UNIVERSITY RESEARCH & INNOVATION COMMITTEE
15 September 2026

MINUTES

Present:
Estelle Blanks (EB), Eve Cosgrave (EC), Justin Durham (JD), Johanna Gascoigne-Owens (JG-O), Matthew Grenby (MOG - Chair), David Hill (DH), Kirsty Lingstadt (KL), Hannah Lynch (HL), Mallikarjuna Rao Pichika (MRP), Jemima Repo (JR), Julia Robinson (JR), Candy Rowe (CR), Lorna Taylor (LT) and Alex Hughes (AH)

Apologies:
Rich Dawson (RD), Pauline Howie (PH), Andy Husband (AH), Cheng Siong Chin (CSC) and Alison Williams (AW).

In attendance:
Sarah Carey (SC-minutes), Libby Gibson (LG), Rebecca Taylor (RT – item 4), John Williams (JW – item 5)

1. Notes and Actions
Received:
a. Doc Ai: Draft Minutes of URIC 23 June 2026, and
b. Doc Aii, Action Log, circulated with the agenda.
Noted:
c. Welcome Kirsty Lingstadt to her first URIC as Director of Academic Services and University Librarian.
d. A student representative will be appointed to join URIC.
e. Minutes of URIC 23 June 2026 accepted as a correct record.

2. PVC Update
Discussed:
a. REF: Code of Practice has been accepted as submitted by Research England, this is a live document. Submission of small units (<20 FTE: Physics, Archaeology, Classics and Education) will be considered at UEB this afternoon. Impact funding (approx. £70,000 per Faculty per year from QR top slice) will be communicated shortly.
b. Systems: Symplectic, (now NU Profiles) webpages will go live on 9 November. The improved system includes FigShare as the data repository, Elements as the research management system and Discovery to provide a full search facility for expertise. Communications will be targeted to PGRs and the Academic community in the coming weeks. Worktribe will replace NUProjects. Work is underway to have all four modules (pre-award, contract management, post award and ethics) in place by the end of 2027 and the first by the end of 2026. Workshops with stakeholders to inform system configuration are taking place.
c. UKRI: Changes announced by Ian Chapman are being implemented, including a new call, ~£20m for collaboration between Institutions. A public statement has been issued on accurately costing projects to improve research financial sustainability and a response to grant assessment in the age of AI has been shared outlining demand management processes. to address concerns arising from application rates. Increased devolution of funding and larger, longer-term investments are being discussed, increasingly from consortia, with programme directors empowered to put out calls within their areas.

d. Local Innovation Partnerships Fund (LIPF): results are currently under embargo. Lessons learnt on working with NEMSA and the future direction of funding devolution are under consideration. Discussed:
    - opportunities to revisit previous strong applications which hadn't achieved funding
    - cross Faculty connections with Newcastle Innovations colleagues
    - responsible research, ethics and EDI
    - external partners for collaboration where multiple HEIs are involved

Agreed:

e. JGO share link to UKRI statement.
f. MOG communicate UEB decision on REF submission of small units.
g. MOG confirm allocation of additional impact funding to Faculties.

3. Research Strategy Updates

Received:

a. Doc B: Annual Report statement, circulated with the agenda

Discussed:

b. NUCoRE renewals process simplifications in place. The six renewing this year are Climate, Rare Disease, Biomedical Engineering, Children & Youth, Cyber Security & Resilience and Mobility & Transport
c. Through the renewal process engagement with UKRI 'bucket 2' funding opportunities should be explicit.
d. Research Strategy is being refreshed. Trajectory is RSIG, URIC, FRICs, UEB, Senate and Council.
e. Our submission has been made to the Integrated Annual report, which will be shared when finalised.
f. New Institutional KPIs reviewed, including research income by FTE (amber) and field weighted citations (green, slight recent decline but remains above peer median).

4. Workshop: Metrics, Measures and KPIs

Received:

a. Doc C: URIC Metrics and Measures – background information

Discussed:

a. Workshop focused on identifying additional leading indicators that could help URIC understand progress towards strategic objectives before changes became visible in lagging indicators.
b. Principles discussed:
    - Measures should align with NGN, new University KPIs and the refreshed Research Strategy.
    - Measure what matters, rather than simply what is easiest to quantify.
    - Existing datasets and reporting requirements should be used wherever possible to avoid duplication and unnecessary workload.
    - Measures should consider unintended consequences and the behaviours they may encourage.
    - Appropriate level of reporting should be determined for each measure; eg Faculty/School. Disaggregation by career stage, contract type and EDI characteristics may provide useful insights.
    - Usefulness of data and ease of obtaining it to be considered.
    - Measures should support expert judgement, consistent with the University's commitment to the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA).
    - The purpose of the metrics is to support URIC's oversight of research strategy, not to create performance-management targets.
    - Timeframes for development and potential resource commitment to be considered.
c. Areas identified for further development:

- Financial sustainability and cost recovery: improving the visibility of cost recovery, particularly for commercial funding and overheads, and understanding the extent to which projects are fully and accurately costed.
- Research collaboration and partnerships: to understand both the volume and depth of collaboration, including the number of partnership-based applications and awards, the strength and maturity of relationships, and collaboration with industry, public-sector, cultural and international partners. Not currently captured by research systems.
- Strategic funding alignment: monitoring applications and awards aligned with UKRI's programme-based funding priorities, including 'bucket 2' funding, Industrial Strategy and European collaborative funding programmes.
- NUCoRE effectiveness and maturity: developing a maturity framework based approach for NUCoREs, recognising that their objectives and indicators of success may vary depending on their stage of development. Early-stages may focus on networking and relationship-building, while more established would prioritise research activity, external funding and financial sustainability.
- Environmental sustainability and impact need to build on existing evidence-gathering processes, including REF impact case studies, rather than establish parallel reporting unnecessarily.

Agreed:

d. HL to collate workshop outputs into a proposed set of strategy measures, identifying the intended purpose and strategic objective for each and incorporating FSRWG outputs.

5. UKRI Open Access Block Grant Expenditure 2025/26 and update on OA Policy Changes 2026-2030

Received:

a. Doc D: Review of UKRI Open Access block grant expenditure

Discussed:

b. Open access compliance had reached 84%, up from 82% in the previous year. Data access statement compliance had reached 87%, up from 82%
c. Newcastle University had used approximately £470,000 of its 2025–26 UKRI block grant to support transformative agreements with major publishers. UKRI was signalling that block grant funding would no longer be available, coinciding with the anticipated end of existing agreements in December 2028. This could create a funding shortfall of approximately £500,000 which colleagues are developing options for addressing.
d. Discussed the need to consider longer-term scholarly publishing arrangements and the University's priorities for supporting open access and research materials.

6. UKRI Application and Award Data

Received:

a. Doc D: UKRI Application and Award Data

Discussed:

b. UKRI data covering applications and awards over the previous ten years to be reviewed subject to considerable caveats, particularly for the earlier years.
c. Reported sector-wide trends include increasing application volumes and declining success rates.
d. Discussed whether further analysis would be useful and whether additional actions should be taken to improve application quality and manage application volumes. Understanding application quality was important, but further analysis needed to be balanced against caveats, RFDM team capacity and other competing priorities. Work is already underway to review Newcastle's data.
e. Discussed culture change, internal demand management and potential support from other teams/FSRWG.

7. Updates and 'white space'

Discussed:

a. Impact Acceleration Account applications submitted for AHRC, EPSRC, STFC & MRC. Will report back to URIC when outcomes known.

b. how URIC could maintain a holistic overview of the NGN, FSRWG and other relevant workstreams, ensuring that members are appropriately informed of developments, able to respond effectively and continue to deliver core business priorities. Considered whether a standing agenda item would provide a consistent mechanism for reviewing progress, sharing updates and assessing the impact of these workstreams on URIC's business.

Agreed:

c: NGN workstream reporting to be added to October URIC agenda

8. Future meetings (10-12 in KGL5.13 unless advised otherwise)

20 October
8 December
19 January 2027
2 March
13 April
25 May
22 June