



## Research Committee

### Minutes

A meeting of the Research Committee was held on Tuesday 23 September 2025  
at 11:00m- 13:00pm via MS Teams

**Professor Sarah Coupland**  
Registrar

- Present:** Professor Keith Hunter, Chair  
Professor Roberto La Ragione, Veterinary Pathology SAC representative  
Dr Owen Driskell, Lead of Laboratory Medicine, NIHR Clinical Research Network  
Professor Dimitris Grammatopoulos, Clinical Biochemistry SAC representative  
Dr Newton Wong, Cellular Pathology SAC representative  
Professor Peter Johnston, RCPATH Vice President for Workforce and Corporate Engagement  
Professor Roland Fleck, Healthcare Science Committee representative  
Dr Wiaam Al-Hasani, Trainee representative
- In attendance:** Shelaine Kissoon, Governance and Committee Services Officer (*minutes*)  
Penny Fletcher, RCPATH Corporate and Public Engagement Manager (*item 4.1*)  
Ms Joanne Brinklow, RCPATH Director of Learning and International
- Absent** Dr Marnix Jansen, Chair of Pathological Society Research Subcommittee

- Rea.21/25**
- 1. Welcome, declarations of conflict of interests, and apologies for absence**
    - 1.1 The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting. Introductions were made, and it was noted that this was the first meeting for the following new Committee members:
      - Professor Roland Fleck, Healthcare Science Committee representative
      - Professor Peter Johnston, RCPATH Vice President for Workforce and Corporate Engagement
    - 1.2 No apologies were received. Absences have been noted and recorded above.
    - 1.3 There were no declarations of conflict of interests.
- Rea.22/25**
- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting**
    - 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2025 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.
    - 2.2 There were no matters arising not already covered on the agenda.
    - 2.3 The action log was reviewed, and the following updates were noted:



**Rea.3/23: Engagement with those who gained Fellowship by Published Works**  
Discussion covered under agenda item 5.2 below.

**Rea.26/24: Webinar on 'how to do research'**

The Chair advised that he has a meeting scheduled with Dr Driskell to discuss and develop a draft plan for the research webinars. A comprehensive plan will be submitted for review at the next Committee meeting. **Action remains in progress.**

**Rea.4/24: Research Fellowship Start-up Grant sponsorship options**

Covered under agenda item 4.1 below.

**Rea.23/25 3. Trainees' Research Medal Awards 2025**

The following update was noted on the Trainee's Research Medal Awards for 2025:

- The award was launched on 8 August 2025, with applications closing on 19 September 2025.
- Approximately 20 applications were received.
- All applications will be compiled and distributed to reviewers, with clear scoring timelines provided.
- Committee members are encouraged to participate in scoring the submissions.
- The final list of winners will be presented and recommended at the January 2026 Committee meeting for approval and subsequently submitted to College Council for ratification.

Shelaine Kissoon to seek volunteers to review the applications and subsequently circulate them for scoring.

**Rea.24/25 4. Research Fellowship Start-up Grants**

**4.1 Sponsorship options**

Penny Fletcher presented a follow-up to the paper discussed at the July 2025 Committee meeting, outlining potential opportunities to secure sponsorship funding for the Research Fellowship Start-up Grant. She proposed a framework offering both corporate companies and kindred organisations/ societies the option to contribute to the overall grant pot or sponsor specific research projects. She clarified that sponsors would not be involved in the application review process. Sponsorship agreements were suggested for three years, with a one-year break clause and an option to extend to five years. Flexible contribution levels were proposed, with a minimum suggested at £1,000, and possible bespoke arrangements.

Members of the Committee had a discussion, and the following key points were noted:

- Topic-specific grants were discussed, including potential funding levels for undergraduate and postgraduate projects; suggested amounts ranged from £1,500–£2,000 per project to reflect current costs of consumables and equipment.
- Timing of undergraduate projects was highlighted as challenging due to differences across institutions and summer schemes. Flexibility to accommodate short term or elective summer projects was recommended.
- Poster or presentation events were suggested to provide visibility for sponsors and grant recipients, with options for digital events or inclusion in a College conference.
- Wider engagement was discussed, including outreach to engineering and other relevant departments to expand participation and sponsorship interest.

- Benchmarking against other funding bodies such as CRUK, MRC, and Wellcome Trust was suggested to guide grant levels and sponsorship packages.
- The committee noted that several previous grant recipients are approaching the end of their funded projects, and it was agreed that their work should be showcased online in 2026

Penny Fletcher agreed to update the sponsorship paper to incorporate discussions from the meeting and circulate it to the Committee requesting feedback ahead of finalising grant categories and sponsorship options.

Shelaine Kissoon to help the Chair coordinate an online showcase in 2026 of previous grant recipients' projects and ensure the item is included on the next committee agenda.

#### 4.3 Next Round of the Research Fellowship Start-up Grant

The Chair provided an update on the timeline for the 2026 grant round, which is planned for January 2026, and members confirmed their agreement with the proposed date. He requested that Shelaine Kissoon prepare and circulate to the Committee suggested dates for the grant opening, closing, and assessment of applications.

The Chair encouraged Committee members to volunteer to review and assess the applications, noting that, if necessary, he would allocate participants.

The Committee also discussed communications and circulation of the Research Fellowship Start-up Grant to ensure that information about the grant is as widely disseminated. Members were invited to suggest additional channels for dissemination, and Professor Fleck offered to provide suggestions at a later date.

## **Rea.25/25 5. Fellowship by Published Works**

### 5.1 The Chair provided an update on the current round of applications for Fellowship by Published Works and the following key points were noted:

- Assessments for the recent application window had been completed.
- The Chair and Professor La Ragione met with Tia Goldring to review applications to determine if any require further adjudication, and it was confirmed that all were appropriately addressed.
- Due to unforeseen circumstances, one reviewer was unable to participate, and the Chair covered the remaining applications. No significant issues or controversies were identified.
- Applications have progressed through the system, with notifications submitted to College Council. Preliminary feedback has been, or is in the process of being, relayed to applicants to enable next steps.

The Chair expressed gratitude to all members who assisted with the application reviews, particularly Professor La Ragione. Committee members were invited to participate in future application assessments to distribute workload more evenly.

### 5.2 Engagement with Fellows who gain Fellowship by Published Works

The Chair highlighted the need to engage Fellows who obtained their Fellowship by Published Works, noting that many do not participate beyond qualification. The discussion emphasised creating meaningful opportunities for these Fellows to contribute, leveraging their research expertise, and ensuring they feel included in College activities. Various strategies were explored, including webinars, advisory roles, committee participation, and connections with national and international research projects, to better integrate this largely untapped resource into the College.

### **Key points highlighted in the discussion included:**

- Since 2022, those awarded Fellowship by Published Works are assigned the post-nominal FRCPATH (Res); clear communication is needed to ensure all relevant Fellows are aware of this distinction.
- Fellows by Published Works can participate in committees and College activities in the same way as those obtaining Fellowship via examination, with limited exceptions relating to examiner eligibility.
- Bespoke engagement opportunities, including webinars, workshops, and small group discussions, were recommended to encourage participation and ensure Fellows feel included.
- Webinars were identified as a key mechanism for engagement, focusing on research, professional development, and wider College initiatives.
- Sponsorship opportunities could support webinars or in-person events, especially educational initiatives and professional development activities.
- Fellows by Published Works have diverse research expertise that could contribute to College initiatives, advisory roles, national projects, and collaborations with industry.
- Developing a directory of members' research and clinical expertise was suggested to facilitate matching Fellows to projects requiring specialist knowledge. RCPATH Consulting was highlighted as a key platform to utilise this expertise for NHS and industry projects.
- Professor Fleck offered to assist in connecting Fellows by Published Works to research opportunities, webinars, and advisory roles, providing a model for engaging other Fellows with similar expertise.
- Ms Brinklow can provide further insight into this cohort, including identifying Fellows and mapping their expertise to potential contributions.
- Active member participation was emphasised as critical to enhancing the value and inclusivity of the College. Members were encouraged to proactively suggest initiatives and provide feedback.

### **Actions:**

- ***Shelaine Kissoon and Professor Johnston to discuss with Stephen Rainbird and Ian Hopper ways to engage Fellows who have obtained their Fellowship by Published Works, ensuring that their research expertise is actively applied to College initiatives, including advisory roles, research projects, and RCPATH Consulting activities, with Professor Fleck included in the discussions.***
- ***Ms Brinklow to provide a list of those who achieved Fellowship by Published Works***

## **Rea.26/25 6. Other Committee updates**

### **6.1 Veterinary Pathology SAC**

Prof La Razione provided the following report on the SAC:

- Several webinars set up and recorded and is available on the College website for trainees and research fellows.
- The SAC are exploring ways to promote research funding for veterinary graduates and are looking at other research opportunities which residents can take on, including short research placements during residency.
- Proposed webinars on human and animal research ethics, and guidance on initiating clinical research in veterinary settings.
- The SAC submitted comments and input to the College which contributed to a government statement on antimicrobial resistance, linking veterinary practice, public health, and zoonosis.

- 6.2 Cellular Pathology SAC  
Dr Wong stated that he had no specific updates and agreed to provide a report at the Committee meeting in January 2026.
- 6.3 Clinical Biochemistry SAC  
Professor Grammatopoulos reported that there are no specific updates from the SAC at this time. He informed that Professor Eric Kilpatrick has recently been appointed Chair of the SAC, who has a research interest in the area.
- 6.4 Clinical Scientist  
Dr Driskell reported that there is nothing major to update at this time. Induction is currently underway for the HST and STP programmes for the 2025–26 intake. He also noted that the HST Research Survey, mentioned at the previous meeting, is currently open and responses are being collated. Results will be reported at the next meeting.
- 6.5 Healthcare Science Committee  
Professor Fleck reported that as it was his first meeting, he has no specific updates at this time in relation to the Healthcare Science Committee.

Professor Fleck suggested that the College consider engaging with research funding councils such as MRC and Wellcome, proposing that the College could provide experts to review to applications. He noted that these committees are often difficult to fill and that early engagement, before calls for applications are issued, could allow the College to advise on key research topics and potentially influence the direction of research.

The Chair highlighted the challenge of time constraints for clinical academics, noting that short notice requests for multi day commitments in London make participation difficult. Professor Fleck agreed and emphasised that early consultation with funders could make involvement more feasible. Professor Fleck offered to share contacts, for further discussions and potential collaboration.

**Rea.27/25 7. Society updates**

- 7.1 Pathological Society  
No update – representative not present.
- 7.2 British Society of Haematology (BSH)  
No update – representative yet to be appointed.

***Action: Shelaine Kissoon to provide the Chair with the contact details for the BSH President or Secretary so he can approach them directly to fill outstanding representative roles.***

**Rea.28/25 8. Trainees' report**

Dr Al-Hasani reported that a new Chair has been appointed for the Trainees' Advisory Committee (TAC), with the term commencing in November 2025. The TAC will hold its first in-person meeting at the College in November 2025, providing opportunities for networking and direct engagement among trainee representatives.

**Rea.29/25 9. Any other business**

Professor Johnston mentioned that he had written an essay earlier in the year reflecting on challenges in UK research, including interactions with industry and academic training routes for doctors. He invited committee members to review the

essay and provide feedback, with potential avenues for publication such as the BMJ or the College Bulletin. Members supported circulating the essay to the committee for input. The discussion also noted systemic challenges in UK clinical research, including regulatory and bureaucratic obstacles, and the impact on clinical academic career progression.

*Post meeting note: The paper on Research and the UK was circulated to the Committee on 24 September 2025.*

**Rea.30/25 10. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on 29 January 2026 at 11:00am for a duration of 2 hours.