



Research Committee

Minutes

A meeting of the Research Committee was held on Thursday 29 January 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 Newton Wong, Cellular Pathology SAC representative
Professor Peter Johnston, RCPATH Vice President for Workforce and Corporate Engagement
Dr Marnix Jansen, Chair of Pathological Society Research Subcommittee

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 Wiaam Al-Hasani, Trainee representative
Professor Roland Fleck, Healthcare Science Committee representative

Rea.01/26

- 1. Welcome, declarations of conflict of interests, and apologies for absence**
 - 1.1 The Chair welcomed all members to the meeting.
 - 1.2 No apologies were received. Absences had been noted and recorded above.
 - 1.3 There were no declarations of conflict of interests.

Rea.02/26

- 2. Minutes of the previous meeting**
 - 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 23 September 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.22/25: Webinar proposal

The Chair gave an update on proposals for a series to support early career researchers, covering ethics, governance, consent, publishing, IP, and project planning. The webinars would cover defining research, governance, ethics, NHS R&D processes, consent, information governance, publishing, intellectual property,



and practical project planning. Existing resources from Research Delivery Networks would be reviewed to avoid duplication, with bespoke content developed where needed.

Members discussed the proposal and the following points were noted:

- To include practical, real-world advice and experiences
- Highlight regional differences, particularly between Scotland and England (Human Tissue Act, biobank processes, and approvals)
- Recognise the role of biobanks in facilitating research and approvals
- Address challenges in transferring samples from NHS biobanks to universities, including governance and MTAs
- Guidance on selecting supervisors, research groups, and feasible research questions
- Acknowledge challenges in academic training and progression pathways
- Involve specialists or experienced practitioners for specific topics
- Review and signpost existing Research Delivery Network resources
- Consider releasing webinars individually or as a series, with a potential live Q&A session

Action: Chair to finalise the proposal and present it at the next Research Committee meeting.

Rea.25/25 Engagement with those who gained Fellowship by Published Works

Professor Johnston informed that both Stephen Rainbird and Ian Hopper are currently fully engaged with the delayed College Digital Transformation Programme, limiting their capacity to focus on the fellowship engagement initiative. He suggested keeping the project on hold and revisiting it once they have the bandwidth to give it proper attention.

Rea.27/25: British Society of Haematology representative

The Chair thanked Shelaine Kissoon for contacting the British Society of Haematology regarding a potential representative. Shelaine confirmed that the society would reach out to her and added that she had scheduled a follow-up in a couple of weeks to ensure progress.

Rea.03/26 3. Trainees' Research Medal Awards 2025

The Committee received and noted the paper on the Trainees' Research Medal Awards. The Chair reported that twenty applications had been received for the 2025 awards. The review panel, comprising Dr Driskell, Professor Johnston, Professor Cohen, and himself, had reviewed the submissions and the top ranked submissions were discussed collectively at a meeting. The Chair highlighted the exceptional quality of the submissions, describing them as impressive and humbling, with several papers of medal worthy standard.

Following the review, the panel's recommendations were endorsed by the Research Committee, which agreed to award the 2025 Trainees' Research Medals to the following trainees, subject to ratification by College Council:

Name	Specialty	Award
Dr Jane Moffat	Forensic Histopathology	Gold
Dr Simon Deacon	Diagnostic Neuropathology	Silver
Dr Stephen Hibbs	Haematology	Silver
Dr Vivak Parkash	Infectious Diseases & General Medicine	Silver

It was noted that some specialties, including Chemical Pathology, did not have submissions meeting the award threshold. The Chair advised that the outcomes would be circulated through Specialty Advisory Committees, the Trainees' Advisory Committee, and College communications to encourage broader participation in future rounds. The medal paper was approved for submission to College Council for ratification.

Rea.04/26 4. Research Fellowship Start-up Grants

4.1 Sponsorship options

Penny Fletcher introduced the revised sponsorship document and outlined the immediate plan to circulate surveys to potential corporate and society partners. She explained that the surveys were intended to gauge interest, gather information to inform a sustainable funding model for research fellowship start-up grants, and enable agreements to be pursued in the coming months. She emphasised the importance of agreeing the overall approach before engaging externally.

The Committee reviewed and discussed the paper on sponsorship options, and the following points were noted:

- Protecting access to funding across all 17 pathology specialties was identified as a core principle; a central, general fund was required to prevent some areas from being excluded if sponsorship was directed solely by industry interests.
- A simple, straightforward model was preferred initially to enable progress, with flexibility to accommodate both general contributions and, where appropriate, targeted support.
- It was noted that industry funding priorities might not align with specialty needs, and that companies were likely to require clear recognition and demonstrable outcomes from any funding provided.
- The option of approaching companies with pre-selected projects and the potential use of matched-funding arrangements was discussed; concerns were raised about financial uncertainty if funding was not secured after projects were chosen.
- It was acknowledged that current resources would only support a small number of awards and would not ensure coverage across all specialties; expanding opportunities, including undergraduate projects, was identified as a stated objective.
- The Committee agreed that early guidance should be sought from relevant trade associations and similar bodies on acceptable models of sponsorship, co-badging, attribution, and intellectual property, to inform development and engagement with industry.
- The proposed surveys were endorsed as a mechanism to initiate discussions with organisations and potential partners, subject to minor amendments to wording and scope.

The Committee concluded that the proposed approach provided a clear framework to engage potential partners, protect equitable funding across all pathology specialties, and gather information to inform the sustainable development of the research fellowship start-up grants.

4.2 Fellowship Research Start-up Grant

It was noted that the Fellowship Research Start-up Grant was launched on 19th January, with a deadline of 16th March for applications. The grant was advertised via the College website, social media, the President's Newsletter, SACs, the TAC, and an email was planned to all RCPATH-registered trainees. Additional dissemination through NSHCS channels was agreed. It was further agreed that applications would be circulated to the assessment panel shortly after the deadline,

with a target date of 1st May for finalised scores. Shelaine Kissoon would send an email nearer the deadline to recruit panel members and circulate the assessment materials.

4.3 Plan an online showcase of projects for previous grant recipients

The Chair noted the importance of showcasing the work of grant recipients to highlight the outputs of the scheme, demonstrate the use of College funds, and raise the profile of both the researchers and their projects. While a face-to-face showcase may be considered in the future, Professor Johnston reported that planning is underway for a potential College conference in 2027, which could include sessions for grant recipients and prize winners to present their work. In the interim, an online session later this year was proposed, likely as a lunchtime webinar with two to three first-round recipients presenting their projects.

Action: *Shelaine Kissoon to explore suitable dates and potential speakers.*

Rea.05/26 **5. Fellowship by Published Works**

5.1 Update on Fellowship by Published Works

The Chair reported that the most recent round of Published Works assessments had been completed and had proceeded smoothly. It was noted that the assessment process had run smoothly, and applications were mostly complete and of a good standard. No issues were reported. The Committee agreed that the process was operating effectively.

5.2 Engagement with Fellows who gain Fellowship by Published Works

Update covered under the action log, reference Rea.25/25.

Rea.06/26 **6. Other Committee updates**

6.1 Veterinary Pathology SAC

Professor La Ragione provided an update on ongoing initiatives in veterinary pathology. He reported that the Veterinary Pathology SAC had held a productive meeting on 28 January 2026 and that digital pathology guidelines for veterinary pathology, which did not previously exist for either research or diagnostic samples, were under development.

Additionally, Professor La Ragione highlighted that he was organising the [European College of Veterinary Microbiology Conference](#), to be held at the University of Surrey from 2nd to 4th September 2026, and colleagues were invited to attend.

6.2 Cellular Pathology SAC

Professor Wong provided an update, noting that there was no substantive feedback from the Cellular Pathology SAC. He reported that, at the last SAC meeting, he had highlighted the Research Committee's plans for forthcoming webinars and related initiatives, which were positively received.

6.3 Clinical Biochemistry SAC

Professor Grammatopoulos reported that the recent Clinical Biochemistry SAC meeting addressed workforce mapping, job plans, and review related matters. He highlighted ongoing difficulties in recruiting Academic Clinical Fellows and Academic Clinical Lecturers in pathology, citing limited candidates, reduced senior academic staff, and changes to national recruitment programs. The Committee noted that evolving medical curricula and GMC standards de-emphasise research training. It was agreed to include this matter on the next meeting agenda for discussion, explore ways the College can support recruitment, and consider providing feedback to medical school deans or producing a position paper.

Action: Shelaine Kissoon to include “Recruitment and Retention of Academic Clinical Fellows and Lecturers in Pathology” as an agenda item for the next meeting.

6.4 Clinical Scientist

Dr Driskell reported that the NSHCS had conducted a research survey, and the results were being collated for publication. The survey provided short examples of activities undertaken by HST trainees, some of which were associated with published work, mainly from life scientists relevant to the College. He highlighted that this offered an opportunity both to showcase the research work within College members and to publicise the Research Committee’s activity, as well as to make potential members aware of these initiatives.

6.5 Healthcare Science Committee

No update - representative was not present.

Rea.07/26 **7. Society updates**

7.1 Pathological Society

Dr Jansen reported that the Pathological Society was experiencing a strained financial situation, leading to the cancellation of the April 2026 grant round. Reduced journal income and unsustainable expenditure were cited as key factors. Dr Jansen agreed to continue to update the Research Committee on developments.

7.2 British Society of Haematology (BSH)

No update - representative yet to be appointed.

Rea.08/26 **8. Trainees’ report**

No update - representative was not present.

Rea.09/26 **9. Any other business**

None.

Rea.10/26 **10. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 7 July 2026 at 11:00am for a duration of 2 hours.