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University Research Committee (URC)

Minutes

date: 28 June 2013
time: 09:30 am
location: G5.05 - High Wycombe Campus

13.01 Welcome / Apologies for absence

13.01.01 The Chair welcomed members to this first meeting of the University Research Committee.

13.01.02 There were eight apologies for absence recorded and accepted by the Chair.

13.02 Membership and Terms of Reference

13.02.01 These had been agreed by Senate. Membership will be kept tight in order for decisions to be made. Future meetings will receive reports from the University Ethics Panel, the Research Degrees Committee (RDC) and the REF Steering Group. The intention is also for this Committee to set up working groups as appropriate for any particular business as required.

13.03 Reports from Standing Committees – Research Excellence Framework (REF)

13.03.01 The intention is to submit in five units of assessment as follows:

- Art & Design: History, Practice and Theory
- Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism
- Business & Management Studies.
- Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy
- Social Work & Social Policy.

13.03.02 Art & Design: this unit is at the most advanced stage having undergone an external review of outputs with a thorough analysis received. The submission will focus on quality as opposed to quantity, and at the present time it is anticipated there will be nine or ten individuals submitted.

13.03.03 Sport: is at a less advanced stage. An external has been identified, but the person could not act immediately in this capacity. Another external has been identified who is available and willing to undertake this.

13.03.04 Business & Management: this unit consists of a small number of people, one of whom is leaving in August 2013. The maximum anticipated number of individuals who could be submitted is five, but this may decrease to three depending on the outcome of the external review.

- 13.03.05 Nursing: the unit has had external review resulting in the possible submission of five people.
- 13.03.06 Social Work and Social Policy: the outputs have gone out to external review and feedback is awaited. There may be a submission of seven or eight individuals, but it is more likely to be less.
- 13.03.07 Art and Design and Nursing are in the most advanced stages, while the outcome of the external reviews is awaited from other areas. Once decisions have been made on the Units for submission, the research environment and impact statements will need to be produced. The internal deadline for this is 18 October, ready for final submission on 29 November 2013.
- 13.03.08 Concern was expressed about the timelines for producing all the documentation required, and a number of actions were agreed to monitor this:
- Action: Identification of confirmed individuals to write the submissions for the DMM units: Chair of REF Steering Group to discuss with DMM Head of Research***
- Action: Action Plan with deadlines for production of documents to be drawn up against named individuals who may require dedicated time to achieve this to be agreed with Chair of REF Steering Group and Heads of Research in both Faculties: Senior Registrar (Research)***
- Action: An additional University Research Committee to be held with the REF as the single agenda item on Friday 18 October 2013: Secretary***
- 13.04 Matters for Discussion**
The University's Outrageous Ambition
- 13.04.01 The Chair of the RDC gave an overview explaining the thinking required around the nature of the University's Outrageous Ambition, to be discussed further at the Managers' Forum shortly. The Committee needs to think about the positioning of research, as research activity is currently viewed as marginal.
- 13.04.02 **Research Infrastructure – themes discussed:**
- need for a key infrastructure utilising the professoriate to lead and develop across the disciplines.
 - need to find a model to deliver the product and have the resources to up-skill and identify staff needs.
 - need to increase staff base: in terms of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), there are only twenty eight research active staff – there is no critical mass and no consolidation.
 - need a greater presence of research activities on the website.
 - need to re-think how research balances income against reputation of the university. Income generation is important but research needs further engagement which would influence other areas including teaching and learning.
 - Need for more research students -the critical mass issue is not helped by the fact we have no bursaries to offer, which affects the number of students coming to Bucks: need a big injection for a pool of studentships, where the areas can competitively bid for their studentships linked to designated areas of research and the University's larger research vision

- need to enter the vision for the REF 2020 now, possibly involving a finance/HR group, and work on the development of an institutional repository/open access
- need a research infrastructure incorporating centres for development, academic and professoriate led.
- need for the Professional Development Review process to be used by Managers to review staff activity, scholarship and research, and to plan workloads to enable research objectives to be achieved

13.04.03 **Research Culture and Environment**

The PRES 2013 Results overview was circulated: it reveals two areas of weakness - resources and research culture. Workshops and activities are organised but attendance and engagement is largely disappointing. Greater publicity and engagement is required.

Another area of concern was identified as supervision, where the score had decreased on previous surveys.

One site had no place for research students to work which is not providing a suitable research environment.

Activity Reports from the Applied Research Groups were circulated to members for perusal. Future reports would be requested to conform to a standard format.

13.04.04 The Chair summed up the discussion, particularly highlighting the points made about strategic focus. There are four strategic drivers:

1. REF for 2020;
2. Identity as a university and how we work with industry and who we are;
3. Learning and Teaching;
4. Research Degree Awarding Powers

A strategy needs to be developed around these key areas, focusing initially on what research is currently being undertaken, and what should be the priority for the forthcoming year.

Action: Chair

13.05 **Data Management**

This will be put on the agenda for discussion at a future meeting.

13.06 **Structure of Future Meetings - Standard Agenda Items**

- Reports from Standing Committees;
- Strategy;
- REF (for the extraordinary meeting on 18 October 2013);
- Overview of the structure and activity of the Research Groups
- Data Management;

13.07 **Date of Next Meeting**

Friday 18 October 2013 at 09.30 in Room G5.05: a 'special' meeting to discuss REF.

Prepared by: Minute Secretary

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