Research Culture Steering Group Minutes

20th May 2025, 12.30-2.30pm

Venue: 1 West North, 3.10

Attendees: Julie Barnett (Chair), Annali Bamber-Jones, Katy Butcher, Katherine Button, Kate Ehrig-Page, David Ellis, Tyrone Falls, Helen Featherstone, Emma Gibbard, Marianne Harkins, Rachel Hogg, Simon Inger, Lucy Millington, Despina Moschou, Hayley Shaw, Junjie Shen, Michael Stimmelmayr, Filipa Vance, Rachel Willis

Apologies: Poornika Ananth, Petra Cameron, Susie Douglas, Annabelle Foot, Jason Harper, Fritz Ka-Ho Ho, Omar Khan, Charles Larkin, Anneke Lubben, Tamsin May, Peter Phelps, Abi Phillips, Carl Sangan, Oli Schofield, Laura Wisby, Aiste Zubiniene

1. Welcome & Chair's business

1.1 Julie Barnett welcomed the group and introduced three new members - Katherine Button, Senior Lecturer in Psychology and UKRN local lead; Kate Ehrig-Page, Research Data Librarian, joining as the union representative for UCU; and Tyrone Falls, Teaching & Research Laboratory Technician in Engineering, joining as the union representative for Unite.

Julie also confirmed that existing member Rachel Willis has formally accepted the role of union representative for Unison.

1.2 Julie updated the group on the funding call for "Reimagining our spaces for a better research culture" which has recently closed and received 20 applications from across the University. Julie confirmed that the panel will meet later today (May 20th) to review applications. Lucy Millington, who is leading on this project, explained that this will be a two-stage process for successful applicants. At this first stage, applicants have applied for funding to develop a proposal to reimagine a space on campus. Successful applicants will then have until the end of August to develop their proposal, after which they will have the opportunity to apply for follow-on funding of up to £10,000 to deliver their proposals. This second stage is currently subject to Research Culture funding being awarded in the next academic year.

Following the panel review, successful applicants should be announced during the upcoming Research Culture Month.

1.3 Julie confirmed that Research Culture Month will take place again this year in June. The announcement to the wider University will be made soon and members of this group are encouraged to attend events where possible and share details with colleagues following the launch.

2. Actions of the previous meeting

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting (March 2025) were approved.

2.2 Previous actions relating to the updated Terms of Reference (ToR) for this group:

- RCSG members to update table at the end of the ToR document with their areas of expertise.
- Hayley Shaw to update the ToR to include a link to the Research Staff Working Group (RSWG).

    Updates: Areas of expertise have not yet been added by any members, however the deadline to do so has been extended until the next meeting to allow further time for members to consider whether this is appropriate or required. This will be reviewed again at the next meeting and a final decision will be made as to whether this is needed in the ToR.

    Hayley Shaw confirmed that a reference to the RSWG had been added to the ToR by way of Annali Bamber-Jones being formally noted as their representative. However Annali requested that a more formal recognition of the relationship between the RSWG and the RSCG be added to the main text of the ToR. This is required as the relationship between the RSCG and RSWG is specifically referenced in the University's HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award report and as such should be visibly noted in the RCSG ToR and linked to the award.

    ACTION: RCSG members to review and update the 'Primary Contributions - Research Culture Pillar' column of the Membership table in the ToR with their area of expertise where appropriate. This will be reviewed again at the next meeting.

    ACTION: Hayley Shaw to add further detail of the relationship between the RSCG and the RSWG to the ToR.

2.3 Previous action: Research Culture Action Plan tracker to made accessible to the wider institution once ready.

   Update: The tracker will be made available on the Research Culture SharePoint site next month (June 2025).

2.4 Previous actions relating to Responsible Research Assessment:

- Lucy Millington to circulate the updated draft of the institutional principles the week of April 7th. RCSG to review and give feedback ahead of this being sent to RKEC at the end of April.
- Hayley Shaw and Lucy Millington to discuss assessment approaches with Simon Hiscock during his visit.

   Updates: Lucy Millington to give an update on Responsible Research Assessment later in this meeting (Item 5).

2.5 Previous actions relating to mandatory training rates:

- Hayley Shaw to share training uptake data with Annali Bamber-Jones so that a baseline can be created for HREiR.
- Hayley Shaw to consider feedback on mandatory training, follow up with 'owners' of mandatory training not present, and draft a 1-page proposal to the group.

Updates: Baseline for HREiR still in progress. Hayley Shaw to give an update on this and the next steps for the mandatory training proposal in this meeting (Item 3).

3. Mandatory training proposal update

Following on from the discussion in the previous meeting, Hayley Shaw thanked the group for their feedback on mandatory training and how/if this group should look to address low completion rates. Hayley confirmed that the feedback from this discussion has fed into a draft paper that Hayley will now share with Abi Phillips and Filipa Vance. The meeting to share this paper will take place June 11th and the outcomes of the discussion will be shared with the Staff Experience Advisory Board as well as this group.

Hayley noted that while this group are highlighting this issue from a Research Culture perspective, this is also a wider University initiative and as such is not owned by this team. Hayley will be exploring the papers that have come before on this issue, and consulting with colleagues in wider teams and departments.

Helen Featherstone flagged the work of the Challenge CPD project that took place in the Public Engagement team. This was a 2-year project investigating the provision, uptake and impact of training and development opportunities for researchers in public engagement. Helen suggested that their may be some findings and evaluation that would be relevant to this proposal and could be shared.

Emma Gibbard raised the point that mandatory training is often hosted online and it is worth considering that this doesn't suit everyone's learning needs and could potentially create a barrier to training for some.

Kate Ehrig-Page asked if workload allocation models (WAMs) allow time for mandatory training. Filipa Vance confirmed that WAMs only apply to academic staff. Julie Barnett added that while there is no specific allowance for mandatory training, academic staff do have a number of general categories within WAMs that would allow for it.

Hayley Shaw raised the point that this also raises the consideration of hourly paid workers and how mandatory training time is this allowed for in their workload allocation.

Rachel Hogg suggested that we also need to bear in mind that mandatory training by its nature does not fit into the definition of CPD, as CPD does not include training or activities that are required as part of an individual's role. This means that mandatory training should not be being completed as part of the 10 CPD days allocated to staff.

Rachel Willis raised the point that while line managers are regularly sent updates on which training courses their team members need to complete, these reports do not include details of the manager's own outstanding training courses so these can be missed.

Hayley Shaw confirmed that there will be a further update as the paper develops and asked any members of this group who would like to join the team drafting the paper to let her know.

4. Update on HREinR Action Plan progress

Annali Bamber-Jones gave the group an update on progress made against the University's HR Excellence in Research (HREiR) Award action plan. Annali gave the context that receiving this award

shows that we are taking actions in line with the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, which itself has three core principles: Environment and Culture, Employment, and Professional and Career Development.

For the current reporting period (2023-26) Annali confirmed that as of May 2025, 30% of actions in the plan have been completed, with 30% in progress and 40% yet to start. This is in comparison to September 2024, at which point 19% of actions had been completed, 22% were in progress and 59% were yet to start.

Annali confirmed that the completed actions to date include increased careers support and leadership provision for researchers, the promotion and increased awareness of the Concordat and the 10 CPD days that researchers are entitled to, the 3-year appointment of an RSWG chair as well as the review of the Departmental Research Staff Lead role. Other completed actions include the newly established induction 1:1s with researchers, as well as the delivery of secondary trauma workshops to support the wellbeing of researchers.

The actions currently in progress include the development of research integrity workshops, building engagement for Postdoc Appreciation Week in September, the establishment of an online Fellowship Academy to host resources on the RIS SharePoint site, as well as developing support for PIs to hold career conversations and clarifying the promotion process for research staff.

Actions still to start include the monitoring of ECR fellowship and grant applications, communication to PIs regarding healthy working environments, career development and challenging conversations, as well wider communication around Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Further actions include the establishment of Research Staff Networks within departments to include annual welcome and networking events for researchers.

Annali noted further actions which are yet to start where members of the RCSG may specifically be able to support. These would include the increased representation of research staff on departmental committees, communication to PIs championing excellent people management, supporting Head of Department reviews of SDPRs and career conversations, and updating the Code of Practice for the Employment of Research Staff to include specific expectations for engagement with the 10 CPD days. This also links to the action to update annual appraisal forms to include questions about using these 10 days of professional development.

Hayley Shaw asked if there are particular committees where we are looking to increase research staff representation. There is an action in the Research Culture Action Plan to review whether research related governance structures are representative of the community and Rachel Hogg is currently gathering data on this. Rachel can share the findings as appropriate. Annali confirmed that the main focus is to increase representation on departmental research committees.

With regards to next steps on the HREiR Award action plan, Annali confirmed that the next actions are the launch of The Researcher Academy on June 2nd, as well as CEDARS 2025 from which the feedback will be used to identify new priorities. The University will be required to complete an annual report on action plan progress and will also be contributing to the external review of HR Excellence in Research with Vitae. Annali asked that members of this group promote both CEDARS and the launch of The Researcher Academy where possible.

Julie Barnett thanked Annali for this update and noted how much progress has been made in recent months. Julie noted how encouraging it is to see this progress and how positive this is for the University.

5. Responsible Research Assessment

Lucy Millington began by giving a quick recap of where the Responsible Research Assessment guidelines were when this group last met in March. At that point, the University had recently signed DORA and reviewed the principles of CoARA. While Bath had not agreed to sign CoARA, as an institution we were in agreement with its four core principles. As a result, the institutional guidelines for RRA were being updated with both DORA and the four core principles of CoARA being incorporated.

Lucy explained that these updates had been made to guidelines without wider consultation as explicit request from RKEC had been to incorporate the exact language of the DORA and CoARA commitments, i.e. not to amend or edit the wording in anyway.

Lucy shared the updated guidelines with the group and flagged the use of colour coding in the approved paper to indicate which elements were DORA, which were CoARA and which were additions made by the University.

Lucy flagged that Inclusivity has been incorporated as a new criteria. The Inclusivity statement highlights the diversity of research outputs as well as the diversity of impact and contributions within research. This links directly to the principles of DORA and CoARA.

Helen Featherstone suggested that, under the 'Set in the broader environment' statement, we could be more ambitious with the list of structural inequalities and biases that are listed as examples. Lucy confirmed that this would be possible. The updated guidelines will soon be taken to Senate but it should be possible to make this suggested edit and raise it as an addition to the paper at Senate.

Lucy introduced the framework that is being proposed as a guide to assess research outputs. The framework draws heavily on an assessment template developed by Elizabeth Gadd at Loughborough University who specialises in this area, and breaks quality down into three sections – contribution of the individual, quality of the content and impact/influence/reach/visibility. This is significant in highlighting that impact, influence, reach and visibility are only one facet of measuring quality and they should be considered separately from both contribution and content.

Despina Moschou asked if this framework would apply in cases of academic staff promotion. Lucy confirmed that it would apply to the assessment of all types of research outputs and in instances wherever this assessment happens (for example, promotions, recruitment, departmental prizes, etc).

Junjie Shen asked what is meant by secondary peer review within the framework? Lucy confirmed that an example of this could be a REF review statement or narrative statement.

Lucy flagged that assessment should always be proportionate to the context in which the assessment is taking place, and that options for assessment include assessing an individual output, assessing an individual's portfolio by way of their top 3-5 outputs, assessing an individual's description of their output (e.g. a narrative statement), assessing a formalised evidence-informed-output narrative, and/or assessing an individual's description of their contribution to the generation of new ideas/ tools/ methodologies/ knowledge. The latter would be done by way of completing the relevant section of a narrative CV. There is a standard narrative CV template available from UKRI which includes this section.

Lucy noted that these options allow for inclusion of specifics, as well as allowing for the bigger picture when it comes to assessing outputs. However, it was noted that research outputs are only one part of what should be assessed when it comes to assessing individuals.

Despina Moschou asked how this framework and guidance would be implemented in practice. Lucy confirmed that that there would be lots of communication and guidance to come once we reach the implementation stage. Lucy also noted that while these guidelines will be there to provide examples and guidance, departments and individuals will be free to develop their own practices for assessment, provided they uphold the principles.

Lucy introduced the guidance on the responsible use of metric in the assessment of research outputs, what they can reliably tell you and what the considerations when using them. This guidance was developed in collaboration with colleagues in the Library, however it was noted that the column of the table which indicates whether each metric should be 'Used Responsibly' or 'Used with caution' was added in after that consultation took place. All metrics that are not 'avoid' can be used, but the document is intended to prompt the reader to consider what the limitations are of that particular metric.

Junjie Shen reiterated that the Library were not involved in deciding these ratings and asked what the difference is between 'Use Responsibly' and 'Use with Caution'. Lucy reiterated that all metrics can be used, and agreed to reconsider in a further meeting with Junjie.

Emma Gibbard flagged the importance of using more than one source of data as evidence to support assessment and that individuals shouldn't be relying on one single metric. This guidance should be used to consider a variety of metrics and how to use them.

Lucy confirmed that the next steps are to take the updated principles to Senate in June, and to take the guidance on the assessment of research outputs to the Staff Experience Advisory Board in July. Lucy and the Research Culture team will also continue working with HR and the Academic Staff Committee to develop the guidance on the assessment of individuals. Between June and September, Lucy and the Research Culture team will be developing the communications and training to support implementation of these guidelines across the wider University. Lucy noted that any members of this group who would like to contribute to either the implementation plan, or to the development of guidance for assessing individuals would be very welcome to join this process.

David Ellis thanked Lucy for this update and stated his agreement with many of the guidelines and principles. However, he noted that many of the incentives in place in the School of Management are currently in opposition to much of what has been suggested in the updated guidelines. David noted that it was currently unclear who within individual departments would draft their departmental practices and who would ensure these were upheld.

Lucy acknowledged this point and noted that the use of metrics in this way will indicate a cultural shift and mechanisms to support Departments and Faculties in updating practices have been considered in the implementation plan.

CORRECTION: In response, Emma Gibbard also noted that The Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS, the owners of the Academic Journal Guide used by the School of Management) had recently signed up to DORA. However following the meeting, Emma noted that this information has either changed or was incorrect as ABS no longer appear to have signed up. Emma requested that this correction be noted in these minutes. It should however be noted that in their guiding principles for using the journal list, CABS do state the following: "As the name suggests, the AJG is a 'guide'. It should not be used as a 'one stop shop' to decide where to publish nor to evaluate individuals' research outputs. The AJG should be used responsibly, in line with the principles of best practice in the assessment of scholarly research as outlined by the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Leiden Manifesto".

6. **Update on Authorship and Acknowledgement guidelines**

Hayley Shaw informed the group that the updated guidelines for authorship and acknowledgement have now been approved and are ready to be launched. The updated guidelines were shared with this group ahead of this meeting. While it has taken longer than originally expected to reach this point, having these guidelines updated and approved was noted as a significant milestone.

One consideration that came out of the latest round of amendments to the guidelines, is whether we could edit the wording of the CRediT taxonomy to better reflect a wider range of disciplinary perspectives. While the University supports CRediT as currently the most transparent means of recognising contribution, there are some noted limitations in the types of output or contributions that it recognises. While it is felt that we cannot change any of the CRediT wording used in our own guidelines, it was proposed that we could add an additional column to the taxonomy in our guidelines to indicate other outputs or contributions that might feel more appropriate or aligned to a wider range of disciplines.

The group agreed that this felt like an appropriate way forward so Hayley will draft this additional column. This will then be sent to Sarah Hainsworth for approval.

ACTION: Hayley Shaw to draft a new column to add to the CRediT taxonomy which provides clarity on output types which might be considered for a wider range of disciplines.

7. **REF People, Culture and Environment Feedback**

Hayley Shaw updated the group on the next steps for the REF People, Culture and Environment pilot. As one of the pilot institutions, we have now been asked to provide feedback on the process. Hayley reminded the group that we took part in the pilot in part to start testing the institution's ability to respond to the new PCE component, but also to have a part in influencing the future direction of REF. Providing this feedback will be a key way for the University to do this.

With this in mind, Hayley put two questions to the group: Were the enablers provided in the template (Strategy, Responsibility, Connectivity, Inclusivity and Development) the right enablers to assess our culture? Is there any overlap and are they are in the right place within the framework? These questions were posed via a Menti poll and the majority of responses were a 4 or above, suggesting that this group do generally agree that the right enablers were included.

However there was a general consensus from the group that Open Research does not necessarily belong under the Connectivity enabler, but might be better placed under Responsibility.

Simon Inger also suggested that the Development enabler in its current form seems to be a bit of a 'catch-all' category for everything positive that does not immediately fit under one of the other enablers.

ACTION: Hayley Shaw and Simon Inger to review the Development enabler and consider where some of the indicators and evidence could be better placed.

The group discussed the pros and cons of the assessment framework (which is structured around the five enablers), and the list of assessment criteria that the panels will also be asked to consider (Vitality, Sustainability, and Rigour). There was agreement that the framework felt more helpful than the list of criteria, however it was also felt that there were differences between the two and it wasn't immediately clear how the two criteria would be brought together by assessors.

Despina Moschou raised the point that the star rating assessment framework is already well known and widely recognised across the sector which potentially introduces the possibility of bias.

Hayley also showed the group the dashboard that has been developed following the recent self-assessment completed by the Units of Assessment (UoAs). The data has been plotted to indicate areas of focus for the future, both for individual UoAs and the institution, as well as areas of focus for this steering group.

8. **Finance update**

Katy Butcher informed that group that as we approach the end of the financial year, we are anticipating a projected underspend of Research Culture funding of approximately £40,000. In light of this, there is an opportunity for members of this group to submit proposals for ways we can allocate the remaining funding before the end of July. While the funding is an opportunity to put new projects or initiatives into action, this is also an opportunity to submit details of any work that has already taken place but has furthered or contributed to our Research Culture aims. In these instances, we may be able to retrospectively allocate funding to cover this time and any associated costs.

Any proposals that are funded would need to be completed before July 31st 2025, with all funds spent and all project activity completed by this date.

Members of this group have been asked to submit any proposals by the end of the day on Tuesday, May 27th. This can be done via the form that was included on the meeting agenda. The form will also be circulated immediately after this meeting.

ACTION: RCSG members to submit any proposals for Research Culture funding by EOD on May 27th.

9. **AOB**

None.

Next meeting: 9th July 2025

Actions from this meeting:
- RCSG members to review and update the 'Primary Contributions - Research Culture Pillar' column of the Membership table in the ToR with their area of expertise where appropriate. This will be reviewed again at the next meeting.
- Hayley Shaw to add further detail of the relationship between the RSCG and the RSWG to the ToR.
- Hayley Shaw to draft a new column to add to the CRediT taxonomy which provides clarity on output types for a wider range of disciplines.
- Hayley Shaw and Simon Inger to review the Development enabler and consider where some of the indicators and evidence could be better placed.
- RCSG members to submit any proposals for Research Culture funding by EOD on May 27th.