

Research Culture Steering Group Minutes

21st January 2025, 11:00 – 13.00 pm

Venue: East Building 0.15

Attendees: Julie Barnett, Hayley Shaw, Lucy Millington, Tamsin May, Katy Butcher, Annali Bamber-Jones, Helen Featherstone, Petra Cameron, David Ellis, Rachel Willis, Despina Moschou, Jason, Anneke Lubben, Simon Inger, Abi Phillips, Omar Khan, Jason Harper, Annabelle Foot (joined for PCE discussion)

Apologies: Filipa Vance, Emma Gibbard, Aiste Zubiniene, Fritz Ka-Ho Ho, Carl Sangan, Poornika Ananth, Charles Larkin, Oli Schofield, Laura Wisby, Marianne Harkins, Fi Lang, Michael Stimmelmayer, Susie Douglas, Peter Phelps, Jane White, Katherine Button

1. Welcome

1.1. Julie Barnett welcomed the group and introduced new members Lucy Millington, Research Culture Project Officer and Katy Butcher, Research Culture & Development Officer.

1.2 Minutes of the previous meeting (November 2024) were approved.

2. Actions of previous meeting & chairs business

2.1 Previous action: RCSG was asked to review and approve the updated ToR document drafted.

Update: Group reviewed the document ahead of the meeting and the draft was discussed in this meeting (see Item 3).

2.2 Previous action: Hayley Shaw & Tamsin May were asked to share the action plan with RCSG.

Update: Action plan has now been shared with the group as well with the wider institution. A launch event is scheduled for January 23rd (see Item 2.4). Hayley thanked the group for their contributions to the consultation process and development of the plan.

2.3 Previous action: Hayley Shaw & Julie Barnett to review Open Call info in line with RCSG.

Update: The two main calls have now been launched with applications due to close on January 24th.

2.4 Update on action plan launch.

The launch event is scheduled for January 23rd, with 120 people signed up to attend and a waiting list of 50.

2.5 Funding expenditure update

Julie Barnett reminded the group that we received a £400,000 allocation from Research England which must be spent by July 2025. Hayley Shaw confirmed that so far 57% of that allocation has either been spent or committed, which puts us in a comfortable position in comparison to last year. Julie Barnett confirmed that there has been no news yet of research culture funding for next year, and that if that remains the case then continuation of work in progress would require university investment.

2.6 Open Call update

The closing date for open call applications is this Friday (January 24th). Hayley Shaw confirmed that we have received 3 applications so far. Flagged that the group may need to consider what the next steps are if no further applications are received and/or the funding is not all allocated. Hayley thanked the members of the group who have signed up to support with the open call review panels and Katy Butcher will be in touch with those members regarding next steps.

3. Discussion of updated ToR document

Hayley Shaw confirmed that the main changes to the ToR were introducing a term of service for group members and defining ex-officio roles. Comments were then invited from the wider group.

David Ellis noted that the School of Management have recently invited applications for a new role entitled Director of Academic Integrity & Ethics. The appointee is still to be confirmed however, David asked if we should we consider inviting them to the group in future. Julie Barnett requested more information on these new roles.

Petra Cameron flagged the process of appointing successors in line with the Athena SWAN criteria and proposed that open calls should be required for appointing successors to non ex-officio roles. The group agreed that selection should be based on criteria and that successors should not just be nominated.

Rachel Willis suggested that union roles are not required to be ex-officio, although they should have the caveat as indicated by the asterisk in the document (“if the individual achieved a promotion(s) before the 2–4-year term we may ask the individual to step down, to ensure a strong earlier career voice is maintained.”). Anneke Lubben confirmed this would also be the case for her role.

Rachel Willis also asked if there is a reason for group tenure being 2 years rather than the standard 3? Julie Barnett asked if we could standardise this to bring in line with other groups within the university. Annali Bamber-Jones confirmed that a 2-year term is the case in the Research Staff Working Group. The group agreed that the term should be adjusted.

Tamsin May asked to clarify the responsibilities of the group in terms of comms activities – flagged that as well as wider strategic comms plans, members are also asked to give input to the comms plans for individual projects and commit to internal and external advocacy by way of socialising activities of the group. The group agreed to amend the wording of this section.

In summary, the group agreed to adjust the term for members to 3 years instead of 2, to update the comms responsibilities of members & to bring in open calls for appointing successors to non ex-officio roles. ToR to be updated in time for next meeting

4. Review of Draft Institutional Statement for the People, Culture and Environment Pilot

Hayley Shaw gave the background to this pilot. As People, Culture and Environment will be assessed as part of the next REF, we are taking part in order to understand what will be required as well as to roadtest the enablers, indicators of excellence and evidence.

Hayley confirmed that the School of Management, Computer Science and Biological Sciences are the units of assessment taking part in the pilot. We also need to draft an institutional statement which Hayley has drafted and requested feedback from the group on.

Hayley also confirmed that we can choose not to provide data against certain indicators where we do not think it is helpful or applicable. Providing this feedback is a valuable part of the exercise. There will be a word limit for the statement.

Despina Moschou asked if will be institution wide or discipline specific? Hayley Shaw confirmed statements from both will be required and the template will be the same.

Rachel Willis asked if there is there any guidance on how the REF will interpret 'good' research culture. Julie Barnett said that her understanding is that 4 stars would only be awarded to institutions that can show they have influenced another institution. Hayley Shaw consulted the guidance document which confirmed this understanding.

Petra Cameron asked how this will compare to the previous environment statement from past REFs. Julie Barnett confirmed that REF have requested that the environment section be set aside for now as this pilot is intended to test the new elements which are people and culture.

Despina Moschou asked if it will be an overall rating given for the three elements, rather than individual ratings for each enabler. Hayley Shaw confirmed this is still TBC, as is the relationship between the institutional and UOA statements.

Jason Harper asked about timescale of the pilot and what the priorities are? Julie Barnett confirmed that the original submission deadline in February has been pushed back to mid-March, and that it has been made very clear by REF that is not the final version so we have scope to use our submission to inform the final version of the template and provide feedback. It is also an opportunity for institutional learning as this pilot will show us the areas we do not currently have data on.

Petra Cameron asked who will be evaluating the statements, as this could be critical to how we write them. Julie Barnett & Hayley Shaw confirmed that the evaluators will hold a variety of different job roles and that the evaluators working on the pilot will not necessarily evaluate for the next REF in 2029.

Anneke Lubben confirmed there has been a push for more technical staff to be involved as they have previously been underrepresented as evaluators in past REFs.

Lucy Millington asked if any reasoning or commentary we provide on the areas we do not think are relevant/choose not to provide evidence for would be included in the word count. This is still TBC.

Rachel Willis also flagged the interplay between the assessment of research culture and research quality.

- **8 mins reading time given, followed by further discussion.**

The group widely agreed that this was a good first draft.

Despina Moschou noted the similarities of structure with the Athena SWAN criteria. Felt the narrative is there but that it could be streamlined to clearly show how we have met the 4-star criteria. Felt that more specific examples/evidence should be included, in particular around financial investment.

David Ellis suggested we focus more on the university's history and felt more evidence is required to quantify the strength of Bath's wider influence. Also felt that the statement needs more focus on Bath's international achievements and reach.

Anneke Lubben suggested that more emphasis be placed on specific timelines to create a narrative as this would show what we have already achieved but also where we aspire to be.

Simon Inger focused on the development section of the draft and suggested that there was a middle ground missing between the big ambitions and the smaller actions. Felt that the less quantifiable measures in the middle are missing but should be included.

Petra Cameron suggested that we need to show three things very clearly – what we currently have in place, what progress we have made, and what we still need to focus and improve on.

Annali Bamber-Jones flagged that we need to be conscious of an overreliance on CEDARS as the main source of data for this statement. Suggested that a larger discussion may be required around whether it is the best source, as based on the most recent response rates there is a sizeable proportion of staff that will not be represented in the data. Annali also suggested that we need to make more of our focus on leadership development for researchers as well as our compliance with the concordat.

David Ellis suggested the need to show that we are both reactive to the changes in the RC landscape but also influential in those changes through evolving our systems, practices and using data to inform our decisions.

Despina Moschou suggested that we pull out the good historical data on career development and consider including this. Also suggested that the institutional and unit of assessment statements should be complementary rather than repeat one another and suggested that preparatory work should start on this now to ensure we are ready on time.

Annali Bamber-Jones suggested that we should encourage contributions to 2025 CEDARS to increase the amount of data we have available and asked if there any institutional survey questions that could be included to create baseline data in the research culture space? Confirmed that we will need to submit our institutional questions for 2025 CEDARS soon (exact date TBC but could be as early as the end of February)

Anneke Lubben suggested there should also be an institutional drive to encourage and increase participation if we know the data will be key to the new sections of the REF.

Abi Phillips confirmed that a paper is being put forward to review the various institutional surveys currently in use. This is in response to a drop in participation of the staff wellbeing survey. Julie Barnett suggested that it may be useful for this group to be included in the review.

Anneke Lubben proposed flagging the REF pilot to the data and insights team so that they are aware of the areas where we will require data, both now and tracked over time. Sharing with this team could also help us to avoid replicating work, for example could the data that is pulled annually for Athena Swan also be used to inform this? Could we share dashboards? Petra Cameron raised the point of anonymity for smaller departments. Abi Phillips confirmed that data would not be available for departments with less than 10 staff members to ensure anonymity.

Julie Barnett asked for any further comments on the draft to be emailed or added as a comment on the draft document.

Hayley Shaw confirmed the next steps are to gather as much data as possible in the coming weeks and finalise the draft by end of this month (January) so that the Units of Assessment can access it from February onwards, ready for final submission in March. The REF steering group will meet in mid-February to review any comments or questions that have arisen.

5. Communications plan for new Guidelines for Authorship and Acknowledgement

Tamsin May confirmed that the new guidelines are nearly ready to launch – she is currently finalising the comms plan with the aim to launch in mid-February. Tamsin asked the group to review the plan and suggest any feedback, in particular around the best ways to disseminate the information. The current feeling is that the biggest challenge will be embedding the new guidelines into day-to-day practice following the launch so suggestions welcome on how best to get the message out.

Tamsin has prepared a distilled version of the key points as a decision tree flow diagram which can be used in departmental meetings, etc to communicate the main points. This will be circulated after the meeting and the group have been asked for feedback.

Jason Harper proposed that as there have been various updates and changes to publication guidelines in recent months, could these be grouped somewhere together so members of staff have access to them all in one place.

Jason also asked what we were looking to measure in order to monitor engagement with the new authorship guidelines, making the point that not all journals and author workflows use the CredIT framework, and the framework itself is very granular. Are we trying to determine the granular (for example, how many staff have undertaken a specific CredIT authorship role), or looking at the top-level trends (e.e. are more technical staff being recognised for their contribution to research outputs)? Hayley to confirm.

Jason also made the point that another way to monitor the contributions of technical staff to the research process is by tracking their deposit / publication of open research outputs in their own name.

Anneke Lubben gave an overview of a current project she is working on looking into the numbers of technical staff who have been listed as co-authors or acknowledged in published articles. The number was small, but the plan is to repeat this survey again this year and again in two years time (at which point the result will take in the impact of these updated guidelines). There are plans to introduce more training for technical staff on the university booking tools and linking this to Pure.

Despina Moschou asked what we are expecting/hoping to see in 2-3 years' time as a result of these updated guidelines? Hayley Shaw suggested more diversity in the roles being recognised by authorship or acknowledgement, as well as an increase in CEDARS survey participants reporting feeling recognised for their contributions. Julie Barnett also suggested a reduction in cases of author misconduct.

Annali Bamber-Jones suggested that we communicate these changes to research staff directly via their Teams channel and newsletter. Annali also asked for the contributions of the Research Staff Working Group to the development of these updated guidelines be recognised and included in these minutes.

Despina Moschou suggested that we really need to engage with lead authors who may have been authoring papers in a certain way for many years and consider how to embed this new best practice. Stated that the messaging needs to be short and clear and proposed that discussions should be held at departmental level.

Petra Cameron suggested that there would not be resistance but lead authors may need reassurance that they are not being asked to recognise someone as an author who they do not feel contributed at that level, and they will also need clarity around the levels of contribution required for co-authorship. Hayley Shaw highlighted how this is worded in the guidelines.

Anneke Lubben raised the point that we also need to encourage and empower contributors to feel confident requesting the appropriate acknowledgement or authorship credit if they meet the criteria laid out in the guidelines.

6. AOB

None.

Next meeting: 11th March 2025

Actions from this meeting:

- ToR document to be updated following group discussion
- Group to feedback to Tamsin on the comms plan for the Guidelines for Authorship and Acknowledgement
- Tamsin to circulate the key points of the guidelines for feedback
- Hayley to provide guidance on Jason's question regarding how we will monitor engagement with the new authorship guidelines (Item 5)