UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Academic Board

RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024 in Room 7X111, Frenchay Campus.

Present: Prof. A Coffey (Chair), Prof. F Cramp, Prof. O Doran, Prof. G Edwards, Prof. J Green, Prof. D Greenham, Dr B Gross, Prof. J Hancock, H Hickman (items 1–2 and item 5), Prof. J Lamond, Dr H Lewis-Smith, O Okeyoyin, P Shelton, Prof. D Sinnett, Dr R Thorn

Apologies: Dr L Duong, F Kareem, Dr A Geary, Prof. N Quenivet

In attendance: A Conway, Prof. M Griffiths (item 5.1), T John (Secretary), C Reilly (Officer), L Wicksteed (item 2.1)

RKEC.24.02.1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
RKEC.24.02.1.1	Members were introduced and welcomed to the meeting; apologies were noted.
RKEC.24.02.1.2	No declarations of interest were raised.
RKEC.24.02.2	**PRESENTATION**
RKEC.24.02.2.1	**Knowledge Exchange Framework 2023 results** *Presentation*
RKEC.24.02.2.1.1	The Assistant Director of Research, Business and Innovation (Business, Innovation and Skills) introduced the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) results in full, noting that:

1. The KEF is informed by data from the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), which determines the allocation of the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) across Universities; the KEF itself is not yet linked directly to HEIF funding.

2. While UWE Bristol's performance improved significantly between KEF1 and KEF2, KEF3 (2023) saw less change; its position nevertheless remains slightly above its cluster E average. The latest results place the University at significantly above average in the public and community engagement and IP and commercialisation domains.
3. Overall, UWE Bristol remains the third highest-ranked university in the cluster, and is well above average both for the region and among University Alliance members.
4. There is room for growth in working with the third sector, CPD and grad start-ups, and research partnerships. Consideration would need to be given to future growth since without it there is the potential for diminishing HEIF allocation.

RKEC.24.02.2.1.2   Members welcomed the report; it was noted that RKEC would have continued oversight of knowledge exchange, particularly in light of the importance of the HEIF as a ringfenced fund for knowledge exchange activity.

RKEC.24.02.2.1.3   In discussion, members commented that universities should not necessarily aim to excel across all domains of the KEF; instead, the intention is for universities to use the results to inform their strategic prioritisation of knowledge exchange activity.

RKEC.24.02.3   MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

RKEC.24.02.3.1   Previous minutes
Paper RKEC.24.02.01 was received.

RKEC.24.02.3.1.1   Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2023.

RKEC.24.02.3.2   Action sheet and matters arising
Paper RKEC.24.02.02 was received.

RKEC.24.02.3.2.1   Members noted that the majority of actions were either in progress or completed, with others addressed elsewhere on the agenda.

RKEC.24.02.3.3   Reflections on research and knowledge exchange environment
Verbal

RKEC.24.02.3.3.1   The Secretary invited members to reflect on and discuss challenges and opportunities for research and knowledge

exchange in light of the University's current position and recent updates from the Vice-Chancellor.

RKEC.24.02.3.3.2   It was highlighted that:

1. Within the funding landscape, collaborative (for example, cross-funding council) opportunities are still emerging. A strong, collaborative research culture should therefore remain a significant priority across the sector.
2. Within UWE Bristol, the Transformation Programme will be a driver for implementing the required changes already identified. Change will need to be managed confidently, and research will not be unaffected by it.

RKEC.24.02.3.3.3   In discussion, members commented that:

1. Post-COVID, there has been a tendency to return to old ways of working and no longer embracing technologies to support new ways of working.
2. There is an opportunity and a need to think beyond the present situation, including ensuring long-term investments and decisions are directed in the right way; this includes retaining and nurturing existing talent to reduce future recruitment costs.
3. A review of strategic partnerships, including doctoral training partnerships (DTPs), would form part of a long-term approach. It will be important to recognise the PGR community as they are also affected by the current challenges.
4. There is more to be done to maximise the effective use of researchers' time. This includes appropriate research governance, Library Services support, and work within Schools and research entities to adapt workloads.
5. Caution is to be exercised in not detracting from or discouraging existing formal progression opportunities, including the academic promotion scheme; such opportunities will need to be communicated carefully.
6. There is a need to consider and potentially reduce reliance on QR funding for studentships. However, existing PhD students need to be supported as they are part of a broader effort to build the University's research activity.
7. There is a broader need to understand what activity is currently supported by QR funding (e.g. internal

investment schemes, research entities, etc.) to inform what should continue under this model.

ACTION: To investigate internal allocation of where QR funding is spent, accompanied by funding modelling up until the next REF (**Secretary; Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services**).

RKEC.24.02.4	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

RKEC.24.02.4.1   **Research and knowledge exchange KPIs**
Papers RKEC.24.02.03a–c were received.

RKEC.24.02.4.1.1   The Secretary introduced an updated summary of income and volume-based research metrics, highlighting that:

1. Overall income has grown over the last five years. However, the research income forecast suggests that UWE Bristol is not on track to reach its corporate scorecard target of £32m by 2030; further analysis is needed to understand why.
2. The value of bids submitted has increased significantly in the past year (from £28m to £52m); the value of successful bids has also increased, though to a lesser extent.
3. Approximately half of bids submitted are under £50k; these have the highest success rates. However, despite a significant proportion being submitted, mid-sized bids (value between £50k and £0.25m) have the lowest success rate.

RKEC.24.02.4.1.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. Mid-sized bidding opportunities are often fewer in number so may therefore be more difficult to succeed in; conversely, bids for smaller amounts of funding may be encouraged by invitation, hence these are more likely to succeed.
2. There is a significant challenge for the Research, Business and Innovation (RBI) service in providing support across a wide range of bid values and types; spreading bidding activity more evenly throughout the year would ease this.
3. Analysis of bid outcomes must first account for the external funding landscape, since outcomes will depend on funding available to the respective research councils. Analysis of UWE Bristol's success in research funding more generally

should also account for where unsuccessful bids are repurposed.

RKEC.24.02.4.1.3   The Head of Research and Knowledge Exchange Services presented an analysis of bid submissions and outcomes by funders, highlighting that:

1. The bulk of bids submitted are to a relatively small group of key funders, for which success rates are usually higher; these include Innovate UK, Horizon Europe, UKRI research councils and the British Academy. There is significant clustering around traditional funders, such as the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR).
2. Success rates are likely to be higher where the bid requires significant prerequisites ahead of submission. Future analysis could be supported by investigating calls for submissions in detail.

RKEC.24.02.4.2   **College research updates**
Papers RKEC.24.02.04a–c were received.

RKEC.24.02.4.2.1   CATE
The College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CATE) provided an update, highlighting the following:

1. Recommendations on practice research, proposed by a working group and endorsed at the College RKEC, with a focus on how to capture practice research in the next REF.
2. Work to embed a stronger research culture for postgraduate research students and to integrate research more closely within learning and teaching.
3. A request that research centres and entities within the College each produce a reflective report against the draft centre criteria; this will inform the review thereof.
4. Ecosystems principles, which have been signed off by the College RKEC and are due to be presented to the College Executive Board.

RKEC.24.02.4.2.2   CBL
The College representative for research and enterprise (CBL) provided an update, highlighting the following:

1. Two away days as part of the review of research centres and entities; a third away day is scheduled for the spring.

The review of research centres and entities will be informed by the current research landscape.

2. Work to consider what research partnerships could be developed from existing teaching partnerships.

ACTION: To liaise on developing research partnerships from existing international academic (learning and teaching) partnerships (**Secretary; College representative for research and enterprise (CBL)**).

3. Strong funding submissions and bidding success, as well as quality outputs.
4. Working as a group to address responsibilities for research and knowledge within the College (in the absence of a College Dean of Research and Enterprise in CBL).

RKEC.24.02.4.2.3   CHSS
The College Dean of Research and Enterprise (CHSS) provided an update, highlighting the following:

1. A number of larger bids, including a significant successful bid in collaboration with CATE and a Centre for Public Health NIHR bid to establish mental health research within UWE Bristol.
2. An initial review of the research landscape and consultations on research centres and entities undertaken by the School Directors of Research and Enterprise. The review of centres will be based not purely on performance, but also on the fit with the College's strategic direction and alignment with external funding opportunities and REF.
3. The need for a systematic approach to securing University commitments on investment to support grant success.

RKEC.24.02.4.3   **University Ethics and Integrity Committee**
Paper RKEC.24.02.08 was received.

RKEC.24.02.4.3.1   The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) provided an update, highlighting the following:

1. UEIC has held its first two meetings. Faculty Research Ethics Committees are continuing to meet on a College basis in the interim; the new research ethics framework is on track to begin operating in September 2024 (including new College Research Ethics Committees).
2. Two live ethics cases are currently under review, both involving students. While one of these has largely been

resolved, the other is expected to need further consideration and relevant aspects of this would likely be reported back to RKEC.

3. Development of an ethics module in Worktribe, which is expected to be rolled out in August 2024.

RKEC.24.02.4.3.2	It was noted that RKEC needs to be assured that research ethics and governance are being overseen appropriately within the University's ethics framework; case data would support this. **[ACTION: Officer/Chair of UEIC]**

RKEC.24.02. 5   ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT

RKEC.24.02.5.1   **Researcher Development Concordat Task and Finish Group recommendations**
Paper RKEC.24.02.05 was received.

RKEC.24.02.5.1.1   The Chair of the Task and Finish Group (PVC Head of College, CHSS) and the Secretary introduced the paper, noting that:

1. UWE Bristol was formerly a signatory of the Concordat; work has been undertaken to develop a recommendation on whether to re-sign it. A gap analysis, identifying the work required to rejoin, has been conducted as part of this.
2. The proposal is to prioritise contract researchers initially, before rolling out the support proposed more widely for all those contributing to research.
3. The focus, identified through the analysis, is on the following:
   a. Provision of ten professional development days per year (pro rata)
   b. Healthy working environments
   c. Research culture and career planning
   d. Reward, recognition and job security.
4. The gap analysis and proposed recommendations will need consideration in light of the University's current position, to distinguish "quick fixes" from longer-term actions.
5. If the recommendation to re-sign is approved, UWE Bristol would have one year from the time of signing to implement the actions outlined. A working group to support this work in the first year would be established; it is expected that this work would become business as usual thereafter.

RKEC.24.02.5.1.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. The ten-day requirement for professional development is non-negotiable but should be achievable on the basis that a majority of funders are also Concordat signatories. In addition, the requirement would likely be satisfied by a combination of CPD and training offered through the Learning and Development Centre.
2. Much of the proposed work identified has already been planned for, regardless of whether the University re-signs the Concordat; the costing implications and other impact assessments of supporting the Concordat would nevertheless need to be considered.
3. Consideration would need to be given to making the development offer equitable across the Colleges and among different kinds of researchers.

RKEC.24.02.5.1.3   Members endorsed the recommendations on the understanding that the rationale for re-signing the concordat must be explicit.
ACTION: To recommend to VCE (and thereafter Academic Board) that UWE Bristol re-signs the Concordat and to consider implementation resources and timeline (**Chair**).

RKEC.24.02.6   **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

RKEC.24.02.6.1   **Funding open-access monographs to meet UKRI requirements**
Paper RKEC.24.02.06 was received.

RKEC.24.02.6.1.1   The Head of Library Research, Performance and Internal Comms introduced the paper, noting that:

1. As of 1 January 2024, all long-form research publications based on UKRI-funded work must be made open access.
2. Funding (of up to £10k for books) is available through UKRI to support open-access publication costs, but there is still likely to be a shortfall in meeting the full cost. No internal funding is currently available.
3. There is therefore a need to consider how to broaden the dissemination of research and maximise impact, and to consider alternative funding streams. A range of options are presented, including the green route (making author-accepted manuscripts openly available) and targeting publishers with lower open-access publication costs.
4. While the change is in some ways a positive development for research (in attempting to transform the academic

publishing industry), the transition to the new publication model will be a significant immediate challenge.

RKEC.24.02.6.1.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. Monographs are still regarded as the dominant form of publication in some disciplines, with researchers' reputations sometimes resting on traditional academic publishers such as OUP. It is therefore important that alternative funding streams are explored thoroughly before considering alternative publishers.
2. This is nevertheless an issue for the sector more widely and the University will need to draw on insight from similar institutions. It is also likely that future developments will be shaped by how publications (including open-access) are counted in the next REF.

ACTION: To establish a task and finish group to consider implications in detail and to develop recommendations on meeting the UKRI requirements (**Head of Library Research, Performance and Internal Communications**).

RKEC.24.02.7	**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

RKEC.24.02.7.1   **Postgraduate research and Doctoral Academy update**
Verbal update

RKEC.24.02.7.1.1   The Director of the Doctoral Academy provided the following update:

1. Good progress has been made in the transition from the Graduate School to the new Doctoral Academy, including reviews of existing guidance (the Doctoral Academy handbook) and procedures, such as a review of CP1 progression. Members' feedback is sought to inform reviews of other progression points.
2. Some progress has been made in integrating PGR into other UWE processes, though more is still to be done. In particular, work is underway to integrate progression with Field and Award Boards, but this will depend on the wider University plans for these.
3. There is a further need to consider the governance structure for PGR, including the extent to which this should form part of the business of the School Boards of Studies.

RKEC.24.02.7.1.2	In discussion, members commented that:

1. RKEC should continue to have sight of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey results, which have already been considered elsewhere within the University.

ACTION: To share PRES results with RKEC members (**Officer; Director of the Doctoral Academy**).

2. Providing that any potential risks can be addressed, it is worth pursuing the automatic issuing of staff email addresses for PhD students.

ACTION: To address access to staff email addresses for PhD students (**Director of the Doctoral Academy**).

3. Concerning the CP1 review, feedback has suggested that external examiners feel that the process is onerous; it would therefore be helpful to consider what is being done elsewhere in the sector in order to simplify the process.

ACTION: To investigate sector practice elsewhere to simplify the CP1 process in response to EE feedback (**Director of the Doctoral Academy**).

4. The Schools and Colleges must be engaged appropriately on new arrangements for PGR emerging from the Doctoral Academy.

RKEC.24.02.7.2	**Research Excellence Group update**
	Verbal update

RKEC.24.02.7.2.1	The Secretary provided a brief update, noting that the University has now appointed a REF Manager; the sector is nevertheless awaiting further clarity on the timeline for the next REF.

RKEC.24.02.7.3	**Library Services report**
	Paper RKEC.24.02.07 was received.

RKEC.24.02.7.3.1	The report was noted for information only.

RKEC.24.02.8	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

RKEC.24.02.8.1	**EDI in Research Working Group recommendations**
	Paper RKEC.24.02.09 was received

RKEC.24.02.8.1.1   The Chair of the Working Group (College Dean of Research and Enterprise, CHSS) introduced the paper, noting that:

1. The group recommends pausing its activity, pending further clarity on the University's strategic approach to EDI (within the People Strategy), noting that an Assistant Vice-Chancellor for EDI is currently in recruitment.
2. Conversely, there is a need to ensure that the group's work is applied effectively, including identifying ways of embedding this within Schools and research entities. EDI must also be incorporated within specific activities, including REF preparation and bid submission work.

RKEC.24.02.8.1.2   In discussion, members commented that:

1. It is expected that EDI will need to be evidenced within the next REF, and there is a specific need to ensure it is addressed across all relevant units of assessment.
2. RKEC should continue to consider EDI issues within research, even if the working group no longer continues; a separate task and finish group may be necessary for developing the proposed good practice guide.
3. Members would benefit from a session on the current People Strategy, and its implications for research, from the Chief People Officer.

ACTION: To consider inviting the Chief People Officer to present the People Strategy to RKEC (**Chair/Secretary**).

RKEC.24.02.8.2   **Professor Martin Boddy**
Verbal update

RKEC.24.02.8.2.1   Members expressed their condolences on the passing of Professor Martin Boddy, formerly the University's Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise and Chair of RKEC. The Chair noted that a letter of condolence acknowledging his valuable work (as Chair of RKEC and more widely within the University) would be shared with the family on behalf of the committee.

RKEC.24.02.9   **DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

RKEC.24.02.9.1   Next meeting dates for academic year 2023/24:
- 1 May 2024
- 19 June 2024.