

**Minutes for the fifth meeting of the Research & Enterprise Committee for the
2019/20 Academic Session, held on Wednesday, 20th May 2020, 2.00pm via
Microsoft Teams**

PRESENT:

Prof J Bonet	Chair, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (R&E)
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 C Bailey	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 K Southgate	Training & Research Programmes Manager (invited)
Mr P Angelo	Secretary

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Dr C Papaix	PVC (BUS) Nominee
Prof T Reynolds	PVC (LAS) Nominee
Mrs W Curran	Finance Manager
Ms P Gibson	ECR/PGR Nominee
Ms M Femi-Obalemo	Student Union Representative

R&EC-19-5-1 ITEMS FROM THE CHAIR

R&EC-19-5-1.1 COVID-19 scenario planning – Task & Finish Group

The Chair informed the Committee that following the COVID-19 outbreak a number of Task & Finish Groups had been established throughout the University that will look at different strands of activities and impacts across the institution. The 'Terms of

Reference' and membership for the Research & Enterprise Task & Finish Group had been agreed and that this panel will be tasked with considering the implications of agreed scenarios and principles relating to both Research and Enterprise activities. Evidence based recommendations will be made to the Strategic Group on actions to be taken where needed.

The Chair explained that this group will focus on specific areas that impact on research, researchers, PGR students, and Knowledge Exchange. It will discuss issues such as the opening of laboratory and research facilities, travel restrictions, issues associated with research that require human participants, the general impact and wellbeing of the PGR community, and the financial consequences on research activities and budgets as well as the distribution of any government support.

The Chair invited comments from the Committee and added that plans were in place to potentially have partial access to certain research facilities at the start of June, but that a cautious approach will be adopted. Panel members were generally in agreement with the documents that were presented, and the Chair informed the Committee that they will be kept informed of any developments in this fast-moving environment.

R&EC-19-5-1.2 QR + HEIF funding 2019/20 and 2020/21 update

The Chair updated the Committee with the latest news on QR and HEIF expenditure for 2019/20 and developments relating to 2020/21. The Chair explained that the situation had moved on since the last Committee meeting in that Research England had now made an extra £100m of QR money available across the whole HE sector for 2019/20, and that from this, an additional £217k had been distributed to the University. Despite this positive news, the Chair explained that no additional expenditure would be allowed as it will be used to underpin the salaries of staff across the institution. Faculties will receive nominal allocations but that they will not be permitted to spend this money as it was imperative that expenditure be kept to an absolute minimum.

The Chair continued that the more worrying news related to the QR and HEIF allocations for 2020/21, in that these had yet to be announced by Research England when they would normally have been at this stage, and that the UUK have requested a doubling of the QR totals from 2019/20 but that there had yet to be a response. It was highly unlikely that the Government would agree to this, and so the outlook for 2020/21 could be worse than the current year and that it was likely that budgets across the University would be squeezed. Finance have already started working on provisional budgets for 2020/21 and will employ various tactical cuts to minimise the impact on staff, but there are financial commitments already in place that are

paid from QR money such as VC PhD Scholarships and the Research Fellows. The Chair confirmed that these will continue to be protected, but that other QR and HEIF funds that generate additional expenditure, such as conference attendance, consumables for research projects or new computer equipment that would normally be permitted, would not be next year.

The Chair acknowledged that this was difficult news but that this was necessary to avoid job losses and significant restructuring. An offer of a reduction of £300k in terms of both QR and HEIF funding had been made for next year to facilitate this, but this will obviously have significant repercussions and the Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise were invited to comment. After lengthy discussion, despite a number of concerns, Committee members were accepting of the situation and the next step would be to await the letter from Research England confirming the QR and HEIF totals for 2020/21 to assess how restrictive these conditions will be. The Chair concluded that there will be an RCIF allocation for 2020/21 but that the amount that would be made available was yet to be determined and that panel members will be kept informed of developments at the next scheduled Committee meeting.

R&EC-19-5-1.3 Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) update

The Vice-Chair provided the Committee with an update on the Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) proposal that was submitted last year which had been developed together with the University of Kent and was led by NIAB-EMR (East Malling Research). The positive news was that after several delays, this proposal was to be funded and that the University will be delivering certain work packages around food processing and post-harvest management and is worth £17.9m in total, out of which the institution will receive £2.8m.

The Vice-Chair explained that there will be further development of the food innovation laboratory and some accelerator space, and that there was an additional £5m research fund that could be bid for. Another positive was that as well as the NRI, this will involve research from across the whole of the Faculty of Engineering and Science, including both Food and Nutrition and the School of Engineering. This was currently under embargo, but a formal announcement will be made in the coming days and the Committee offered their congratulations to the Vice-Chair and the NRI on this significant achievement and that this was particularly welcome news in the current climate.

R&EC-19-5-1.4 Concordat to Support Research Integrity – GAP analysis

The Director of Research & Enterprise reminded the Committee that a revised Concordat to Support Research Integrity was published last year to which institutions were expected to sign up to, and whose

commitments applied to researchers and their employers, and were a condition of grants from many research funders. As such, this was an important document and the University had twelve months to implement and adopt this revised Concordat and have a demonstrable commitment to it in place by autumn this year.

The Director of Research & Enterprise added that the policies and frameworks that cover the commitments of the University to ensure that the highest standards of integrity and professionalism are observed when conducting research are expressed in the 'Code of Practice for Research' with recent additions to the 'Ethical Research Collaboration Policy' and the updated 'Research Ethics Policy'. However, GRE had undertaken a high-level GAP analysis to identify where the policies and regulations of the University were consistent with the expectations of the new Concordat, and where further work may be required.

The Chair stressed the importance of research integrity and that there was significant political pressure around this, and the Committee agreed that the institution took this seriously and was in a good space with this, although there was still some more work to be done. Two areas of improvement were identified as the integration of research ethics, and the training of all academic staff and PGR students so that they have an in depth understanding of research integrity. The Director of Research & Enterprise informed panel members that this had already been built into GRE workflows and that the Committee would be kept informed of future developments.

R&EC-19-5-1.5 COVID-19 letter from PhD students

The Chair briefed the Committee that both he and the Vice-Chancellor had received a letter from a collection of PhD students (predominantly from FES) setting out various concerns on how the current COVID-19 crisis was impacting their studies. They raised several issues in the letter which was discussed in detail by the Committee and the Chair invited comments from panel members. The Student Union Representative explained that the students were particularly worried about finances, project extensions, interruptions, and the potential re-opening of laboratory facilities, but that they also felt that communication had been more directed to undergraduate students rather than the postgraduate community. **The Committee discussed the letter in detail and understood their anxieties and the Chair reported that a formal written response would be prepared and sent out in the coming days to address the points raised in the communication.**

***ACTION: CHAIR/DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH &
ENTERPRISE/HEAD OF RETI***

R&EC-19-5-2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

R&EC-19-5-2.1 Minutes of the fourth meeting of the Research & Enterprise Committee for the 2019/20 academic session held on Wednesday, 8th April 2020

The minutes of the Research & Enterprise Committee held on Wednesday, 8th April 2020 were agreed by the Committee to be a true and accurate record of the meeting.

R&EC-19-5-3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

R&EC-19-5-3.1 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 19-2-4.6 The Chair asked that registers of attendance be kept from the two sessions held at Greenwich and Medway in October, and that registration for the online EDI training be monitored closely to ensure that all named individuals on the REF 2021 panels had complied.

R&EC-19-5-4 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021 PREPARATIONS

R&EC-19-5-4.1 REF Staffing Committee update

The Chair informed panel members that the second meeting of the REF Staffing Committee had been held at the end of April to review those members of staff where a decision regarding their status as having a significant responsibility for research (SRR) was undetermined following the first meeting held in February. The panel reviewed the status of several members of staff, some of which were appeals against the decision made at the first meeting. The Chair commented that the REF Staffing Committee reviewed the pending decisions on a case-by-case basis by assessing any additional information and data that had been provided following the first meeting.

The REF Staffing Committee divided individuals into those with SRR, those without SRR, and those who were still undetermined based on incomplete data. Including decisions that were made at the previous meeting (and taking into consideration any members of staff that had been identified as having left the institution between the two meetings), the REF Staffing Committee had now identified 318

members of staff as having SRR, 386 without, and 79 that were still undetermined.

The Chair added that the Head of Research Development Services had sent a version of an outcome letter relevant to the decision, which also invited staff to submit an appeal and personal circumstances if appropriate. The REF Staffing Committee will meet again in the middle of July to review those staff whose SRR was still undetermined (as well as any further appeals) with a view to communicating final outcomes soon after.

R&EC-19-5-4.2 Research England survey on revisions to REF 2021 timetable

The Chair notified the Committee that the University had responded to the short survey that institutions had been invited to complete by Research England in order to gather initial views on the revised REF 2021 timetable. This was just for noting by panel members but the main headlines were a request to not change the current census date of 31st July 2020, as this would have significant repercussions for all institutions, and that there be a universal extension to the assessment period for impact until the end of the calendar year. The University also expressed a preference for a single deadline of 31st March 2021 as the revised submission date, but the Committee would be kept informed of any important developments as soon as they are announced.

R&EC-19-5-4.3 Next round of UoA meetings

Following on from the previous item, the Chair added that another round of UoA meetings will be scheduled once there has been clarification over the new REF 2021 submission timetable, but proposed that it may be a good idea to wait until after the census date to conduct these in order to tidy up all of the REF data and confirm the staffing profiles for each Unit of Assessment (UoA). The Committee agreed that this was a sensible approach and should be organised when more details around the postponement had been made available. The intention would be to also focus on some of the narratives that need to be written, as well as the impact case studies, but that they would follow a similar format to the previous rounds.

On a separate note, the Director of Institute for Lifecourse Development sought clarity from the Committee around the internal requirement for a 100 word statement when submitting outputs for UoA3 (Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy) and that they did not form part of the formal REF assessment process. The Chair confirmed that this was indeed the case and that this only applied to both UoA11 (Computer Science and Informatics) and UoA12 (Engineering) to explain the significance of the research and that this was minuted for reference.

R&EC-19-5-5 GREENWICH RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE

R&EC-19-5-5.1 Research & Enterprise Financial Summary Report 2019/20

The Committee noted the financial summary report by Faculty from 1st August 2019 to 30th April 2020.

The Director of Research & Enterprise reported that revenues stood at £15.7m for the first nine months of the year and that this figure was up by approximately £242k at the same stage for 2018/19. This was predominantly showing in NRI, but some Faculties were demonstrating marginal gains. Contracting totals were presently at £19.7m which represented a drop of around £3.7m for the same period last year. There were no real concerns and the Committee will continue to monitor the figures closely throughout the rest of the year to measure the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

R&EC-19-5-5.2 Research & Enterprise Bidding Activity Report 2019/20

The Committee noted the bidding activity report by Faculty from 1st August 2019 to 30th April 2020.

The Director of Research & Enterprise briefed the Committee on the current bidding data for 2019/20 which showed promising activity across all the Faculties despite the COVID-19 crisis. In fact, there had been significant interest in a number of the recent COVID-19 related proposals that had been announced with a number of bids being submitted from across the University. Faculty profiles were generally healthy, but these will be monitored closely in the coming months during this period of uncertainty.

R&EC-19-5-5.3 Knowledge Exchange network update

The Head of Commercialisation & Innovation provided the Committee with an update on the latest developments with regards to Knowledge Exchange. The KEF 'roadshows' had taken place virtually as scheduled which were well attended and had been followed up with the setting up of the Knowledge Exchange network on Yammer. The Head of Commercialisation & Innovation encouraged Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise to share this information with their appropriate Faculty and participate with the community. The KEF narratives that were originally expected by 29th May had now been postponed until October but will need to be as comprehensive as possible due to their significance.

The Knowledge Exchange Concordat had also been circulated widely for individuals to familiarise themselves with and it was becoming very clear that the impact that HEIs have on the external community was extremely important. In addition, the University Alliance had

carried out a poll on public opinion of HEIs which will feed into the Treasury and how they allocate public spending. The results of this have just been published and will be disseminated by the Head of Commercialisation & Innovation after this meeting.

One concern that the Head of Commercialisation & Innovation raised was around commercial compliance and that employees must strictly adhere to the regulations. It was clear that this had not been as robust as it should have been in some instances. As such, the Head of Commercialisation & Innovation was putting together a pack for academic staff that will detail the key points when engaging with Enterprise with a particular focus on commercial compliance and why it is so important. This will be aligned in a similar way in which ethics issues are addressed on Research projects, as to what the expectations are, and Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise will be asked to for their input and communicate this important message to academic staff within their Faculty.

R&EC-19-5-5.4 GRE interaction with Faculty Committees and meetings

The Director of Research & Enterprise briefly asked the Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise if they were generally happy with the interaction and support of GRE in their own Faculty Research & Enterprise Committees and other related meetings. The Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise confirmed that the relevant RDOs and EDMs attended these Faculty meetings to provide any updates and were satisfied with the current arrangements. **The Director of Research & Enterprise requested that the 'Terms of Reference' for each of the Faculty Research & Enterprise Committees be sent to him to reflect the interaction of GRE in these meetings as some of them appeared to be out of date.**

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

R&EC-19-5-6 RETI

R&EC-19-5-6.1 PhD programme codes update

The Head of RETI provided the Committee with a final iteration of a paper that outlined information on existing programme titles and codes and Faculty proposals for future ones. Panel members were reminded that the intention was to lower the number of codes but despite several meetings between the Chair, Head of RETI, and the Director of Strategic Planning this had proven to be a challenging task.

The paper set out the final planned structure and after some general discussion the Committee agreed on the number and subject titles

for each Faculty and to continue with the existing programme codes for current students but introduce the revamped ones for new students. **The Chair requested that this final PhD programme code structure be taken forward by the Head of RETI with Planning and Statistics and for this item to be finally actioned and closed.**

ACTION: HEAD OF RETI/DIRECTOR OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

R&EC-19-5-6.2 PRES 2019 – Faculty co-ordinated action plan

The Head of RETI presented a paper that set out the latest developments with regards to a Faculty co-ordinated action plan following the outcomes of PRES 2019. The Committee was reminded that some of the main challenges from the report included trying to improve the 'research culture' across the institution and to enhance the resources provision for the PGR community. The action plan incorporated feedback from the Faculties and set out a number of strategies to address these and which will now be duly implemented.

R&EC-19-5-6.3 PGR/ECR forum update

The Head of RETI provided the Committee with a brief update on the main points that arose from the last PGR/ECR forum that was held on Monday, 18th May. The meeting had good representation from across the Faculties and was generally positive and constructive. **The Head of RETI summarised the highlights from the forum but the minutes were scheduled to be presented at the final Committee meeting of this academic session in July.**

ACTION: HEAD OF RETI

R&EC-19-5-6.4 Current RETI training activities

The Head of RETI informed the Committee that during the COVID-19 impacted period, RETI had replaced most timetabled campus-based training with remote delivery using a range of online methods such as video conferencing, Panopto recordings, and webinars. In order to provide further support to PGR students, RETI had also introduced some new sessions that were detailed in the paper that was presented to the Committee. The Head of RETI reported that this revised programme had been a success so far and that there had been no real issues, and so work will continue on the provision of online training throughout academic session 2020/21 if social restrictions remain in place.

R&EC-19-5-6.5 3MT competition 2020/21

The Head of RETI notified the Committee about the intention to run the successful 3MT competition again in academic year 2020/21 and requested Faculties to support the event. Only two of the Faculties held heats this year but the hope was for all of them to participate in 2020/21, and that this also formed part of the PRES 2019 Faculty co-ordinated action plan that was covered in a previous agenda item. The Chair emphasised the positives of this competition and encouraged Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise to engage with this as there were many benefits and provided networking opportunities for students to share their work and experiences.

R&EC-19-5-7 ITEMS FROM FACULTY RESEARCH & ENTERPRISE COMMITTEES

No items were brought to the attention of the Committee.

R&EC-19-5-8 POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH MATTERS

R&EC-19-5-8.1 PGR Completions – Recommendations for Committee

The Committee approved the list of postgraduate research degree awards recommended by examiners and considered at recent meetings of Faculty Research Degrees Committees.

R&EC-19-5-8.2 Summary of PGR related business by FRDCs for 2019/20 to end of Q3 (30th April 2020)

The Head of RETI provided a summary of FRDC activity in terms of submissions of various RDA forms across all four Faculties to the end of 30th April 2020. This was for general noting by the Committee, but the total number of PGR students was presently just over 500 which was significantly lower than the target figure and remained a concern.

The Chair again stressed that there had been an over-reliance on VC PhD Scholarships in recent years and that Faculties needed to be more creative with their PGR recruitment. The Committee agreed that PGR numbers were too low and new initiatives would continue to be explored in a hope to raise numbers. This was an ongoing concern and the figures will continue to be monitored closely throughout the rest of the year and beyond to observe the effects of the COVID-19 crisis.

R&EC-19-5-8.3 PGR completions for REF 2021 update

The Head of RETI presented some updated figures for the total number of PGR completions for the current REF period for

consideration by the Committee. The existing totals indicated that there would be approximately 420 completions (PhD/EdD) for the REF period (including 35 from the Medway School of Pharmacy) which was extremely positive and would represent an approximate doubling of the amount submitted to REF 2014. Plans were in place to maximise the number of completions before the census date and **the Chair emphasised the importance of these PGR completions and asked Faculty Directors of Research & Enterprise to continue to support those students that could possibly complete before the end of July and to liaise with RETI.**

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

R&EC-19-5-8.4 Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Research Awards – proposed changes 2020/21

The Training & Research Programmes Manager presented a paper to the Committee that highlighted proposals for amendments to the Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Research Awards. Panel members were asked to discuss these recommendations and to agree a final version which could then be presented and endorsed at Academic Council in order for the revised regulations to be published in time for academic year 2020/21.

The Committee agreed with most of the suggested changes but following detailed discussion some further minor corrections were necessary. As such, **the Chair requested that Committee members communicate these amendments directly to the Training & Research Programmes Manager outside of this meeting so that the document could be finalised in time for it to be sent to the next Academic Council meeting and for the final version to be presented at the next Committee meeting scheduled in July.**

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

R&EC-19-5-9 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

There were no items for information presented to the Committee.

R&EC-19-5-10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The PVC (BUS) Nominee highlighted the problem that no offers could yet be made to PhD students with a September start date due to the

fact that the UKRI had delayed the announcement of the fees for 2020/21. One proposal was to suggest to Admissions that they publish an interim set of fees but make it clear that they were subject to change. The Director of Research & Enterprise reported that this had been followed up and was just awaiting a final sign-off from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer but that the Committee would be informed of when this had been resolved.

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

R&EC-19-5-11 DATES & TIMES OF 2019/20 MEETINGS

Meeting
July 1 st 2020, Greenwich Campus, Room QA075, 2.00pm