

**APPROVED**

**The University of Manchester**

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

**18 March 2026**

**Present:** Professor Colette Fagan (Chair), Professor Lynne Bianchi, Dr Rachel Miller (to minute 9), Professor James Pattison, Professor Thomas Schmidt, Professor Tim Stallard, Professor Andy Trafford, Professor Melissa Westwood, and Professor Anne White.

**Attendance for minutes 1-6:** Dr Cathal Rogers (Research Culture and Assessment Project Manager)

**In Attendance for all items:** Dr Julian Skyrme (Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement), and Jane Holland (Governance Manager) (minutes).

**Apologies:** Professor Richard Curry, Professor Maggie Gale, Professor Sarah Haigh, Professor David Matthews, Professor Chris Taylor, Professor Arpana Verma, Dr Andrew Walsh, and Professor Angelia Wilson.

**1 Declarations of Interest**

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

**2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

**Agreed:** to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2026.

**3 Matters Arising**

**Noted:**

- a) an Action Log for Senate and its Subcommittees had been developed and was available to Committee members for review via a link to the Senate SharePoint page. The actions would be updated by the Governance Office;
- b) arising from minute 8d) from the 21 January meeting, the UMSU PGR Officer provided a separate analysis of the data by Faculty. It was noted that there were marginal differences. The UMSU PGR Officer was progressing this work with the Manchester Doctoral College Strategy Group (MDCSG).

**4 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 for inclusion on the Forward Agenda. **Action: Committee members**

**5 REF Code of Practice**

**Received:** The REF Code of Practice.

**Noted:**

- a) the REF Code of Practice is a requirement for institutions submitting to the REF 2029 and will require approval by the funding body, UKRI-Research England. The University's draft Code of Practice had been developed following input from the team involved in REF delivery, and incorporated feedback from consultation. Wide engagement has been undertaken, including consultation with the Trade Union Negotiating Group and academic leads for EDI, and the document had been cascaded for comment to the Faculties by the Faculty Vice-Deans for Research and Innovation;
- b) The Committee requested minor clarifications to the draft Code of Practice including:
  - i. clarifying the UoA lead roles in terms of RRE;
  - ii. emphasising why cases were 'exceptional' (5.1.1);
  - iii. the decision process emphasised in terms of how selection was undertaken (5.1.3);
  - iv. clarification of 'we' (5.1.5);
  - v. awareness of breadth of research activity, which was a secondary consideration, with an ultimate focus on quality;
  - vi. a sentence relating to foreign language review. This would be followed up with colleagues in the Faculty of Humanities;
  - vii. the word 'annual' would be removed from the 'annual RRE process';

**Action: Research Culture and Assessment Project Manager**
- c) regarding implementation of the Code of Practice, there would be appropriate dialogue with the EDI team in terms of delivery across the Faculties.

**Agreed:** to approve, in principle, the REF Code of Practice, subject to the minor text adjustments.

## 6 Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

**Received:** The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) Action Plan.

**Noted:**

- a) the report identified how the University would meet the commitments of the CoARA Agreement over the next five years, 2026-2031. The Action Plan was approved by Research Committee in February, and would be included in the Vice-President for Research report to Senate;
- b) a member commented on the evaluation of different outputs in relation to Commitment 4 and avoidance of the use of rankings;
- c) It is important to ensure CoARA is implemented in our procedures through inserting cross-referencing links and explanation in the relevant policy documents and guidelines for recruitment and selection of researchers, including PGRs and PGR supervisors. **Action: Research Culture and Assessment Project Manager**
- d) The Committee also asked that the REF Board provide a sentence which clarifies the use of RRE grades. This should include a reminder of our policy that RRE grades should not be used in promotion cases (this is stated in the promotion policy) and clarifies who in the UoA team has access to grades to ensure effective preparation for REF. **Action: Research Culture and Assessment Project Manager**

## 7 Chair's Update

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

- a) the Vice-President for Research report to Senate had been included in the Committee papers circulation to provide an opportunity for members to discuss and comment;
- b) there was increasing uncertainty in the international arena, including risk analysis relating to overseas travel, and ongoing concern around the international levy and associated financial implications for the University;
- c) the UKRI had released updates on funding changes. The University is in a strong position to benefit from many of the changes, but the implications of cuts to the STFC budget were noted;

- d) The M2035 delivery plans for research and international are in development and will be launched in due course. A preview of the Delivery Plans will be included in the May Sub-Committee meeting. **Action: Governance Manager**

## 8 Update from the AVPs for Research and Innovation

### Noted:

- a) the launch of the Impact Acceleration Account Social Venture Fund had been published on StaffNet. The announcement detailed the current position and provided links to UKRI and support that had been put in place for research staff;
- b) given some delays to awards is anticipated as a result of the UKRI changes being made to funding calls, work is being undertaken to review circa 800 research staff contracts that are due to finish this year. Our policies already provide support for researchers on fixed-term contracts, including eligibility for an extended notice period under our current policies. A communication has been sent to all research staff to remind them of the support which is available and to reassure them that research awards (and associated job opportunities) are still healthy.
- c) research staff were being encouraged to engage with the Your Voice Matters employee engagement survey, and the data from the survey when available could provide useful insights.

## 9 Social Responsibility and Research

- a) **Received:** University of Manchester Statement of Social Responsibility in our Research and Innovation.

### Noted:

- a) the Statement had been developed to provide clarity around the meaning of social responsibility in research, particularly in respect of academic freedom. It had been approved by the University Executive, Research Committee and Social Responsibility Committee;
  - b) section 3 made reference to research partnerships. It was confirmed that this linked with responsible international research practice. A link to the Partnerships Policy would be added to the Statement to provide coherence; **Action: Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement**
  - c) the wording in section 4 “We believe that both these programs are probably the largest in the UK.” would be deleted due to its ambiguity. **Action: Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement**
  - d) the repetitive reference to other universities would be reviewed; **Action: Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement**
  - e) the Statement would be included in the Vice-President for Research’s report to Senate.
- b) **Received:** University of Manchester Research and the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

### Noted:

- a) the new analysis was presented which conveyed the University’s research outputs in relation to the UN SDGs;
- b) one of the key performance metrics in the M2035 Strategy set out the University’s ambition to be in the top 1% of universities in the world for impact towards the UN SDGs, of which research was a key element;
- c) the University’s SDG17 research score was 79.8. There were opportunities to increase this score through targeted activity, including partnering in research with low/middle-income countries. It was acknowledged that the key focus would be to publish the best research work;
- d) the analysis would also be discussed at Research and International Committee to inform the M2035 delivery plan, as well as at Social Responsibility Committee. The key

findings and recommendations would then be disseminated via the usual Faculty Committee channels;

- e) the comparison of competitors was discussed, particularly in understanding why some institutions were performing less strongly than others;
- f) several researchers tagged their work to SDGs. It was suggested that a targeted approach would be required to remain ahead of competitors and to prevent a decline in the University's ranking position;
- g) in advance of presentation to Research Committee and International Committee, the report would be updated with a link to a table detailing the countries that the University was working with. The executive summary would be updated to include the SR recommendations to Research and International Committees in light of the analysis.

**Action: Executive Director of Social Responsibility and Civic Engagement**

## 10 Policy Review

**Received:** The PGR Policy Update report.

**Noted:**

- a) the report detailed the recommended updates to postgraduate research policies and regulations. Key changes included 1) revisions to the PhD by Enterprise Regulations and associated policies, 2) the introduction of grade descriptors for the MSc by Research programme, and 3) amendments to the Submission Pending Policy to ensure compliance with UK Visas and Immigration guidance;
- b) following discussion at the last meeting of the Committee, the PhD by Enterprise Regulations had been updated to confirm that conversion to a standard PhD should not be included as an outcome of the annual review. The handbook would provide detail about the requirement for academic and entrepreneur examiners;
- c) the grade descriptors in the Examination of Master of Science (MSc) by Research Policy had been updated to clearly outline the criteria for assessment;
- d) the Submission Pending Policy had been updated to accommodate the recommended changes made by UKVI for students to retain sponsorship while travelling outside the UK.

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

- a) PhD by Enterprise Regulations
- b) Policy on Progress and Review
- c) Degree of Master of Science by Research (MSc) Regulations and Examination of Master of Science (MSc by Research) Degrees Policy
- d) Postgraduate Researcher (PGR) Submission Pending Policy

## 11 Information Items

**Noted:**

- a) the Vice-President for Research report to 11 February Senate;
- b) Research and Impact @ Manchester Newsletter - providing details of the University's research and impact activities and associated events;
- c) Social Responsibility Update: report to 11 February Senate.