

SENATE

Title of paper: University Research and Innovation Committee Minutes

Main purpose of the paper: For information

Presenter(s): Professor Matthew Grenby

Date of paper: 12 November 2025

Purpose of the paper

To report on the 16 September meeting of URIC

Relation to strategy and values

Research for discovery and impact strategy

Recommendations:

Senate are asked to note the contents of the minutes.

Consultation to date (including any previous committee consideration and its outcome):

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH & INNOVATION COMMITTEE
16 September 2025

MINUTES

Present:

Estelle Blanks (EB) – Director of Business Development & Enterprise
Tim Cheek (TC) – Dean of Postgraduate Research, FMS
Eve Cosgrave (EC) – Head of Faculty Research, FMS
Rich Dawson (RD) – Dean of Research and Innovation, SAgE
Johanna Gascoigne-Owens (JG-O) – Head of Research Funding Development
Matthew Grenby (MOG) – Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation (Chair)
David Hill (DH) – Director of Research Strategy & Development
Pauline Howie (PH) – Director of Service Delivery, NUIT
Alex Hughes (AH) – Dean of Research & Innovation, HaSS
Phil Lord (PL) – Dean of Postgraduate Research, SAgE
Jemima Repo (JR) - Senate Representative
Candy Rowe (CR) – Dean of Culture and Inclusion
Lorna Taylor (LT) - Head of Faculty Research, HaSS
Beverley Wilkinson (BW) – Deputy Head of Faculty Research, SAgE
Alison Williams (AW) - Dean of PGR Studies , HaSS
John Williams (JW) – Head of Collections, Research and Digital Futures

Apologies:

Justin Durham (JD)- Dean of Research & Innovation, FMS
Louise Jones (LJ) - Research Integrity & Governance Manager
Kate McGill (KM) - Head of Faculty Research, SAgE (Beverley Wilkinson deputising)
Jill Taylor-Roe (JTR) – Director of Academic Services & University Librarian (John Williams deputising)

In attendance:

Sarah Carey (SC) - Executive Assistant (Minutes)
Nicola Simcock (NS) - Research Culture Manager (item 3ii)
Neil Bonnington (NB) - Director of Financial Performance (item 4)

1. Welcome and Chair's Update

Noted:

- a. Congratulations to Rich Dawson and Justin Durham who have been appointed to the roles of Dean of Research and Innovation for SAgE and FMS respectively.
- b. A selection committee is currently shortlisting and interviewing for the Research Strategy Manager role.
- c. MOG gave an update on changes to REF including the announcement of a 3 month delay.
- d. HEIF allocation is being reformed and will be subject to increased scrutiny, driven by how well we do in supporting Innovation, Commercialisation and Industrialisation.
- e. Similarly QR, which comes under SIRC (Strategic Institutional Research Funding), will be scrutinised through the Research England Transparency Programme, currently being piloted. It is thought that hypothecated QR funds for, eg Research Culture, will not be subject to further scrutiny.
- f. JG-O updated members on complexities arising from UKRI wording changes to institutional policy in relation to not requiring match funding for proposals, either in money or in-kind, unless specified otherwise. This is seen as a positive step but will require culture change among UKRI reviewers and applicants.

- g. As previously agreed at URIC Newcastle University has signed up to the Concordat for Environmental Sustainability in Research and Innovation. The implications are being taken forward by a working group.
- h. DH advised that UKRI plan to carry out an audit at Newcastle. DH will be meeting with finance colleagues in the coming weeks to prepare and it is expected that the approach will be more in-depth than previous audits. It will become clear in due course to what extent timesheet compliance will be an area of focus but our solution appears to have been as effective as those at other institutions.
- i. The RFDM team are working to reduced capacity having 2 fewer members than this time last year. A paper on RFDM priorities will be brought to URIC but colleagues will need to liaise closely with the team to ensure careful and appropriate prioritisation.
- j. AH flagged issues with Research Infrastructure, specifically a need for support with non-standard and complex calls in HaSS and requested the Transformation Programme take into account trans and interdisciplinary calls. The Innovation and Business team will work more closely with RFDM as the former's new structure beds in.

2. Notes and Actions

Received:

- a. Doc Ai: Draft Minutes of URIC 24 June 2025, and
- b. Doc Aii, Actions Log, circulated with the agenda.

Noted:

- c. Minutes of URIC 24 June 2025 accepted as a correct record.
- d. 'White space' 20 minutes now included on the agenda as standard for joined up strategic thinking.

Discussed:

- e. NUMed and NUIS Directors Mallikarjuna Rao Pichika and Cheng Siong Chin to be invited to join URIC as members on the understanding they will receive papers and are not necessarily expected to join every meeting.

3. Updated Terms of Reference

Received:

- a. Doc B: URIC Terms of Reference, updated September 2025

Noted:

- b. The Dean of Business and Innovation role is currently vacant.
- c. NUSU have not appointed a PG sabbatical officer this year; the new Education Officer Gina Tindale will be invited to join URIC instead.
- d. PH attends on behalf of Andy Grossett, Director of NUIT.
- e. Minutes from URIC are now included in Senate papers for discussion there.

Agreed:

- f. 'The Chief Information Officer, NUIT' to be amended to Director of NUIT.
- g. MOG to review link between URIC/UEC/FEBs and Transformation Programme.

4. Research Strategy and Culture Updates

Received:

- a. Doc Ci: Proposed NU Centre of Research Excellence in Food Systems, and
- b. Doc Cii: QR Enhancing Research Culture (ERC) Budget, and
- c. Doc Ciii, QR ERC Project Fund ideas circulated with the agenda.

Noted:

- d. The Food NUCoRE proposal has been approved by RSIG with recommendations for development needs. It will be refined and presented to FRICs in November, with an onward trajectory of FEBs, UEBs and Senate. If approved it will be well placed to respond to calls and will join up NU Farms,

industry connections and scattered expertise in this area. The overlap with Healthier Lives is not thought to be problematic and should be acknowledged in the document.

- e. There will be a NU Connections article acknowledging the impact of research culture work published next week. Given changes in the team (Research Strategy Manager role is vacant, Dean of Research Culture has become Dean of Culture and Inclusion) members are taking Autumn to review engagement and re-prioritise. The Research Space has now launched and will become business as usual. The Maturity Framework will be a new priority project. RE have confirmed a Research Culture budget of £700,000 (£50,000 more than last year) which NC outlined. £60,000 is available for a project fund and members were asked what it should be spent on. Members discussed the importance of bringing people together with a purpose, potentially with external facilitation and resulting in a resource.

Agreed:

- f. URIC agreed to join the Research England Transparency Programme pilot process for SIRF.
- g. JGO to circulate UKRI amended policy wording on match funding to URIC.
- h. Research Culture Project Fund to proceed as a community networking and engagement fund.

5. Finance Q4

Noted:

- a. Research applications in the 12 month rolling period to end July 2025 are largely flat by volume in comparison to the previous year but there is a 6% increase in value.
- b. Research awards, have increased in volume by 13% but decreased in value. The data is impacted by the comparison year 23-24 having a number of significant multi year awards.
- c. Research income on a full year fiscal basis shows a strong performance at £133,811K a 6% increase on the previous year and approx £1,700K up on the estimate.
- d. Our budget for the current year is £135,400K with projected increase year on year. The decline in awards is a major cause for concern, although it was noted that application value is increasing steadily.

Discussed

- e. opportunities to reboot European funding
- f. the correlation between volume of applications and value, balanced with quality of applications
- g. cost recovery, income sources, depreciation, contraction of staff numbers.

6. HESA Research Income data: Newcastle's position

Received:

- a. Doc D, 2023-24 HESA Research Income per FTE

Noted:

- b. The sector average research income per FTE is £11.2K, Newcastle's has risen from 87.5K to 90.6K. We remain however significantly below the median of the Russell Group average at £121.9K.
- c. Newcastle is the top Institution for charitable income per FTE. Nick Collins and NB have been working on research cost recovery, TRAC (Transparent Approach to Costing) and funding policy for discussion at Finance Committee.

Agreed:

- d. TRAC and Research finance to be added to a future URIC agenda, NB and Nick Collins to be invited.

7. UKRI Expenditure Report

Received:

- a. Doc E: Review of UKRI Open Access Grant Expenditure 2024-25, circulated with the agenda.

Noted:

- b. JW provided an overview of the report.

8. White space

Discussed:

- a. NUAcT start up costs and PhD studentships. Balancing support of new colleagues with financial consequences in Units. Local solutions and case by case judgements. Equality and inclusivity.
- b. Response to the loss of AHRC Northern Bridge Consortium for Arts and Humanities PGR cohorts. AW and MOG to pick up at PGR subcommittee.

9. Royal Society Audit Report

Received:

- a. Doc F: The Royal Society Institutional Audit of Newcastle University, for information, circulated with the agenda.

10. FMS Information Governance for Health Research updated ToRs

Received:

- a. Doc G: Information Governance for Health Research Committee Terms of Reference, for information, circulated with the agenda.