Research Culture Steering Group Minutes

11th March 2025, 11.30am-13.30pm

Online

Attendees: Julie Barnett, Hayley Shaw, Anneke Lubben, Charles Larkin, Aiste Zubiniene, Jason Harper, Annali Bamber-Jones, Annabelle Foot, Rachel Willis, Michael Stimmelmayr, Helen Featherstone, Simon Inger, Despina Moschou, Marianne Harkins, David Ellis, Rachel Hogg, Lucy Millington, Tamsin May, Katy Butcher

Apologies: Pete Phelps, Petra Cameron, Poornika Ananth, Emma Gibbard, Fritz Ka-Ho-Ho, Filipa Vance, Abi Phillips, Laura Wisby, Susie Douglas, Oli Schofield, Carl Sangan, Omar Khan (on parental leave)

1. Welcome & Chair's business

1.1. Julie Barnett welcomed the group and introduced new member Rachel Hogg, Research Culture Project Officer. Rachel has joined the university on a 6-month secondment from the University of Bristol.

1.2. Julie confirmed that we are still awaiting news on renewed research culture funding from Research England. This is later than funding has been confirmed in previous years, however Research England budgets are still to be confirmed. Internal discussions are ongoing to seek to ensure that work in progress can continue.

Anneke Lubben let the group know that she had recently met with UK Research & Innovation (UKRI) and they did suggest their budgets are tighter than in previous years.

1.3. The university has announced its renewed commitment to open research practices by becoming a signatory of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA). This was announced as news item today on the University website.

2. Actions of previous meeting

2.1. Minutes of the previous meeting (January 2025) were approved.

2.2. Previous action: ToR document to be updated following RCSG discussion in previous meeting

Update: Hayley Shaw confirmed that the requested updates have been made. The main updates were extending the term of RCSG members, providing clarity on the appointment process as well as the succession criteria for certain roles. Hayley has asked that where possible, members of the group update the table at the end of the ToR with their area of expertise.

Annali Bamber-Jones requested that a link to the Research Staff Working Group be added to the ToR in order to formally record the relationship between the two groups. Hayley confirmed this will be added.

ACTIONS: Group members to add areas of expertise to the ToR document. Hayley Shaw to add link to RSWG.

2.3 Previous action: RCSG asked to review the comms plan and flow diagram for the Guidelines for Authorship and Acknowledgement

Update: The group reviewed the documents between meetings and no further comments were raised. Hayley Shaw confirmed that there are some nuances and stylistic changes that have been identified that need to be incorporated into the guidelines and flow chart. Once updated, these may need to go to RKEC again for approval, however Tamsin May will circulate the current designed version of the flow chart in the meantime.

Jason Harper asked a question regarding publications that do not recognise the CREDIT framework, or expect authors to be selected via the 4 criteria AND assigned a CREDIT role, and whether these have been accounted for in the guidance. Hayley confirmed that this point has fed into the decision to review the guidelines again and would appreciate Jason's expertise on this. It was agreed this would be discussed outside of the meeting.

ACTIONS: Tamsin May to circulate designed version of Authorship and Acknowledgement flow chart. Julie Barnett, Hayley Shaw and Tamsin May to pick up the issue of different uses of CREDIT with Jason Harper outside of this meeting.

3. **Action plan tracker overview**

Hayley Shaw showed the Research Culture Team's action plan tracker and gave the context for how it will be used and updated. The tracker lists all actions within the Research Culture Action Plan and indicates current progress. The intention is for the tracker to be refreshed monthly and made freely available so that interested parties can view progress and access available project templates.

Hayley flagged that while each project has a Research Culture Team lead, many will also have a lead from another team or department demonstrating that this is a university-wide action plan. Ownership of all projects is indicated on the tracker.

Hayley flagged the significant wins so far, including the completed action on returning career support (thanks to Aiste and team), the rights retention pilot now being embedded as an institutional approach (thanks to Jason and team), the progress made on responsible research assessment and the TechTeam Bath campaign nearing approval.

Scoping work is still required on some actions including talent banks and hourly workers.

Comments or reflections were invited from the group. The consensus was that is a positive approach, in particular in its transparency and accessibility and the assurances it provides around progression.

Helen Featherstone asked if the tracker is currently accessible to wider colleagues. Hayley confirmed not yet, but it will be made available on the Research Culture SharePoint site once it has been updated.

Julie Barnett asked how this will be promoted to the wider university, not only for awareness but also as an opportunity for modelling good practice. Hayley and Tamsin May to discuss this outside of the meeting.

ACTIONS: Tracker to made accessible to wider institution once ready. Hayley Shaw and Tamsin May to decide on the best way to promote it.

4. **New project templates review**

Hayley Shaw introduced this item, clarifying that the aim is to bring early drafts of project templates to this group for comment and collaboration. In many cases, the project templates will still be in progress and some projects will have a lead outside of the Research Culture team. Some projects brought to the group will focus on immediate plans and actions that can be delivered before July but are set in the context of much broader and longer delivery plans that may be managed by other teams.

Helen Featherstone asked if the plan is for the group to receive and review templates in every meeting, and what is required from the group in terms of feedback. Hayley confirmed that a couple of templates will be brought to meetings when available, and that it should be seen as an opportunity for the project leads to ask for support, clarify their thinking and benefit from the expertise of the group.

4.1 First project template review: Support for setbacks

Rachel Hogg introduced this project as an opportunity to develop support for academic staff when funding proposals are rejected. Feedback from the Research Culture Action Plan launch event indicated strong support for this as an action, and after scoping the existing work going on in the University (in particular in HSS), Rachel has formed a working group to develop a pilot workshop aimed at building resilience, offering support and embedding useful resources. The hope is also for there to be a coaching resource made available to provide wrap-around support.

Julie Barnett welcomed this as an important project and invited comments from the group.

Anneke Lubben flagged that there are more technical staff than ever writing proposals and it would be valuable for any future frameworks for these workshops to also include them. Anneke suggested that Catherine Lyall would be a good first point of contact for input from technical staff members on grant proposal development and associated setbacks.

Helen Featherstone seconded the idea that the workshop should consider all staff members and job families, for example research enablers, professional services staff, etc.

Helen also raised the question over whether there is an opportunity to share learnings from the Public Engagement team who have done a lot of work on welfare and wellbeing, and relationship centred practice. Rachel confirmed that the names of anyone interested in joining or contributing to the working group can be sent to her.

Annali Bamber-Jones asked if research staff will be included in the workshops and flagged the danger of these staff members sometimes being missed out of communications due to assumptions around email lists, etc (i.e. sometimes we can think we are communicating with research staff when we are not). Rachel confirmed that the workshops will be open to all and when communications start to go out, close attention will be paid to the mailing lists being used.

Julie Barnett closed the discussion on this project by reiterating its importance, particularly in its aims to support academics in bouncing back after a rejection and providing guidance on how to redeploy the work that has gone into an unsuccessful bid. Very often there is not an opportunity to reapply to the same funder with a revised proposal.

Helen Featherstone added that there could some work to do on normalising the relatively low success rate for bid proposals and reframing the value of the time and work that goes into them, even when they are unsuccessful.

4.2 Second project template review: Leadership opportunities for minoritised research staff

Rachel Hogg introduced this project as a piece of work that is mostly being led by other teams (primarily HR and the Culture and Inclusion team), programmes, and local initiatives. This project plan has been developed following initial discussions with those teams and represents some specific actions the Research Culture team can support on, while developing awareness and knowledge of the other initiatives going on.

The project is focusing on 4 areas:

- Mapping out leadership opportunities for minoritised staff
- Reviewing the suitability of continued participation in Aurora
- Contributing to mentoring programme recommendations for minoritised staff
- Piloting the new GW4 Women Technical Leaders Group

Anneke Lubben noted her support for the Aurora programme as a previous participant and also raised the point that a big piece of this work will be reviewing how learning is translated after leadership programmes are completed. How is the investment (both time and cost) translating to the future development of individuals and the institution.

Anneke also raised the point that there are opportunities for less formal approaches to leadership development that could be considered, such as shadowing or short-term observer status in high level committees. These provide useful insight opportunities and add value alongside more formal programmes.

Jason Harper asked how minoritised is being defined in the context of this project, for example would disability be considered, and how intersectionality will be considered as part of this.

Aiste Zubiniene agreed that this is an important consideration and outlined some of the work currently ongoing within the wider University which relates to intersectionality (a possible holistic EDI charter, the University's disability confident action plan which incorporates physical disability and neurodiversity, and intersectionality as a consideration for Athena Swan). Aiste will continue to update this group with any developments.

Helen Featherstone raised the point that any leadership development (including for staff who are not minoritised) should be inclusive and challenge existing leadership structures that have resulted in inequalities. Helen also raised the consideration of minoritised staff having to take on the work of driving this change and stated the importance of ensuring engagement beyond these communities, for example, engaging male allies.

Simon Inger seconded this and confirmed that the University's centralised leadership provision is being built around the idea of generous leadership, i.e., working to ensure others succeed.

5. Update on responsible research assessment - DORA & update on CoARA workshop

As per the announcement at the start of the meeting, the University has now signed DORA after establishing agreement to do so in November 2024. This is now being cascaded as a news item to the wider university.

Lucy Millington updated the group on the responsible research assessment workshop that took place at the end of February, bringing together colleagues from various departments as well as two external experts to bust myths and review the core principles of CoARA.

From a values perspective, there was general agreement with the principles during the workshop and a perceived overlap with a lot of what we are already doing as an institution. However, there is not currently agreement to formally sign due to the resources and implementation required.

Alongside this workshop, Lucy and Hayley Shaw submitted a draft of the proposed amended institutional principles to RKEC which included the DORA commitments. The initial feedback was to stick more closely to the principles outlined by DORA and not overstretch the commitments.

As a result, the next steps are as follows:

- Lucy and Hayley will write a second draft of the principles to take in the feedback from RKEC as well as include the CoARA commitments that are possible at this time.
- An implementation plan for the updated institutional principles will need to be formed, including a plan for raising awareness of the changes and embedding the new principles within the working practices of each faculty and department.
- This second draft of the principles will be reviewed by RKEC towards the end of April before being submitted to Senate at the end of May.

Lucy confirmed that the current timeline is to have an initial draft of the second version ready by the week of April 7th which will be sent out to colleagues for review and feedback. The input of this group would be welcomed to help shape the draft that will go to RKEC.

ACTION: Lucy to circulate the draft institutional principles the week of April 7th and RCSG to review and give feedback.

Lucy confirmed there is also work ongoing with the School of Management regarding journal lists and the significance placed on journal identity in relation to publications.

David Ellis asked who in the School of Management is involved in these discussions. Lucy confirmed that the initial conversation was with Andrew Brown and on his recommendation, the plan is now to hold a wider forum with a range of colleagues in management. David supported this recommendation and flagged the importance of hearing the views of people across different career stages.

Anneke Lubben asked how much the RRA work is being linked to or driven by Hidden REF activities given that they seem to align closely. Hayley confirmed that she has connected with someone at Hidden REF and they are coming into the University to present under the Research Enablers Network, but it was agreed there is a lot of learning to be shared in relation to responsible research assessment.

ACTION: Hayley Shaw and Lucy Millington to discuss assessment approaches with Simon Hettrick during his visit.

6. **Improving mandatory training rates**

Hayley Shaw began this discussion with a thank you to all colleagues in this group who have supported the ongoing REF PCE pilot. Submission will take place on the 19th of March. Hayley let the group know that she would like to bring the learnings of the pilot back to this group for discussion and input, and that this item is one such example.

Completion of training is an action we were required to report on, and Hayley shared some dashboards that have been compiled for the PCE pilot which show the current completion rates across the University. Rates were given for mandatory, recommended and refresher training courses.

The question for this group is are we happy with the mandatory training completion rates (currently c. 60%) and if not, would the group like to take an action forward to address this? The questions to consider are:

- Should mandatory training be made a stronger requirement?
- What are the risks/opportunities of doing this?
- What is the best approach – enforce, encourage or support?
- If we choose to enforce, what is the most appropriate way to do so?

Michael Stimmelmayr asked if there is a correlation between the type of training and the completion rates? For example, what are the completion rates for longer, more reading-intensive courses vs for example, the shorter courses sent by cybersecurity.

Jason Harper asked what we currently do to monitor training rates. Hayley confirmed that currently reminders are sent to line managers, which in turn does raise the consideration of whether current line management structures are fit to support following this up.

Simon Inger confirmed that completion of mandatory training is not generally included in SDPRs. Each training course/programme has a subject owner, but it is down to line managers to 'enforce' completion. Simon also noted that there has historically been a question about what the sanction should be if training is not completed without a definitive answer having ever been agreed on.

Helen Featherstone raised the question of what exactly it is we are trying to report on – is it training uptake/completion or the impact of mandatory training completion (i.e. behaviour change, good practice, etc.). Helen also raised the consideration that there is always likely to be some who push back on anything that is made mandatory.

Hayley Shaw recognised that there are two considerations that ideally we would like to measure – do people know what's expected of them (i.e. have they completed the training) and are they subsequently exhibiting these behaviours (i.e. has the training impacted behaviour).

Annali Bamber-Jones noted that one sanction that has historically worked is failing probation if mandatory training is not completed. Annali also raised the point that we need to be encouraging line managers to frame the training positively with their direct reports as line managers can have a significant impact on attitudes.

Annali let the group know that members of the RSWG have recently completed the mandatory Be the Change training, and doing so brought up some concerns about vulnerability for members of the group. This is an example of when people have completed the training but don't feel the mechanism/expectation being communicated is right for them.

Annali also flagged that monitoring mandatory training is also a requirement of HREiR and in our action plan, we have committed to create a baseline and monitor and report uptake against this. Hayley confirmed that a baseline can be drawn from the data available in these dashboards.

ACTION: Hayley Shaw to share training uptake data with Annali Bamber-Jones so that a baseline can be created for HREiR.

David Ellis asked if the dashboards will be made available across the University? He raised the issue of accountability and suggested that if the information is not freely available or visible, staff cannot be held accountable. This is also potentially a wider consideration for other policies within the institution.

Hayley confirmed that the dashboards have currently been developed specifically for the REF PCE pilot, however agreed with the principle of openness. Hayley noted that guidelines would need to be developed in terms of data privacy and access but agreed that the data should be made as accessible as possible to inform decision making about how best to enforce and encourage uptake.

Anneke Lubben raised some concern around what the data represents and how it is interpreted in order to meet institutional objectives. Anneke raised the point that there is a need to review what we can actually take from the rates of mandatory training uptake and what are the meaningful conclusions.

Jason Harper seconded this and raised the question of monitoring how effective the training is after it has been completed.

Julie Barnett raised the point of how we also ensure that our systems are logging when training is completed, as there have been anecdotal instances of staff members completing the training and receiving email confirmation but the system not showing them as having completed it.

ACTION: 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.

7. RC Futures and Evaluation

Hayley Shaw confirmed that the focus of this year's Research Culture conference at University of Warwick is Research Culture Futures. Hayley proposed exploring with this group if there is anything we would like to submit and invited colleagues to reach out if they are interested in meeting informally to discuss this further.

We also have a commitment to update the Research Culture Action Plan with KPIs for each action which may be something to workshop with this group over the coming months. It would be helpful to engage with the group on milestones and KPIs that come in as part of project plans and review these collectively. This was received positively by the group.

8. AOB

No AOB but an agenda item was raised for the next meeting by Annali Bamber-Jones. Annali to give an update on progress on the HREinR Action Plan as we will be halfway through the 3-year reporting period this summer. This was confirmed and will be added to the next agenda.

Next meeting: 20th May 2025

9. Actions from this meeting:

- RCSG members to update table at the end of the [ToR document](#) with their areas of expertise before the next meeting
- Hayley Shaw to update ToR to include a link to the RSWG
- Tamsin May to circulate the designed version of Authorship and Acknowledgement flow chart
- Julie Barnett, Hayley Shaw and Tamsin May to pick up the issue of different uses of CREDIT with Jason Harper outside of this meeting
- Research Culture Action Plan tracker to made accessible to the wider institution once ready. Hayley Shaw and Tamsin May to decide on the best way to promote this

- 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 Hettrick during his visit
- 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