Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee

Thursday 18th April 2024, 10:00am

South Wing Council Room with facilities to join the meeting online via MS Teams

Minutes

Present Members:
Professor Geraint Rees (Chair): Professor Ibrahim Abubakar; Dr Paul Ayris; Professor David Bogle; Michael Brown [Minutes 41-45]; Professor Stella Bruzzi; Sarah Chaytor; Professor Sarah Edwards; Professor Carsten Gerner-Beuerle; Megan Gerrie; Professor Jacqui Glass; Claire Glen; Alex Hall; Fran Hartop; Dr Jane Kinghorn; Sarah Lawson; Dr Nick McNally [Minutes 36-40]; Martin Moyle; Ciaran Moynihan; Professor Courtenay Norbury; Professor James Phillips; Nicholas Tyndale; Kirsty Walker; Dr Kathryn Walsh; Professor Andrew Wills; Professor Nick Wood

Apologies:
Professor Lynn Ang; Jeremy Barraud; Andrew Cooper; Sarah Cowls; Rebecca Edwards; June Hedges; Professor Jennifer Hudson; Issy Smith; Professor Cheryl Thomas KC; Professor Nigel Titchener-Hooker; Emma Todd; Kirsty Walker; Professor Simon Walker-Samuel; Professor Peter Zusi

In attendance:
For Minutes 36-45: Professor Sue Hamilton, Vice-Dean Research and Global Engagement, Faculty of Social and Historical Sciences
For Minute 39: Gail Adams, RIS Director of Compliance and Assurance
For Minute 39: Stephanie Allison, Assistant Director, Research Ethics Service
For Minute 41: Clare Foyle, Head of Strategic Delivery Account Management

Officer:
Rachel Port, Governance Manager: Research Integrity

Part I: Preliminary Business

36. Welcome

36.1. The Chair welcomed the following new members to their first meeting of Research, Innovation and Global Engagement Committee [RIGEC]: Professor Nick Wood, Chair of Clinical Research Governance Committee; and

Dr Sarah Edwards, Chair of UCL Research Ethics Committee.

37.   Minutes

37.1. RIGEC approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2024
       [Minutes, 28-35, 2023-24].

37.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

38.   Matters Arising

38.1. Arising from Minute 31.3.a, the Director of Research Culture and the UCL REF
       Manager would prepare some guidance for Faculty Vice-Deans (Research)
       about research culture information that was likely to be required for inclusion in
       UCL's REF2029 submissions.

38.2. Arising from Minute 32.3.c, the Annual Report on the Concordat to Support the
       Career Development of Researchers had been shared with Faculty Deans and
       Faculty Directors of Operations for information.

38.3. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part II: Strategic Items for Discussion

39.   Chair's Report

39.1. The Chair gave an oral report on relevant developments since the last RIGEC
       meeting and the following points were made:
       a. The first meeting of UCL's Research and Innovation Security Committee
           (RISC) had taken place and had generated some very helpful discussion.
           Both Council and Audit Committee supported the establishment of RISC to
           help promote Trusted Research and Innovation across the institution. It
           was suggested that advice around how to make decisions on international
           collaborations would be helpful.
       b. UCL had been very successful in the recent round of the European
           Research Council's Advanced Grants scheme with 9 awards, making it the
           institution with the most awardees in the UK. The Chair expressed his
           congratulations to colleagues on this remarkable achievement.

40.   UCL Research Ethics Update (4-21)

40.1. Professor Sarah Edwards, Chair of UCL REC and Stephanie Allison, Assistant
       Director, Research Ethics Service gave an update presentation on research
       ethics at UCL. The following points were made during the presentation:
       a. In terms of UCL's research ethics policy, work was being undertaken to

document exemptions for ethical approval, with examples. Future policy developments would include addressing external requests for research ethics review.

b. In terms of the research ethics governance structure, the newly constituted UCL REC would hold its first meeting this month. Its three new reviewing sub-committees had been formed: LREC Chairs Group; Life and Medical Sciences (LMS) REC; Humanities, Arts and Sciences (HAS) REC, and the response rate to serve on those groups had been very positive.

c. In terms of the composition of the membership on the three reviewing sub-committees, the high level of female participation was noted with 51% male: 49% female on the HAS REC and 27% male: 73% female on the LMS REC. The need to increase lay membership was noted.

d. UCL had procured a new online research ethics system from Infonetica. The design of the workflow would be followed by testing and training and an Advisory Group of stakeholders had been formed to feed into the process. The main challenge was that the testing period would occur over the summer and the aim was to implement the online system for the start of the next academic year for all high-risk and central low-risk applications.

e. In 2022-23 session, in terms of applications submitted for ethical approval by Faculty, 49% of applications in the Faculty of Brain Sciences were high risk and 22% of applications in the Faculty of Population Health Sciences were low risk. In terms of ethical approval by staff/student, 41% of applications submitted for ethical approval that were rated as high risk were made by PGR students whilst 36% of low risk applications submitted for review were made by academic staff.

f. UCL REC considered some 304 high risk applications and 369 low risk applications in 2022-23 and the turnaround times for feedback had halved.

g. UCL also had 24 Local RECs who reviewed 1665 ethical applications in 2022-23 and 58% of those groupings had administrative support.

40.2. The following points were raised in discussion:

a. Members noted the very good progress made on improving the ethical approval process at UCL and that the turnaround times for feedback on applications for review had halved.

b. It was noted that Infonetica was used by a number of Russell Group institutions and the benefits offered by the system would be covered as part of the design and testing phases. It was noted that in the past the quality of applications for ethical review at UCL required improvement and the system would allow the Research Ethics Team to review the number of applications returned to researchers for further work.

c. It was suggested that offering a payment to Lay members could help to increase their membership on the committees. It was intended that Lay members would be paid £25 for each meeting they attended, as well as reimbursement of travel costs, and training would also be provided. This was found to be in line with the sector.

    d.   Whilst the aim was to implement Infonetica for the start of 2024-25 session in order to reduce the administrative burden on the Research Ethics Team and to ensure consistency in approach for researchers, it was not considered to be problematic if it was launched later in the academic year.

    e.   It was also aimed to link data protection and risk assessment processes in the online system for applications, and to enable the Infonetica system to link with Worktribe for externally funded projects.

    f.   The Chair expressed his thanks to the Research Ethics Service for all their hard work in this key part of UCL's activities and looked forward to the implementation of the online system.

40.3.   RIGEC received the UCL Research Ethics Update.

41.   Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) Annual Monitoring Statement 2022-23 (4-22)

41.1.   Dr Kathryn Walsh, Executive Director of Innovation and Enterprise, introduced the HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement 2022-23. The following points were made during the presentation:

    a.   The main aim of the Statement was to demonstrate how UCL had used its HEIF allocation against the strategic objectives for Knowledge Exchange set out in the HEIF accountability statement as well as the supplement provided for business and commercialisation activity.

    b.   HEIF was allocated by UKRI via Research England (RE) and UCL's submission was currently awaiting RE approval.

    c.   UCL currently received the maximum capped HEIF allocation (£4.67m) and supplement (£1m). However, the future of HEIF was unclear and there was growing support for uplifts in funding being made on a single year basis.

41.2.   The following points were raised in discussion:

    a.   In response to a query, it was noted that there were limited metrics available on the allocation of HEIF to BME researchers.

    b.   It was considered that if the method to allocate HEIF was changed, UCL would need to consider how innovation and enterprise and knowledge exchange integrated with its Global Engagement and faculty level activities especially in relation to partnerships.

    c.   HEIF also covered the creation of societal and economic benefits from UCL's research and education across all academic disciplines.

    d.   The Chair considered that small partnerships were very beneficial to UCL but that a more joined-up approach was needed across the institution in its collaborations.

41.3.   RIGEC received the HEIF Annual Monitoring Statement 2022-23.

42.   Confidential: UCL Strategic Risk Register and Escalated Risks (4-23)

42.1. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

42.2. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

42.3. Exempt from publication, please see confidential minutes.

Part III: Other Business for Approval or Information

43.   Horizon Europe Response Group – Update Report (4-24)

43.1. RIGEC received the Horizon Europe Response Group Update Report.

43.2. This was the final report of the Group that had been disbanded in light of the UK's accession to Horizon Europe. It was noted that the Group had undertaken an impressive amount of work, supported by RIS, in a short timescale.

44.   UCL Library Committee Annual Report 2022-23 (4-25)

44.1. RIGEC received the UCL Library Committee Annual Report 2022-23.

45.   Date of the next meeting

45.1. The next meeting of RIGEC would take place on Thursday 18th July 2024 at 10:00am-12 noon and be hybrid in the South Wing G12 Council Room.

Rachel Port
Governance Manager: Research Integrity
July 2024