

Draft:	27-Feb-2015
Approved for circulation:	11-Mar-2015
Confirmed by Committee with / without amendments	Date

University Research Committee

Open Minutes

Date of meeting: **Friday, 27 February 2015**

Duration of meeting: **9.30 to 12.30**

Location: **G5.05, HW**

Attendance

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Shân Wareing	Vice Chancellor's Office	Ex officio
Anne Evans	Academic Quality Directorate	Officer
Miriam Moir	Academic Quality Directorate	Officer
Lauren Griffiths	Chair of RDC	Ex officio
Geraldine Walters	Chair of UEP	Ex officio
Florin Ioras	DMM	Nominated member
Margaret Greenfields	S&H	Nominated member
Sue Procter	Dean of Research – S&H	Ex officio
Jake Kaner	Research Lead – DMM	Ex officio
Barbara Dexter	Learning & Teaching Directorate	Ex officio

Apologies

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Colin Martin	S&H	Nominated member
Vicky Vass	Pro Vice Chancellor - DMM	Ex officio
Alison Chambers	Pro Vice Chancellor – S&H	Ex officio
Connor Baker	SU Officer	Ex officio
Carol Pook	Deputy Chair of UEP	Ex officio

Guests and Observers

Name	Faculty / Directorate	Category of membership
Melanie Nakisa	AQD	N/A
David Bulbeck	Finance	In attendance for Item 5 on Agenda

Welcome

15.01 The Chair welcomed a number of members in new roles to the Committee.

Minutes of the previous meeting

15.02 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising from the minutes not appearing on the agenda

15.03 There were no further matters.

Status of actions from the previous meeting

15.04 The status of actions on the Action Sheet was noted.

Research Finance (URC15.01)

15.05 The Financial Controller presented a paper which itemised research income for 2014/15 to date. Some of the issues relating to project funding experienced by principal investigators and research leads were raised in discussion:

- It was noted that the report only included income that had been spent on projects and not all funds received by the University. Some principal investigators found this confusing and would prefer to know what income had been received by the University against their project code so they could ensure projects kept to budget. The Research Leads in the Faculties would like to have a complete overview of project income and expenditure through regular reports.
- All projects needed to have a project code and be coded correctly as research, consultancy or other income.
- There was a requirement for all grant contracts to be signed off by Finance.
- Clarification was required concerning whose responsibility it was to retain different types of contract.

15.06 It was agreed that a Working Group would be established to review the entire process from pre to post bid for research projects. This Group would establish clear principles and clarity regarding where responsibilities should lie and how the current process could be improved. The Group would include: Finance representation, Research Leads and the Research Unit. Representatives from Enterprise would also be involved for clarification of areas of responsibility and to ensure a common process.

Action: Miriam Moir

Progress against the institutional action plan 2014/15

15.07 The Chair reported on progress against the institutional action plan.

- A report had been discussed at SMT that considered the achievements in REF 2014, the importance of obtaining RDAP and issues relating to research leadership. This report would be made available to Members on the URC Blackboard organisation.

Action: Secretary

- A number of steps had already been taken with appointments to research Leads: notably the Dean of Research in Society & Health; the Research Lead in Design, Media & Management; and the new Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.
- Invitations had been sent to all academic staff to update their profiles in order to establish the current baseline for RDAP.

Updates on Faculty and School Research Plans

DMM (URC15.02)

- 15.08 Prof Jake Kaner was now established as the Research Lead for DMM. He reported that a Research leaders team had been formed comprising the Professors and Readers in the Faculty. The strengths of members of the team had been identified with regard to the contribution they could make towards the next REF and RDAP.
- 15.09 Four objectives had been identified to contribute to the Research Strategy:
- Post 2014 REF: to maintain QR, identify UOAs and increase volume of activity.
 - RDAP – to establish the current baseline and set objectives to ensure the Criteria are met.
 - Research Culture – to raise awareness of and increase research activity.
 - Research Income – to increase research income in line with sector benchmarks.
- 15.10 Concerns relating to staffing changes following REF 2014 were being addressed through development support for current staff and appropriate recruitment.
- 15.11 RDAP was recognised as a priority with a requirement for development of staff to contribute to the application.

S&H (URC15.03)

- 15.12 The Dean of Research in the Faculty of Society & Health, Prof Sue Procter, reported that discussions had taken place in the Faculty resulting in a number of actions and plans to take forward. A goal at a Staff development day had been set as a minimum target of one peer-reviewed output per whole time equivalent staff members per academic year. These outputs were to be peer reviewed but did not necessarily need to be academic journal articles and could be outputs in professional journals, book chapters or collaborative papers.
- 15.13 All Professors and Readers were being asked to produce bidding and publication plans by July 2015.
- 15.14 All academic staff were to be aligned to one of the faculty's Research Groups.
- 15.15 All Research Groups and Institutes were to be brought together under a Centre for Applied Research and Enterprise (CARE) which would be led by the Dean of Research and provide governance arrangements, coordinate research activity, and provide support for Research Assistants and Fellows.
- 15.16 The Faculty had pump primed 3 annual rounds of Research Challenge funding with mixed success. All projects funded under this scheme were expected to produce a minimum of one publication, but not all had been successful. The Faculty was currently reviewing whether this was the optimal use for funding going forward.
- 15.17 Support would be provided for 10 student research internships to support academic research projects over summer 2015.

- 15.18 Early Career Researchers were being supported to produce a bidding and publication plan, with Heads of Academic Department using PDRs to identify future ECRs.

Pedagogic Research

- 15.19 Prof Barbara Dexter was invited to comment on the plans for developing pedagogic research which was being taken forward through the Higher Education Research & Development Group (HERD). It was noted that there was considerable interest in the group and it had a membership of around 50 people. Questions remained as to the optimal way to continue the momentum of the Group. A number of research clusters had been formed and some were progressing extremely well while others had poorly attended sessions.
- 15.20 ESEP funding had enabled the academic enhancement team to support the development of a number of individuals.
- 15.21 The possibility of developing an in-house peer reviewed online journal was discussed. It was agreed that resources could be better employed by either supporting the writing of academic journal articles or, for new academics, possibly conference proceedings from internal/joint conferences.

Research Integrity

- 15.22 The Chair reported that the University had most of the elements required to meet the requirements of the Concordat to support research integrity. However these needed to be reviewed and consolidated.
- 15.23 It was agreed that a Working Group would be established to take this forward. This needed to involve Dr Lauren Griffiths (Chair of Research Degrees Committee & S&H Representative), Prof Jake Kaner (representing DMM perspective); IT Director; Research Unit.

Action: Miriam Moir

University Ethics Panel – Issues for discussion (URC15.04)

- 15.24 The Chair of the University Ethics Panel, Dr Geraldine Walters, presented a report to the Committee.
- 15.25 The progress of the Committee over the last few years was noted. Some challenges still remained:
- Achieving an appropriate balance between ensuring a process is not too bureaucratic whilst still meeting requirements.
 - The Panel has a large membership which has the benefits of providing expertise from a wide range of discipline and methodological aspects but also increases the range of diverse views which can mean that achieving a consensus is more challenging.
 - A number of submissions required amendments on the grounds of methodological issues: on such occasions the view of the Panel was that it is not ethical to take up participants' time for poorly designed projects which would not answer the research question. The Panel provides a supportive development

role to such submissions. All submissions are signed off by supervisors so the underlying issue concerns development of supervisors.

- Some uncertainties remain about when ethical approval is required despite provision of guidance documents which outline the scope of projects the Panel expects to see.
- Sub-committees have been established across the University to review all taught student projects. The UEP does not always feel confident that it has received all the reports that it should do from the departments.

15.26 In discussion the Committee agreed that methodological issues were of particular concern. It was also noted that some of the appeals received by the University related to the quality of supervision on dissertations. It was agreed that some supervisors needed additional support to supervise dissertations and some form of development plus mentoring should be provided. Development of Line Managers also needed to be considered. It was noted that the most effective form of development for ethical issues would be to encourage supervisors to attend the Ethics Panel as observers.

15.27 The next round of ESEP funding would shortly be open to applicants and where studies were evaluative but aimed for external publication then staff would be advised they needed to obtain ethics approval.

Action: Barbara Dexter

15.28 The Chair noted that although there were a number of challenges faced by the University Ethics Panel it was nevertheless functioning in an extremely effective manner and many of the issues outlined would be resolved organically. In the meantime Miriam Moir and Prof Barbara Dexter would take forward the staff development issues highlighted.

Action: Miriam Moir; Barbara Dexter

Researcher development

15.29 It was noted that the next Research Conference would take place on 12 March where a good turnout was anticipated. The timing of such events was always problematic but going forward there would be a specific staff development calendar to try and reduce the number of clashes that occurred.

15.30 It was reported that a Research Blackboard organisation was being developed that would act as a central point to enable staff to find out more about the different research groups and when they were meeting. It would also provide or signpost where information about development activities, RDAP and REF could be found.

Open Access Policy (URC15.05)

15.31 An Open Access Policy was presented to the Committee for approval.

15.32 The policy had been driven by the requirement for deposit of articles on the Bucks Knowledge Archive upon acceptance of an article for publication. It would also facilitate the showcasing of the University's research.

15.33 Some staff development sessions had already taken place on REF and Open Access, but the message needed to be disseminated more widely so that everyone understood the exact requirements to be compliant for the next REF. It was agreed

that this needed to be presented to the Research Professors and Readers groups in each faculty, AFMTs, and the REF Steering Group.

Action: Prof Jake Kaner, Prof Sue Procter

15.34 The Committee agreed to recommend the Policy to Senate.

The Post-2014 Research Excellence Framework

15.35 Preparation for the next REF was discussed. It was agreed that UOA leads should be identified not only in established UOAs but also in emergent areas. This would provide local leadership to facilitate building of a research profile in these areas. Leads would be identified to become members of the REF Steering Group.

Action: Prof Sue Procter; Prof Jake Kaner

15.36 Local UOA Leads would be required to provide lists of appropriate peer reviewed journals for their area.

Update on validation partner

15.37 The Chair provided an update on the status regarding a new validation partner:

- A new partner had been identified.
- The potential partner was currently following through due diligence.
- A package was being identified which would incorporate co supervision; joint supervision and joint conferences.
- Three PhD studentships had been put in place through ESEP funding. A further two would be progressed when the new validation partner was in place.

Research Degrees Committee – Issues for discussion (URC15.06)

15.38 Dr Lauren Griffiths, Chair of the Research Degrees Committee, presented a paper to the Committee.

15.39 It was reported that a Working Group had reviewed and made changes to the existing annual review process.

- The current annual review documentation had been revised and streamlined
- From September the annual review would be scheduled to come in line with the students' enrolment date, this would enable reviews to be staggered across the year and enable students to have a full year of their studies before their first annual review.
- Prior to each annual review a pre-meeting would take place without the student present.
- Full-time students would also be required to undertake an interim review at 6 months after commencement of their studies.
- The enhancement of the process would be disseminated to Supervisors at the next Supervisor workshop on 16 April 2015.
- A further iteration of the process would involve the use of e-portfolio as an alternative to Vitae to permit recording of development activities which would

enable supervisor access and facilitate dialogue between student and supervisors.

- 15.40 It was becoming more apparent that with the increase in cross-faculty supervision and the need to be open and transparent that there was a requirement for a centralised research budget to support research students to attend conferences, purchase specialist equipment and resources. It was agreed that this would be considered at the faculty AFMTs and discussed at the May Research Degrees Committee meeting.

Action: Prof Sue Procter; Prof Jake Kaner

- 15.41 The Professional Doctorate/Masters by Research framework would be taken forward as a cross faculty initiative capitalising on the research strengths of both faculties.

Any Other Business

- 15.42 The Committee wished to record their congratulations to Dr Neil Brownsword on his achievement in winning the International Korean Biennale Ceramics Award.
- 15.43 The Chair announced that this would be her last Committee meeting before leaving the University and was thanked for her contribution to Research at the University.

Date of next meeting: 22 May 2015