	Director of Institute for Lifecourse Development
Prof C Monks	PVC (EHHS) Nominee
Prof D Wray	PVC (E&S) Nominee
Prof B Bennett	PVC (E&S) Nominee
Prof C Bailey	PVC (LAS) Nominee
Prof T Reynolds	PVC (LAS) Nominee
Ms R Nunn	Head of Commercialisation & Innovation
Prof A Mehra	Head of Research & Enterprise Training Institute
Mr N Cormack-Bissett	Head of Research Development Services
Mr S Mujunga	Student Union Representative
Ms M Femi-Obalemo	Student Union Representative
Ms R Hassan	President of Doctoral Society
Ms K Towner	Assistant Director of Finance (invited)
Mr B Cory	PGR Student (invited)
Mr P Angelo	Secretary

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Prof J Bonet	Chair, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (R&E)
Dr M Yang	PVC (BUS) Nominee & ECR/PGR Nominee
Dr J Lopes-Ramos	PVC (LAS) Nominee
Mrs W Curran	Finance Manager

R&EC-20-5-1 ITEMS FROM THE CHAIR

The Vice-Chair invited colleagues to introduce themselves to Prof. Ben Bennett who had now joined the Committee as a second PVC (E&S) Nominee as the Vice-Chair had now assumed responsibilities for the chairing of this Committee until further notice.

R&EC-20-5-1.1 Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy

The Vice-Chair updated the Committee on the latest developments with regards to the University Strategy 2020 – 2030 which had now been approved by the governing body and informed panel members that the intention was to now develop three sub-strategies, one of which being the new Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy. The Vice-Chair reminded panel members that this Committee had been tasked with this responsibility and a set of slides were presented to ascertain some preliminary ideas as to what this may look like and to promote some general discussion.

This was deliberated at length by the Committee and a number of considerations were suggested that related to external/internal environments, Research & Knowledge Exchange partnerships, communication and visibility, people and place enablers, infrastructure, training and development, academic and societal impact, research culture, work models and BAW allocations, career pathways, and KPIs. The Vice-Chair proposed that a Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy group be established along with the formation of some other working sub-groups that would inform the main one to help address all the points raised. The plan would be to then hold a number of Faculty roadshow events to further develop the strategy before having this signed off by Academic Council and the governing body soon after the first Committee meeting of academic session 2021/22.

In conclusion, **the Vice-Chair requested that individuals volunteer themselves to be part of these working groups and that a series of steering group meetings be set up over the coming weeks to establish a timetable and further advance the Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy. A more substantive iteration was to be presented at the last scheduled Committee meeting of the current academic session for further comment and discussion.**

ACTION: VICE-CHAIR/DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE/HEAD OF COMMERCIALISATION & INNOVATION/FACULTY DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE

R&EC-20-5-1.2 Sabbatical leave policy discussion update

The Vice-Chair reminded the Committee of the paper that was presented at the last meeting that set out the current sabbatical leave policy of the University which was due to be reviewed. Following comments received from panel members the policy had been subsequently updated and had been brought back to the Committee for final approval.

Panel members were generally happy with the amendments, but there was some further dialogue around flexibility and the time period that would be associated with a sabbatical. **The Vice-Chair agreed to review the paragraph of the policy referencing the six/twelve week period and to define a sabbatical as a committed period of research to achieve a defined outcome before sending this on to the HR Director for ratification at VCG.**

ACTION: VICE-CHAIR/HR DIRECTOR

R&EC-20-5-1.3 UKRI update

The Vice-Chair provided panel members with an update following a recent meeting with the institutional UKRI contact point where it had been made clear that over the next year there would be a review of the REF 2021 process in which HEIs across the sector would be consulted on shaping what this may look like for future exercises. This was just for noting by the Committee and would not take the guise of a formal review.

One other important point to note was that there was to be a reflection on how future QR and HEIF allocations were to be distributed to institutions. It was clear that the external landscape was changing and that this added discernible importance to getting the Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy right and that the Committee would be kept informed of any significant future developments.

R&EC-20-5-1.4 Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) processes

The Vice-Chair introduced a paper to the Committee that provided some background to the admission of the NRI to the UK Food Systems Centre for Doctoral Training (UKFS-CDT). This was the first time that the University had led a CDT and the document set out different aspects of some of the processes including student recruitment, registration and induction, and was designed to ensure that the procedures required for the CDT aligned with the current PGR regulations of the University.

In summary, over the next three years, 60 students were to be recruited which presented a number of demands, but the Committee welcomed the document and discussed at length some of the main challenges that would be faced. Attendance monitoring and having access to RETI training for the first cohort of students would need further consideration, but panel members agreed that overall, this was a success story and any lessons learned could be used in applying for future CDT programmes.

R&EC-20-5-2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

R&EC-20-5-2.1 Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Research & Enterprise Committee for the 2020/21 academic session held on Wednesday, 14th April 2021

The minutes of the Research & Enterprise Committee held on Wednesday, 14th April 2021 were agreed by the Committee to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.

R&EC-20-5-3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

R&EC-20-5-3.1 Please refer to the action sheet attached.

All the actions other than those mentioned below are now complete or are to be discussed in more detail at this or subsequent meetings.

Action points still in progress from previous meeting:

R&EC 20-2-1.4 The Committee agreed that a working group be formed to develop an approach to research evaluation which should include having an implementation plan and monitoring process. The working group was to have broad representation from across the majority of academic disciplines and involve members of staff from all REF panels.

R&EC 20-2-1.5 The Chair requested that any potential future in-house journal publications be reviewed by this Committee and that the process should be formalised. As such, a business case and some guidance would be put together and brought to a subsequent meeting for further deliberation and agreement.

R&EC-20-5-4 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021 PREPARATIONS

R&EC-20-5-4.1 UoA20 submission update

The Head of Research Development Services briefly informed the Committee that the one outstanding Unit of Assessment (UoA20) that had been granted an extension in order to finalise the impact case studies and environment statement had now been successfully submitted as planned. There were no problems with this, and the REF Team had confirmed receipt and the institutional REF 2021 submission was now complete.

R&EC-20-5-4.2 REF 2021 audit process

Following on from the previous agenda item, the Head of Research Development Services explained that the next steps of REF 2021

related to various audit processes that have started this month and that would run through until the end of the calendar year. The institution had been tasked with the first of these requests in terms of evidencing that staff members submitted to REF 2021 had a significant responsibility for research (SRR) as set out in the Code of Practice for two randomly selected UoAs (UoA18 and UoA20). Further audits on output eligibility, impact case studies, and environment statements were scheduled to take place later in the summer and early autumn and the Committee would be kept informed of any significant developments.

R&EC-20-5-5 GREENWICH RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE

R&EC-20-5-5.1 Performance dashboard

The Director of Research & Enterprise presented the latest performance dashboard of metrics to the Committee and reminded members of the conversations that were had as to how GRE could possibly work with the Faculties in a more strategic manner to optimise operational support.

The dashboard that GRE had developed reflected the input and output from academic activity for both Research and Knowledge Exchange and took into consideration Research/Enterprise Career Pathway FTE, unique PIs, and BAWs.

These were essentially for noting by the Committee and followed a similar pattern to previous meetings, but the Director of Research & Enterprise again expressed some concerns with the figures when compared to those at the same stage last year. There were some extenuating circumstances for this with the COVID-19 pandemic, and despite bidding activity remaining strong over the previous 12 months, contracting totals were significantly down when measured against academic session 2019/20.

GRE would continue to work closely with Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise to support the new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy, and that academic staff identified through these metrics were to be encouraged to embrace wider research expectations around bidding and success and to help embed a richer research culture.

R&EC-20-5-5.2 HEIF accountability statement update

The Director of Research & Enterprise reminded panel members of the HEIF accountability statement that was presented at the last Committee meeting that needed to be completed and returned to Research England. Some preliminary responses had been drafted as HEIs had been asked to set out their strategic objectives that

related to Knowledge Exchange and how these influenced any plans around HEIF.

Following feedback that had been received this had been subsequently updated and was presented to the Committee for final review and comment. Panel members agreed with this consolidated version that set out a formative summary of KEF activity throughout the institution and explained how any HEIF funding would be spent over the next five years. The Director of Research & Enterprise thanked colleagues for their input and concluded that this would now be signed off by the Vice-Chancellor and submitted to Research England before the deadline.

R&EC-20-5-5.3 National partnerships agenda update

The Head of Commercialisation & Innovation prompted panel members that the Vice-Chancellor had set up a working group to look at both national and international partnerships across all the core activities of the University to help improve its external profile. The evolution of the new Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy afforded the opportunity to review the institutional approach and the presented paper covered the main potential partnership areas which could lead to the University to build out capacity and capability.

This was for general noting by the Committee but included exploring fields such as education provision, apprenticeships, student recruitment and employment, research and business partnerships, sustainability etc. Panel members commented that it was evident that there was a broad array of opportunities which was encouraging, but that these could potentially overlap as different teams performed diverse roles across the University. It was apparent that a strategic approach was necessary and the Head of Commercialisation & Innovation added that work would continue to be carried out by the group and that panel members would be kept informed of any consequential developments at subsequent Committee meetings.

R&EC-20-5-5.4 UK Reproducibility Network

The Director of Research & Enterprise presented a paper to the Committee that sought a commitment of institutional membership to the UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN). The UKRN promotes the UK as world-leaders for conducting and promoting rigorous research and was a peer-led consortium designed to investigate the factors which contribute to this and worked with external stakeholders to co-ordinate efforts across the sector.

The 'Terms of Reference' were reviewed by the Committee but the proposal was for an identified member of staff from FEHHS to act as the institutional lead in the network in order to help improve research and teaching practices across the University. The intention was for

there to also be a local network lead (FEHHS) to help deliver some of the proposed initiatives around research integrity, training opportunities, and the adoption of open research practices. Following some examination, the Committee agreed to this request as it was clear that being a member of such a network could enhance the research culture and environment of the institution.

The Head of Research Development Services proposed that the identified individuals work closely with GRE and in particular with the Scholarly Communications Manager, and **the Vice-Chair re-iterated the recommendation that the University initially join this network for 12 months and for this to be progressed through the appropriate channels with any updates being reported at future Committee meetings.**

ACTION: DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE/DIRECTOR OF INSTITUTE FOR LIFECOURSE DEVELOPMENT

R&EC-20-5-5.5 Consultancy and the use of surplus income from fee generating income

The Director of Research & Enterprise and the Assistant Director of Finance introduced a draft document to the Committee that set out to clarify the processes that covered consultancy at the University as well as the use of surplus income from fee generating income. This was designed to promote discussion and to address some of the inconsistencies in practices that had materialised across the institution.

The Director of Research & Enterprise stressed that this was a draft but that some of the most important sections related to who would define and agree to such payments to individual members of staff, and under what conditions academics could engage in these 'for profit' activities whilst ensuring that they were carried out through a defined formal process. The Director of Research & Enterprise added that there were significant gaps in the institutional policy framework around fractional appointments that also required considered discussion as this was creating issues around conflicts of interest and the ownership of intellectual property.

The Assistant Director of Finance reminded panel members of the financial regulations around any surplus income generated by projects and which was debated at length by the Committee. Panel members concurred that this document covered several complex issues and so **the Vice-Chair requested that this be discussed further at Faculty level with any ensuing comments and feedback being sent to both the Director of Research & Enterprise and the Assistant Director of Finance so that the paper could be re-worked and presented at the next Committee meeting before going to VCG later in the year for final approval.**

***ACTION: FACULTY DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH &
ENTERPRISE/DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH &
ENTERPRISE/ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF FINANCE***

R&EC-20-5-6 RETI

R&EC-20-5-6.1 Representation of protected groups for VC PhD Scholarships

The Head of RETI presented a paper to the Committee that related to the representation of protected groups on the VC PhD Scholarships programme as this issue had been raised by some members of the BAME staff network, as well as PGR students with disabilities, who felt that the institution needed to move towards establishing an approach for fair representation of such individuals on University funded programmes.

The Committee invited a PGR student (FES) to address panel members on the underlying causes of any under-representation, and to discuss targeted action approaches that included making adjustments to application and selection processes, as well as providing additional support to PGR students in protected groups.

Following considerable deliberation, the Committee recognised the need to promote and invest in greater diversity and inclusivity and debated ways in which greater flexibility into such programmes could be introduced. However, **the Vice-Chair stressed the importance of the distinction between positive action and positive discrimination and advised that the proposals put forward by the invited PGR student be progressed outside of the meeting, together with the input of the Head of RETI and the Student Union Representatives, with the aim of bringing these back to a subsequent meeting for final recommendations to be made.**

ACTION: HEAD OF RETI/STUDENT UNION REPRESENTATIVES

R&EC-20-5-6.2 Response to the HR Excellence in Research Award and Researcher Development Concordat action plans

The Head of RETI reminded the Committee that the University was a signatory of the revised Researcher Development Concordat and had been successful in retaining its HR Excellence in Research Award accreditation. The Head of RETI explained that the action plans of the HR Excellence in Research Award and Researcher Development Concordat had previously been presented to the Committee, but that Faculty replies to the specific action points were still outstanding. The paper put forward was essentially for noting by panel members but **the Vice-Chair requested that Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise send their responses to the**

action points to the Head of RETI as soon as possible in order for the requisite annual report to be written.

ACTION: HEAD OF RETI/FACULTY DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE

R&EC-20-5-7 ITEMS FROM FACULTY RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE COMMITTEES

R&EC-20-5-7.1 Tuition fee waivers for VC PhD Scholarship students from the EU

The PVC (BUS) Nominee introduced a paper to the Committee that proposed a recommendation for the tuition fee waiver on VC PhD Scholarships for home students to be extended to those from the EU. Following Brexit, PGR students from the EU joining the University from this September have been reclassified as 'international' and now face a significant increase in fees. The concern was that the University could potentially miss out on very able students as other HEIs had introduced fee waivers and other generous schemes such as bursaries and transition scholarships in order to remain competitive.

Panel members agreed that this needed careful consideration as many EU students were academically strong and this could potentially impact recruitment on PhD programmes. The Vice-Chair commented that this was made slightly more complicated due to the fact that the University received an amount of money through the QR allocation that was proportionate to the total number of students, but **the general consensus of the panel was that there should be some form of reduction in the fees and that the Committee would make this recommendation to the established Fees Committee before it next convened for a final decision to be made.**

ACTION: VICE-CHAIR/PVC (BUS) NOMINEE

R&EC-20-5-7.2 FLAS Research Unit structure

The PVC (LAS) Nominee provided the Committee with a brief update as to the new research unit structure in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences following the addition of two new research groups (Artificial Intelligence & Data Science/Sound-Image). This was essentially for noting by panel members given the context of the new Research & Knowledge Exchange Strategy being worked on and the PVC (LAS) Nominee added that every member of staff in the Faculty that was on a research career pathway was now affiliated to one of these research centres or groups.

R&EC-20-5-8 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH MATTERS

R&EC-20-5-8.1 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2021 update

The Head of RETI informed the Committee that the closing date for the PRES 2021 survey had now passed and that initial figures from Planning and Statistics (PAS) showed that there had been a 43% response rate compared to a sector average of approximately 32%. This was encouraging given the logistical challenges of asking students to complete the survey this year and represented a slight increase on previous submissions. **The Head of RETI will now produce a report following the publication of the official outcomes from PAS and Advance HE which will be presented at a subsequent Committee meeting as per previous years.**

ACTION: HEAD OF RETI

R&EC-20-5-8.2 University strategy for PGRs starting remotely during COVID-19 pandemic

The Head of RETI presented a paper that was designed to start a dialogue for the University to develop a strategy for PGR students starting remotely during the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout lockdown, a number of PGR students had started at the institution under certain approved conditions through necessity, but it was evident that the current PGR regulations did not cover remote starting and all the exceptional circumstances presently being experienced. **Panel members agreed that this was a complex issue that covered areas such as tuition fees, visa compliance (UKVI) and supervision and as such, the Vice-Chair requested that a working group be formed, together with colleagues from the International Office to look at this in more detail and for a set of recommendations to be presented to the Committee at a later meeting.**

***ACTION: HEAD OF RETI/FACULTY DIRECTORS OF RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE/TRAINING & RESEARCH PROGRAMMES
MANAGER/INTERNATIONAL OFFICE***

R&EC-20-5-9 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

R&EC-20-5-9.1 Research & Enterprise Financial Summary Report 2020/21

The Committee noted this item for information.

R&EC-20-5-9.2 Research & Enterprise Bidding Activity Report 2020/21

The Committee noted this item for information.

R&EC-20-5-9.3 PGR Completions – Recommendations for Committee

The Committee noted this item for information.

R&EC-20-5-9.4 Summary of PGR related business by FRDCs for 2020/21 to end of Q3 (30th April 2021)

The Committee noted this item for information.

R&EC-20-5-10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The PVC (EHHS) Nominee briefly asked the Committee whether there would be any further COVID-19 extensions made available in order to support PhD students who were still being impacted by the pandemic. The Director of Research & Enterprise confirmed that another financial scheme would run in 2021/22 and possibly again in future years until this current cohort of students had completed their studies. However, support for students involved with participatory research would need to be tapered moving forward, with the expectation of this decreasing over time, but that this will be under regular review.

The Secretary informed the Committee that the date of the last meeting for the academic session had been put back a week and was now scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 7th July at the usual starting time.

No other business was discussed and the meeting was duly closed.

R&EC-20-5-11 DATES & TIMES OF 2020/21 MEETINGS

Meeting
July 7 th 2021, Medway Campus, Room P130, 2.00pm