APPROVED

The University of Manchester

Senate
Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research)

19 October 2023

Present: Professor Colette Fagan (Chair), Muhammad Ansab Ali, Professor Philippa Browning, Professor Richard Curry, Professor Maggie Gale, Professor Nigel Hooper, Professor David Matthews, Professor James Pattison, Professor Thomas Schmidt, Professor Chris Taylor, Professor Arpana Verma, Professor Melissa Westwood and Professor Richard Winpenny.

In Attendance for all items: Dr Julian Skyrme (Director of Social Responsibility), Dr Andrew Walsh (Director of Research and Business Engagement Services), and Jane Holland (minutes).

Apologies: Professor Stephen Flint and Professor Mahesan Nirmalan.

1   Welcome
Noted:
   a) the Chair welcomed members to the first Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research) meeting of the 2023-24 academic year;
   b) Professor Thomas Schmidt was welcomed to his first meeting, as a new member replacing Professor Fiona Devine as Head of School nominee;
   c) Professor Andy Trafford would be invited onto the committee membership, replacing Neil Hanley as Vice-Dean for Research and Innovation (Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health);
   d) the meeting dates for 2023-24 had been confirmed and the meetings would mirror the format of the Senate meetings.

2   Declarations of Interest
Noted: That there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

3   Review of Terms of Reference and Membership
Noted: The terms of reference and membership of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research) were reviewed.

4   Purpose and Working Expectations
Noted:
   a) the Chair provided a recap of the committee ways of working document, a copy of which would be circulated to members after the meeting. **Action: Governance Manager**
   b) committee members were invited to suggest items for future agendas;
   c) members were reminded that proposals for new policies would be considered by the committee and recommended to Senate for approval. The committee had delegated

authority from Senate to approve revisions to existing research policies for which Senate was the approving body.

5   Forward Agenda: Schedule of Committee Business for 2023-24
Noted:
   a) the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research) Forward Agenda;
   b) it was proposed that a briefing on the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) would be provided by the business team to the March 2024 meeting. This would be arranged and added to the forward agenda; **Action: Governance Manager**
   c) the Manchester Doctoral College (MDC) process had moved to a new cycle and would be presented to the committee at the start of the 2024-25 academic year, to align with the annual performance review process and deep dive.

6   Minutes of the Previous Meeting
Noted: That a suggested amendment had been received relating to minute 10.b), which would be revised to 'it was confirmed that dual awards had a reciprocal arrangement and that the fee structure would relate to the <u>home/recruiting</u> institution'.

Agreed: to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 17 May 2023, following minor amendment.

7   Matters Arising
Noted: The Matters Arising update.

8   Chair's Update
Noted:
   a) a committee member asked whether the Student Experience Programme (SEP) had had a negative impact on research activity at the University. Another member noted that research might have also been negatively impacted by the recent industrial action and the marking and assessment boycott, due to a backlog in marking and disruption of other activities.
   b) the committee noted that disruption associated with any change programme or major incident (cyber attack and industrial action) was likely to negatively impact on research capacity (time, intellectual and creative bandwidth, and well-being), and that the impact would be unevenly experienced by individuals. The discussion noted that:
        i.   the transfer to the SEP new admissions system had caused some disruption and had stretched the resources of the admissions team. However, it was confirmed that recruitment numbers were to target;
        ii. the tender process for a replacement for the PGR eProg was in progress, although a number of elements had been delayed. A new provider would be identified by the end of January 2024;
   c) it was confirmed that to date there was no evidence of significant adverse impact on research at the aggregate institutional level given the metrics analysed in the Research Deep Dive and associated assurance report (next agenda item). However, the Deep Dive report minutes also noted that; (i) research services and research finance were still stretched due to staffing levels despite some additional investment, and (ii) academic workloads were a concern in all three Faculties.
   d) it was also acknowledged that concerns about the wellbeing and workloads of academic and Professional Services staff were being raised for attention through a number of channels. Hence, there was a risk that we may see a lagged negative impact on research activity; the risk of which would be addressed within the usual business cycle of strategy, monitoring and assurance by the Research Strategy Group and associated Faculty research leadership.

9   Academic Assurance Review Research Report
Received: the Academic Assurance Review Research report.

Noted:
   a) the report provided the key indicators to assure the Board of a high level of research, and included background data to inform discussion relating to the deep dive, in advance of the annual performance review;
   b) there was discussion regarding applications for funding through Innovate UK. The Faculty of Science and Engineering had increased the capacity of its Professional Services team in order to support academic staff with funding applications and business engagement. Careful consideration could be given to engaging commercial grant writing organisations if additional support was required. **Action: Director of Research and Business Engagement Services**
   c) that a minor correction be made to the report at 2.2 Research funding; Institutional funding volume would be updated to 'Rationale: Government has set a target to increase research funding to 2.4% of GDP and UKRI's budget has increased'. **Action: Governance Manager**

Agreed: to recommend the annual academic assurance research review report to Senate, following minor amendment.

10   Policy Review: PGR Policy Updates
Received: PGR Policy Updates report.

Noted:
   a) that careful consideration had been given to the proposal to remove the PGR extensions due to COVID, with a final application date of 31 January 2024. It was confirmed that students registering up to and including January 2021 would be eligible to apply for the COVID extension. Exceptional COVID extension applications after the cut-off date could be applied for through the mitigating circumstances procedure. Removal of the COVID extension would allow the streamlining of processes and there would be an expectation for supervisors to devise programmes which would address the need for appropriate support;
   b) it was confirmed that independent chairs would be required to have previous experience of examining PhDs.

Agreed: to approve the updates to:
   i.   Presentation of Thesis Policy;
   ii. Presentation of Dissertation Policy;
   iii. EngD Regulations;
   iv. Policy on Progress and Review of Postgraduate Researchers;
   v.   Procedure for the Approval of New Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes;
   vi. Procedure for Amending or Withdrawing Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes;
   vii. COVID Extension Procedure;
   viii. Nomination of Examiners and Independent Chairs Procedure.

11   Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement Update
Noted: an oral update on Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement.
   a) an action plan had been submitted to the watermark process for Public Engagement in Research. The results of the process would be made available on 6 December 2023;
   b) the University's KEF Public and Community Engagement self-assessment score of 22/25 for public engagement was in the top quintile of institutions;
   c) work was in progress towards the University's submission to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2024, the results of which would be published in June 2024. A detailed analysis of the UN SDGs relating to research would be presented to the January 2024 committee meeting.

12 **Assurance of Quality and Standards in Research – recent reports received by the Planning and Resources Committee**
    Received:
    a) the University of Manchester Research Institute (UMRI) End of Year Report 2022-23.
    b) the Research Compliance Committee (RCC) Annual Report 2022-23.

    Noted:
    a) the Vice-President for Research chairs the UMRI Board. The Associate Vice-President for Research (Interdisciplinary Research) provided leadership on governance of UMRI research beacons, institutes and platforms. The UMRI end of year report provided an overview of UMRI activity delivered through the 2022-23 academic year;
    b) Appendix C of the UMRI end of year report provided a summary of the Research Beacons themes and associated activity. It was confirmed that the information was useful for transparency purposes and internal communications, and was regularly updated. It was noted that for the Advanced Materials Beacon that additional schools and departments should be listed explicitly. The additional detail should be provided to the Associate Vice-President for Research (Interdisciplinary Research). **Action: Committee Members**
    c) the RCC annual report provided assurance on the safety of the research environment and integrity on how research was undertaken. A committee member requested clarification about the amber rating (minor adverse events only) relating to the storage of military grade chemicals and arsenic, and chemicals which had not been properly accounted for. It was confirmed that the amber assurance rating indicated that processes were in place, but not fully operational at that level. Clarification of the categorisations would be sought to inform the Committee members of the operation of RCC assurance. **Action: Vice-President for Research**

13 **Information Items**
    Noted:
    a) Senate Induction presentation.
    b) Research and Impact @ Manchester – providing details of the University's research and impact activities and associated events.