

*APPROVED*

**The University of Manchester**

**Senate  
Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research)**

**21 January 2026**

**Present:** Professor Colette Fagan (Chair), Professor Lynne Bianchi, Professor Richard Curry, Professor Maggie Gale, Professor David Matthews, Rachel Miller, Professor James Pattison, Professor Thomas Schmidt, Professor Tim Stallard, Professor Andy Trafford, Professor Arpana Verma, Dr Andrew Walsh, Professor Melissa Westwood, and Professor Anne White.

**Attendance for minutes 1-12:** Dr Julian Skyrme (Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement)

**In Attendance for minutes 8, 9 & 10:** Dr Helen Baker (Head of Research Degrees and Researcher Development), and Professor Elizabeth Cartwright (Director of Manchester Doctoral College)

**In Attendance for minute 12:** Dr Cathal Rogers (Research Culture and Assessment Manager)

**In Attendance for minute 13:** Alistair Beech (Social Media and Digital Communications Manager)

**In Attendance for all items:** Patrick Hackett (Secretary, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer) (observing), and Jane Holland (Governance Manager) (minutes).

**Apologies:** Professor Stephen Flint, and Professor Sarah Haigh.

**1 Welcome**

**Noted:**

- a) the Chair welcomed members to the meeting;
- b) the Secretary, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer was observing the meeting.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

**Noted:** That there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

**3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Agreed:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 1 October the 2025.

**4 Matters Arising**

**Noted:**

- a) the Matters Arising update;
- b) arising from minute 8 from the 1 October meeting, a further discussion would be scheduled around the EDI analysis of the Enhancing Research Culture call applicants/awardees; **Action: AVP Research and Innovation/Vice-Dean for Social Responsibility & EDI (FSE)**
- c) arising from minute 10f) from the 1 October meeting, actions were underway to improve research income against the 8% growth target. There had been a subsequent discussion at Senate relating to metrics, performance and benchmarking for units of assessment;
- d) arising from minute 11 from the 1 October meeting, the Chair confirmed that a meeting would be convened with the Academic Director of the Open Research Office, along with upcoming discussions with research strategy leads. An update (via circulation) would be provided on

progress, which had been temporarily impeded by contract negotiations. **Action: Vice-President for Research**

## 5 **Forward Agenda: Schedule of Committee Business for 2025-26**

### **Noted:**

- a) the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (Research) Forward Agenda;
- b) Committee members were encouraged to submit agenda items to the Governance Manager.

**Action: Committee members**

## 6 **Chair's Update**

**Noted:** an oral update on research and general University matters.

- a) an update on the REF Board would be provided later in the meeting. A successful, initial meeting had been held;
- b) UKRI were revising how they allocated and managed their budget. There would be a pause as the executive chairs and the individual research councils adapted to a new way of working. Decisions would need to be taken on how the funding would be dispersed.

## 7 **Update from the AVPs for Research and Innovation**

**Noted:** The next phase of M2035 was in progress following the 200 Event, and would be progressed through the committee structure with contributions from schools and institutes moving forward.

## 8 **University of Manchester Students' Union Research Report**

**Received:** The University of Manchester Students' Union Research Report, focusing on the unique status of postgraduate researchers (PGRs) and requesting a review of support.

### **Noted:**

- a) that a number of points raised in the report did not directly relate to academic assurance, and would be routed instead through the Manchester Doctoral College (MDC);
- b) MDC's confirmation that wellbeing remained a priority for ensuring PGRs had a good experience and achieved their potential while undertaking their PhD;
- c) that consideration would need to be given to the outcomes of the PGR Voice survey, including subsequent changes already implemented, in order to determine an appropriate way forward;  
**Action: UMSU PGR Officer**
- d) the level of support required by PGRs may vary depending on their local research requirement; for example the needs of lab-based PGRs may differ from those working off campus. It was suggested that the data should be separated and analysed accordingly;  
**Action: UMSU PGR Officer**
- e) a number of useful initiatives had already been undertaken and resources generated. Work would be undertaken to understand if these tools and initiatives continued to be fit for purpose. The remaining recommendations within the report would be considered by the MDC Strategy Group (MDCSG) with a view to integrating into MDC operational planning later in 2025-26 or early in 2026-27. **Action: AVP Research and Innovation, Director of MDC and UMSU PGR Officer**

## 9 **Manchester Doctoral College Annual Review**

**Received:** The Manchester Doctoral College Annual Review report, providing an update on key developments, issues and actions identified through the PGR annual monitoring process.

### **Noted:**

- a) that the reference to rationalising and reviewing programmes related to complexities associated with dual and joint programmes;
- b) work had commenced to review the processes in place for the approval of programmes and how these were managed;
- c) urgent policy updates could be submitted for review and consultation at any point during the academic year, rather than being deferred until the scheduled policy review date.

## 10 Policy Review

**Received:** The Policy Review report, detailing minor amendments to the previously approved PhD by Enterprise Regulations, and updates to policy associated with the PhD by Enterprise.

**Noted:**

- a) that clarification was requested at E.19 which related to ‘the PGR failing to make satisfactory progress only on the business development aspects of the project...’ A member requested information on the criteria to be used for assessing the enterprise component of the thesis. It was confirmed that the policy was an overarching document, whereas specific information relating to the degree programme would be included in a guidance pack for examiners, and the programme handbook. Development of the assessment criteria was underway;
- b) a change had been made to introduce an additional review meeting for the PhD by Enterprise candidates in order to assess progress of the enterprise component of the study;
- c) if a student was transferred to a standard PhD programme, there should be no requirement to extend their studies to make up for time lost while undertaking enterprise;
- d) the next phase of the documentation – examiners’ guidance and programme handbook - would be shared with the Committee members. **Action: AVP Research and Innovation**

**Agreed:** to approve the minor updates to the:

- a) PhD by Enterprise Regulations;
- b) PGR Policy on Progress and Review of Postgraduate Researchers;
- c) Presentation of Theses Policy;
- d) Nomination of Examiners and Independent Chairs Policy.

## 11 UMRI Annual Report 2024-25

**Received:** UMRI Annual Report 2024-25.

**Noted:** That the assurance reports would continue to be presented annually. However, the reports would be restructured to align with the M2035 Strategy to continue to provide assurance. The UMRI Annual report would fall under the remit of the Research Committee.

**Agreed:** to recommend the UMRI Annual Report 2024-25 to Senate.

## 12 REF 2029 Update

**Received:** A REF 2029 Update, detailing the new policy and guidance updates published by Research England in December 2025, and implications for the University’s preparations.

**Noted:**

- a) reframing of the environment category to Strategy, People and Research Environment (SPRE), which would be worth 20% of the assessment with a 60:40 institutional:unit level split.
- b) the potential difficulty of writing an institutional-level statement and obtaining input from various elements across the University was raised. It was confirmed that a plan to support this was in place and an initial draft and data ‘roadmap’ should be ready for circulation by the end of April 2026;
- c) a package of resources to support development of unit level SPE statements would be produced by the end of June 2026.

## 13 Briefing on aspects of Social Media and Research

**Received:** A PowerPoint presentation, providing a briefing on aspects of social media and research, including University policy, and guidance relating to social media.

**Noted:**

- a) there was a discussion around the provision of support and accessibility for academic staff engaging with social media, to make participation easier for those who wished to be active;
- b) the benefits of individual and institutional social media activity and their interactions were considered;
- c) the importance of having an authentic researcher voice in the social media content to increase engagement was noted;
- d) the institutional social media strategy was multi-channel. There was a recommendation for academics and researchers to use Blue Sky and LinkedIn currently, as they offered opportunities to reach specific audience groups;
- e) Research Committee would be requested to consider what else might be done to raise researchers' awareness and use of the support available to raise the profile and impact of their research. **Action: Vice-President for Research**

**14 Policy Schedule (including non-PGR Policies)**

**Received:** The Policy Schedule.

**15 Assurance of Quality and Standards in Research – recent reports received by the University Executive**

**Received:** The Research Compliance Committee Annual Report 2024-25.

**Noted:** That a more detailed drill down of the detail within the report could be provided to the next meeting by request to the Governance Manager. **Action: Committee members**

**16 Information Items**

**Noted:**

- a) the Policy Schedule;
- b) the Research Compliance Committee Annual Report 2024-25;
- c) Research and Impact @ Manchester Newsletter - providing details of the University's research and impact activities and associated events;
- d) Social Responsibility Update: report to 22 October Senate. An item on social responsibility in relation to research would be added to the Committee's Forward Agenda. **Action: Governance Manager**