Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 12th May 2022, 10:00am
Video-conferencing meeting on MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
Professor David Price (Chair); Professor Lynn Ang; Dr Paul Ayris; Mr Jeremy Barraud; Professor David Bogle; Mr Simon Cane; Ms Sarah Chaytor; Mr Andrew Cooper; Ms Sarah Cowls; Mr James Davis; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Professor Jacqui Glass; Ms Claire Glen; Professor Stephen M. Hart; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Professor Kate Jeffery; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Ms Amy Lightstone; Ms Viktoria Makai; Mr Benjamin Meunier; Mr Martin Moyle; Mr Ciaran Moynihan; Ms Aloma Onyemah; Professor James Phillips; Professor Deenan Pillay; Professor Geraint Rees; Dr Francesca Scotti; Professor Cheryl Thomas QC; Mr Nicholas Tyndale; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Andrew Wills

Apologies:
Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Professor Janet Darbyshire CBE; Mr Alex Hall; Mr Richard Jackson; Professor Sam Janes; Ms Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker, Ms Kirsty Walker

In attendance:
Mr Adam Cresswell, UCL REF Manager [for Minute 30]
Dr Amy Hong, Head of Academic and Research Experience [for Minute 33]
Mr Steven O'Neil, Head of Public Affairs
Ms Emma Todd, Head of Research Culture [for Minute 32]

Officer:
Ms Rachel Port

Part I: Preliminary Business

27. Welcome

27.1. Professor Price welcomed all members to his final meeting as Chair of the Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee (RIGEC).

28.   Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2022

28.1.   RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 9th March 2022 [Minutes 17-26, 2021-22].

29.   Matters arising from the Minutes

29.1.   Arising from Minute 19.3, it was noted that the London Economics Review report into UCL's economic and social impact would be published in June and would give a very impressive account of UCL's contribution to the UK.

Part II: Matters for Discussion

30.   UCL REF2021 Results (Paper 4-13)

30.1.   The Chair introduced the UCL Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 results that were announced today. The key points made were:
   a.   UCL had come 2nd in the UK for research power, behind Oxford (1st) and ahead of Cambridge (3rd).
   b.   92.5% of UCL's research was graded 4* (world leading) and 3* (internationally excellent).
   c.   UCL's research received a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.50 (out of 4), up from 3.22 in REF2014. UCL was ahead of Oxford in terms of GPA.
   d.   UCL maintained its position as top for research power in Main Panels A (life and medical sciences) and C (social sciences). UCL's performance in Panel B (physical sciences, engineering and mathematics) had strengthened considerably in REF2021 to be ranked 5th while UCL was ranked 6th for Main Panel D (arts and humanities).
   e.   78% of the three elements of 'output', 'impact' and 'environment' submitted across 32 units assessed received higher or the same GPA than in REF2014.
   f.   It was considered that if UCL's 1* and 2* research activity had been scored 3*, its GPA would have increased to 3.8%.
   g.   In terms of UCL's whole-Unit of Assessment (UoA) overall rankings, 4 of those were ranked 1st. Those were: Archaeology; Architecture, Built Environment and Planning; Education; and Psychology, Psychiatry and Neuroscience.
   h.   In terms of those UoAs where UCL's submission was ranked as the top HEI on overall 4* score without weighting by size, those were: Area Studies – Institute of the Americas; Law; and Philosophy.
   i.   In terms of those UoAs where UCL submitted the highest percentage of overall 4* work, those were: Computer Science and Informatics; Area Studies – Institute of the Americas; Chemistry; Law ; and Art and Design – History of Art.

j. It was noted that UCL had not performed as well as expected in some research areas with 1* and 2* work, whilst other areas could increase their 4* work.

k. In terms of Main Panel D, it was considered that UCL's submissions from the arts and humanities were scored harshly and those areas required more institutional investment.

l. Some areas were not considered to have been submitted to the appropriate UoA such as UCL Hebrew and Jewish Studies whilst Mathematics and Statistics and been submitted separately.

m. UCL would be bigger at the time of the next REF exercise with UCL East.

n. The Chair considered that UCL should focus on areas that it had more headroom to improve for the next REF exercise by looking at its impact and/or environment or eradicating its research graded 1* and 2*.

o. The Chair expressed his sincere thanks to the UCL REF Manager and the entire REF Team for all their hard work in preparing UCL's submissions. He also expressed thanks to the UCL REF Steering Group and in particular its Main Panel Leads, Professor Stella Buzzi, Professor Ivan Parkin, Professor Geraint Rees and Professor Sasha Roseneil as well as those Vice-Deans (Research) who also provided significant input. He also gave thanks to all academic colleagues and those who gave up their time to read the outputs.

p. The Chair noted that the Provost and Council were pleased with the results that showed a fantastic performance by UCL.

30.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. It was noted that submissions covering departments in the Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences were spread across various UoAs and panels which made it hard to keep track of progress during their preparation.

b. UCL had put sustained support in place for the development of impact case studies. UCL was committed to the development of case studies on a yearly basis and faculties had invested in creating impact teams.

c. In response to a query about how to use the different metrics including the unweighted ones, the Chair noted that the target was to maintain excellence in UCL's research and considered that overall quality and size was better to achieve that.

d. In terms of UCL's impact in REF2021 compared to the REF 2014 exercise, it was considered that those areas that had scored low needed to look at their impact agenda.

e. It was noted that the Faculty of Laws had been very successful in terms of its impact agenda, and that faculties could include impact in its faculty strategy planning.

f. It was considered that while the idea of bringing up research in those areas with a lower GPA was important, this would require a cultural change at UCL where it tended to support those areas/departments that performed better. It was likely that a more nuanced approach might be

needed as different actions would be required in different areas to improve their GPA.
g. In terms of developing public engagement case studies, it was noted that Panel B's membership included an external assessor to cover this area which proved very helpful.
h. The REF Manager also expressed his thanks to all those involved in preparing UCL's submissions and to the Executive Director of Innovation and Enterprise and colleagues in her area.

31.   Evolving issues and impact on the Research, Innovation and Global Engagement areas

31.1. The Chair invited members to raise any evolving issues in their respective areas of work that might impact on research, innovation and global engagement. The following points were raised in discussion:
a. **European Research Council Funding (ERC)**: It was noted that communications had been sent out to UCL researchers who had held ERC awards since 2001. Further communications would be prepared by Research and Innovation Services (RIS) and an article would be included in the UCL Staff News. However, it was considered that UCL researchers should still continue to apply for ERC funding awards.
b. **VISAs and Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) Clearance**: There was anecdotal evidence that some international staff and/or students were having their applications rejected and there appeared to be no information available from the Home Office about how to appeal a decision.
c. The Executive Director of Student Services and Registrar intended to convene a Task and Finish Group to look at this issue further to include representatives from the Doctoral School; External Engagement; RIS; and Human Resources.
d. **Wellcome Audit:** The Wellcome Trust was conducting an audit of UCL's activities that was being managed by Research and Innovation Services. The Wellcome had adopted a more collaborative and informative approach to this visit.
e. UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) would visit UCL in September 2022.
f. **UKRI:** David Sweeney CBE would step down as the inaugural Chair of Research England. He was a long-term champion of excellence and open access and was known to speak truths to those in power.
g. The Chief Executive post at the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) remained vacant while the Medical Research Council (MRC) had an interim lead. The future of Innovate UK was also uncertain.
h. **UCL Press Expansion:** In terms of ensuring outputs were made Open Access on publication, it was intended that communications would be sent out by Library Services to the UCL community to remind them of this requirement as well as there being some internal compliance monitoring.

    i.   Elsevier would now publish Open Access outputs at no extra cost which was considered to be a significant achievement.

    j.   UCL Press had published 244 monographs to date and achieved 6 million downloads.

32.   Research Culture Update (Paper 4-14)

32.1. Emma Todd, Head of Research Culture, introduced the progress report on the projects that formed part of the Enhancing Research Culture programme. The key points made were:

    a.   Research England awarded £33m of funding to Higher Education providers in England in January 2022, to enable them to develop and initiate new activities on response to the R&D People and Culture Strategy.

    b.   UCL received £1.073m and it was allocated, by the Research Culture Operations Group, to proposals that aligned with both the funders criteria and UCL's priorities and offered long-term benefits for UCL beyond the current financial year.

    c.   All 39 projects (15 cross-UCL projects and 24 local/faculty projects) were now underway. Each project had an associated action plan and an internal reporting exercise would commence in September.

    d.   This short-term programme of activity was complemented by concurrent work to develop a long-term research culture roadmap that would be considered at future meetings of RIGEC and University Management Committee (UMC) respectively.

    e.   In terms of the roadmap, it was considered that UCL needed a more joined up approach to research culture.

    f.   It was intended that the Vice-Provost (RIGE) and the Chief People Officer would act as sponsors for this area of work.

    g.   Plans were also being made to liaise with departments and faculties and to ensure work in this area was made more visible across the institution.

32.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

    a.   It was noted that research culture would be a key element in the next REF exercise.

    b.   In relation to the Autumn phase of activity, it was suggested that UCL might organise a forum for its researchers about research culture.

    c.   It was considered that some projects were likely to be more successful than others.

    d.   The Chair expressed his thanks to the Head of Research Culture for all her efforts in this important area of work.

33.   HR Excellence in Research Action Plan (Paper 4-15)

33.1.   Dr Amy Hong, Head of Research and Academic Experience, Organisational Development (OD), introduced the update report on the proposed 2022-24 HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) Action Plan and current challenges. The key points made were:

a.   Under the HREiR award obligations, UCL was required to complete a self-assessment Action Plan every two years, to be followed by an external evaluation as part of the 8th year review.

b.   Guided by the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, the refreshed 2022-24 HREiR set out 49 clear obligations for institutions, researchers and managers of researchers.

c.   Representatives from across UCL Human Resources (HR), Research Support and Faculties participated in an HREiR Action Plan workshop held in December 2021.

d.   The three key challenges highlighted at the workshop were: (i) institution and culture – bringing clarity to researchers and managers of researchers about expectations; (ii) employment - need to improve data integrity and clarity on researcher career tracks and (iii) professional and career development – workload and training.

e.   A set of recommendations had also been prepared that included improving communication and engagement to inform researchers and managers of researchers of the Concordat and Action Plan obligations, that would include regularly updating mailing lists and developing a Researcher Hub.

f.   It was also recommended that capacity building and skills training was essential to delivering the Action Plan at a local level and that would involve working closely with other areas of research support across UCL.

g.   It was intended that OD would be responsible for many of the proposed actions in the Plan, while the Research Staff Consultative Group would oversee its delivery.

h.   Subject to RIGEC approval, the Action Plan would subsequently be put forward for formal approval by UMC.

33.2.   The following points were raised in discussion:

a.   Research and Innovation Services was keen to work more closely with OD to ensure there was a coherent curriculum around the administration of research.

b.   It was suggested that some elements of the proposed recommendations and actions linked with work being undertaken or planned in other areas such as research culture and by RIGE and so a more joined up approach was needed, as well as clarity on leadership for taking the activities forward.

c.   Members liked the emphasis on the basics in the proposed actions.

d. It was queried whether some of the work around technical support staff be brought into the Action Plan and/or recommendations.

33.3. RIGEC:
a. Approved the 2022-24 HREiR Action Plan.

34. Confidential: Due Diligence Exempt Organisations (Paper 4-16)

34.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

34.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

35. Professor David Price

35.1. It was noted that Professor Price would be succeeded in his role as Vice-Provost (Research, Innovation and Global Engagement) by Professor Geraint Rees with effect from 16th May 2022. On behalf of RIGEC, Professor Rees noted that UCL was in Professor Price's debt for both his past 15 years as Vice-Provost and prior to that in his other management roles at UCL. He would leave a legacy of creating amazing excellence in research and innovation across the institution. Professor Rees noted that he had been a transformative, inspirational and supportive leader and drew attention to the three, core values Professor Price held that he was of the opinion had shaped both his and others' careers of: (i) intellectual leadership; (ii) focusing on developing people, and (iii) possessing integrity and speaking truth to those in power. Members expressed their sincere thanks to Professor Price and wished him well for the future.

35.2. Professor Price expressed his thanks to the committee and extended especial thanks to Jeremy Barraud, Director of Governance and Delivery in RIGE, for all his work in the area of research operations and governance since he took up post at UCL. He also extended especial thanks to Rachel Port as Secretary who had supported both RIGEC, and its predecessor Research Governance Committee for over a decade, as well as handling other research integrity activities.

36. Date of the next meeting

36.1. The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 30th June 2022 at 10:00am on MS Teams.

Ms Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity, Secretariat, Office of General Counsel
June 2022