



Research Committee

Minutes

A meeting of the Research Committee was held on Tuesday 7 July 2026
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
Professor Peter Johnston, RCPATH Vice President for Workforce and Corporate Engagement
Dr Marnix Jansen, Chair of Pathological Society Research Subcommittee
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

Rea.11/26 1. Welcome, declarations of conflict of interests, and apologies for absence

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.
- 1.2 There were no apologies to note.
- 1.3 There were no declarations of conflict of interests.

Rea.12/26 2. Minutes of the previous meeting

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 were reviewed and approved as an accurate record.
- 2.2 The following matter arising was noted:
 - *Changes to Trainee Research Medal Award winners 2025 following the College Council meeting:*
Following submission of the Trainee Research Medal Awards to College Council for ratification, a question was raised regarding the eligibility of Vivak Prakash, who had initially been selected for a Silver Medal. It was subsequently confirmed that he was not a registered College trainee and was therefore ineligible under the eligibility criteria and guidance. Although he was undertaking training in



infectious diseases and general medicine, his primary Royal College registration was with the Royal College of Physicians. The remaining eligible candidates were reviewed, and Dominique Chaput, a microbiology trainee, was awarded the medal in his place. It was agreed that additional eligibility checks would be incorporated into the application process to ensure that candidates met the requirement to be registered College trainees.

- 2.3 The outstanding actions were covered under other relevant items on the agenda and elsewhere during the meeting.

Rea.13/26 3. Chair's report

3.1 Plan for research webinar series

The Committee received and noted the proposal for a suite of short research videos and webinars, developed by the Chair and Dr Driskell, comprising a range of introductory topics relating to research.

The Committee discussed the proposed topics and suggested additional areas, including academic and scientific career pathways, ACF/ICAT posts and clinical academic training, research funding, publication, CPD, data analysis and emerging techniques including AI, and research governance and NHS R&D processes. It was agreed that the topics should be prioritised to establish a core programme of approximately 10–11 sessions, with additional topics retained for future development.

The Committee also discussed the format of the sessions, with some topics considered more suitable for short, focused presentations and others for live discussion and Q&A. It was proposed that the sessions should be recorded to create a bank of resources for trainees and others to access subsequently.

The Chair agreed to prioritise the proposed topics and, with the support of Shelaine Kissoon, develop the document as a live resource for Committee members to add comments, suggestions and potential speakers. The programme would be further developed ahead of the next Committee meeting.

Action: *Chair to revise and prioritise webinar proposals*

3.2 Pathology Transformation report 2026

The Chair informed that the Pathology Transformation Report 2026 had been published. He noted that, having searched the report for references to research, there appeared to be no mention of research and expressed disappointment that research remained absent from the wider pathology transformation agenda.

The Chair questioned whether the report warranted consideration at a future meeting and indicated that, unless members had strong views to the contrary, he did not consider that the Research Committee should spend time reviewing the report given its other priorities. Members were invited to raise any views on this ahead of the next meeting.

Action: *members to raise views/comments ahead of the next meeting*

3.3 Pathological Society Public Lecture

The Chair asked whether the public lecture on the future of pathology delivered by President Bernie Croal at the Pathological Society would be made publicly available.

Dr Jansen agreed to contact his colleagues to clarify whether the lecture could be made available, and the Committee noted that this would be helpful.

Action: *Dr Jansen to clarify if Lecture will be available*

Rea.14/26 4. Trainees' Research Medal Awards 2026

The Committee received and considered the proposed timeline for the 2026 Trainee Research Medal Awards. It was noted that the awards were due to be advertised in early August, with a six-week submission period, followed by assessment of applications and notification of outcomes to applicants by December.

The Committee discussed arrangements for the assessment of applications, with the aim of distributing the reviewing workload across Committee members. Professor Johnston, Dr Driskell and Professor Fleck agreed to undertake reviews, with applications to be allocated between reviewers.

It was agreed that Training Programme Directors (TPDs) and Heads of School would be included as additional dissemination routes for the award information, alongside the existing College channels.

The Committee agreed to the proposed timeline, and the necessary arrangements would be progressed to enable the awards process to be completed by December.

Rea.15/26 5. Research Fellowship Start-up Grants

5.1 Future sponsorship options

The Committee received an update from Penny Fletcher on progress in exploring future sponsorship options for the Fellowship Research Startup Grant. She reported on discussions with corporate and non-profit organisations, including feedback received through questionnaires. It was noted that the response rate had been limited, although some potentially promising contacts had been identified for further follow-up.

The Committee discussed potential sponsorship and co-badging arrangements. It was noted that some non-profit organisations would require match funding and that some had specific requirements regarding the amount and area of funding. The possibility of using existing College funds to support match-funding arrangements was discussed. Professor Johnston suggested that the availability of designated funds be explored with Daniel Ross, who would be able to advise on the process for potentially using such funds.

Penny Fletcher presented a draft framework for corporate sponsorship packages, comprising different levels of sponsorship and associated benefits. She advised that the packages were intended to provide a standard offering, while allowing for tailoring where appropriate. It was noted that sponsors would not be involved in the assessment of grant applications.

The Committee discussed the timing for securing sponsorship ahead of the 2027 grant round. It was noted that early engagement with potential sponsors would be important, particularly in view of companies' internal funding processes. Penny advised that she would continue to follow up existing contacts and begin approaching potential sponsors. She also agreed to circulate the draft document on the sponsorship packages to Committee members for comment.

Action: *Penny Fletcher to circulate draft sponsorship document*

5.2 Fellowship Research Start-up Grant

The Committee received an update on the current Fellowship Research Startup Grant scheme. It was noted that the applications were currently being scored and that, once the scores had been collated, the assessors would meet to finalise the results.

It was agreed that the Chair would take Chair's action to approve the successful applicants once the scoring process had been completed. The Committee would be informed of the outcome by email, following which the successful applicants would be submitted to College Council for ratification.

Action: *Scores to be finalised and communicated before the next meeting*

5.3 Plan an online showcase of projects for previous grant recipients

The Committee discussed the potential organisation of an online showcase for research grant awardees. The Chair noted that this could provide an opportunity for grant recipients to present their work and suggested that this could potentially be organised in 2027, either as an online showcase or through online poster presentations, as part of a larger or smaller College meeting, depending on what would be most appropriate.

Penny Fletcher agreed to develop a project initiation document for the proposed showcase and to discuss the resource requirements with the relevant College teams.

5.4 Reports from applicants awarded funding in the second round

The Committee received and noted a report from Hannah Crane on her Research Fellowship Startup Grant. Two further reports from Dr Nathaniel Lee and Dr Tina Mazaheri remained outstanding, with follow-up action ongoing.

The Committee discussed the potential to use the reports to highlight the outcomes of the grants, including through the publication of suitable summaries in the College Bulletin. This would be revisited once all three reports had been received, with the Chair to liaise with the Communications team.

Rea.16/26 6. Fellowship by Published Works

6.1 Update on Fellowship by Published Works

The Committee noted that the next set of Fellowship by Published Works applications was due to be assessed, with the assessment expected to be completed in August 2026. Any issues arising would be picked up at the next meeting.

6.2 Engagement with Fellows who gain Fellowship by Published Works

Discussion deferred to the next Committee meeting.

Rea.17/26 7. Recruitment and Retention of Academic Clinical Fellows and Lecturers in Pathology

The Committee discussed the recruitment and retention of Academic Clinical Fellows (ACFs) and Academic Clinical Lecturers (ACLs) in pathology. Professor Grammatopoulos reported that the issue had been discussed at regional meetings, but that he had not yet been able to establish a clear pathway for identifying and cataloguing ACFs and other academic trainees. It was noted that such posts were relatively limited and were generally organised through local initiatives rather than centrally.

The availability of data on academic trainees was discussed. Ms Brinklow confirmed that the College records trainees registered with it who are academic trainees and also records trainees who undertake out-of-programme research, although the latter information is not readily extractable from the College database. Professor Johnston noted that relevant data may also be available through national organisations, although the accuracy and timeliness of such data for pathology could be limited.

The Committee discussed the value of obtaining a clearer picture of the national landscape of ACF and other academic training posts, including to help institutions understand the likelihood of recruiting to new posts. Professor Grammatopoulos noted difficulties in obtaining information through deaneries and suggested that university records might provide an alternative source of information.

Ms Brinklow agreed to check whether the College could provide high-level data on academic trainees and those undertaking research. It was noted that this would only cover specialties for which the College registers trainees and would therefore provide only a partial picture. The Committee also noted that any information sought should be at an aggregate level rather than relating to individual trainees, in view of data protection considerations.

Action: *The Committee agreed to review progress at the next meeting.*

Rea.18/26 8. Other Committee updates

8.1 Veterinary Pathology SAC

Professor La Ragione reported that the webinar series had been successful and well attended, with recordings available online and a further series planned. Work was also progressing on guidance on AI and digital pathology, and other SAC guidelines had been updated and published.

The Committee discussed the potential use of digital pathology in examinations. Ms Brinklow advised that the College was in the process of establishing a working group, subject to approval of its terms of reference, and that a number of specialties had been identified as potentially benefiting from digital pathology examinations. She highlighted the practical implications, including the potential need to run digital and microscope-based examinations in parallel and the requirement for GMC approval for changes to medical examination formats.

Dr Jansen noted that the Pathological Society trainee committee had undertaken a survey of trainees in England regarding their views and expectations concerning digital pathology examinations. He offered to obtain further information from the relevant trainee/training committee and facilitate contact with Professor La Ragione and Ms Brinklow, to ensure that relevant work was communicated between the groups.

Action: *Professor La Ragione, Trainee Committee representative and Ms Brinklow to meet to discuss progress towards digital examinations*

8.2 Cellular Pathology SAC

It was noted that Professor Wong had demitted his role on the Committee and a new representative would be sought. The Chair thanked Dr Wong for his contribution.

Action: *A new Cellular Pathology SAC representative to be sought.*

8.3 Clinical Biochemistry SAC

Professor Grammatopoulos reported that discussions at the recent Clinical Biochemistry SAC meeting had focused mainly on the Pathology Transformation Review. He noted that research had been mentioned only briefly in the review, although the potential impact of staff losses on the ability of services to deliver research had been highlighted. No other matters relevant to the Research Committee were discussed at the SAC.

8.4 Clinical Scientist

Dr Driskell reported that there had been no significant updates since the previous meeting. He noted that he was aware of an NIHR Incubator application submitted in response to an NIHR call focused on underrepresented professions, which had been developed around healthcare scientists.

8.5 Healthcare Science Committee

Professor Fleck reported that discussions at the Healthcare Science Committee meetings were continuing around advice, supervision and mentorship. He highlighted the challenges faced by the diagnostic electron microscopy community, particularly the lack of funding and clear career pathways. He advised that he would report back to the Committee on the Research Committee's activities, with a view to encouraging discussion around research and its translation into this area.

Rea.19/26 9. Society updates

9.1 Pathological Society

Dr Jansen reported on the recent Pathological Society meeting held in Manchester and noted that interaction with the College had been discussed at various points during the meeting. He also reported a proposal for a joint research development award with the British Division of the International Academy of Pathology (BDIAP), with funding of approximately £2,500. He advised that he would seek further information from Kirsty Lloyd, who leads the BDIAP research grants, and would circulate the details to the Chair for consideration by the Committee.

Dr Jansen confirmed that the pause on the larger grant schemes had been lifted and that the schemes would reopen in October.

9.2 British Society of Haematology (BSH)

The Chair reported that Professor Johnston had provided some helpful suggestions regarding securing a BSH representative, which he had followed up in part. He noted that further follow-up was required and confirmed that he would progress the matter.

Rea.20/26 10. Trainees' report

Dr Alhasani highlighted the importance of providing guidance for trainees interested in pursuing research or academic careers. She noted that the planned research webinar series would be particularly useful, including its focus on practical aspects of funding and pursuing academic careers through non-clinical pathways.

Dr Alhasani also raised the recent GMC consultation on the legislative framework for specialties. She noted that concerns had been raised about the potential implications of changes to the regulation of specialties and the role of the Colleges, although no specific implications for research had been identified. Ms Brinklow confirmed that the College had submitted a response to the consultation, informed by a detailed response from the Training Advisory Committee. She noted that the GMC had provided reassurance that the changes would not remove the Colleges' current roles. She explained that the consultation related to the GMC's oversight of specialty registers and how organisations could be involved in approvals relating to specialties.

Rea.21/26 11. Any other business

Professor Johnston reported on the ongoing review of medical training programmes and noted that academic training tracks had not been mentioned in the discussions to date. He reported that he had been in contact with Jane Dacre, who was chairing the review group, and had sought to bring relevant evidence on academic training to the review through the Association for the Study of Medical Education and other academic networks. He noted that there appeared to be limited interest in academic training from the Department of Health, NHS and deaneries, although the GMC was understood to be interested in enhancing academic training.

Rea.10/26 10. Date of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 13 October 2026 at 11:00am for a duration of 2 hours.