BIRKBECK
University of London

MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
9 February 2017

Present
Professor Julian Swann (Chair), Mr Paul Turnbull, Professor Matthew Davies, Professor Hallvard Lillehammer, Professor Diane Houston, Dr Rosie Cox, Professor Martin Eve, Professor John Kraniauskas, Professor Anthony Bale, Dr Maya Topf, Professor George Christodoulides, Professor Alex Poulavassilis, Dr Sarah Lee,

Apologies
Professor Stephen Frosh, Professor Michael Thomas

In attendance
Mr Robert Atkinson, Ms Liz Francis, Mrs Rabinder Bery, Mr Richard Wilson, Mrs Katharine Bock, Mr Kashim Barick

17 MINUTES
Received and confirmed
17.1 The minutes of the Research Committee 12 October 2016.

17.2 Noted
It was reported that the College had submitted 9 nominations to the AHRC Peer Review College; 7 for the standard Peer Review College and 2 for the Strategic Review Panel. 8 out of the 9 nominations were accepted.

18 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Received and noted
18.1 The report made to the Academic Board following the meeting of the Research Committee 12 October 2016 (RC 2016 22)

19 CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
19.1 It was reported that the College has for the first time provided a research budget which included the support for cross College competitions for the Leverhulme early careers fellowship scheme.

19.2 The College received over 200 enquiries and 60 formal applications. Following a screening process, discussions with the Pears Institute and the School of SSHP funding 2 applications from their own budget, a total of 9 candidates have been put forward.

19.3 It was reported that the cross College competitions will be beneficial in terms of the institutional environment for REF purposes and also for general research activities.
19.4 Having been established for 12 months, we have reviewed whether the structure of the two new working groups (the Research Strategy Group and the Research Support Group) are working as intended and have expanded this consideration to include wider research support from the Research Grants and Contracts Office. This process has identified ways to strengthen the College’s research administrative support function.

19.5 A number of service improvement suggestions have been made as part of a broader proposition put to the College to improve our research environment as part of our ambitions to improve our position in the Research Excellence Framework in 2021.

20 RESEARCH CENTRES

Received

20.1 The College’s rolling review of Research Centres (RC 2016 23)

Noted

20.2 It was reported that the Research Committee will be holding a Research Centres’ Day in mid-June. The aim of the event is to get the College’s research centres and institutions to engage with each other. A prize by way of funding from the research budget will be awarded for a suitable project or projects that bring together the work of 3 or more research centres. Further details will be reported in due course.

20.3 The Research Committee reviewed three Research Centres:

- Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Research in Media & Culture (RC 2016 26)
- Centre for Educational Neuroscience (RC 2016 27)
- Birkbeck Centre for Applied Macroeconomics (RC 2016 28)

**Birkbeck Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Media & Culture**

20.4 The Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Research in Media & Culture centre provides a unique space for reflective critical inquiry, where researchers from different disciplines can gather and participate in intellectual conversation in an interdisciplinary and cross-disciplined setting.

20.5 The centre offers an open forum for research development and knowledge exchange, focused both on the work of academics, public intellectuals and the research of graduate students.

20.6 It facilities and advances innovative thinking and seeks to incubate curiosity and new ideas, drawing together a range of interests to create different kinds of connections and intellectual associations in and through interdisciplinary dialogue.

20.7 The Research Committee noted the interesting work the centre is doing with themes, particularly around the theme of ruins which encouraged involvement from other College departments.

20.8 The centre also engages with postgraduate researchers and has links with SOAS and the British Library.
Approved

20.9 The Research Committee approved the continuation of the Birkbeck centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Media & Culture.

Birkbeck Centre for Educational Neuroscience

20.10 The centre for Educational Neuroscience (CEN) was established in 2008, as a cross-institutional research centre spanning Birkbeck, UCL, and the formerly independent Institute of Education.

20.11 The centre’s goal is to progress the new field of educational neuroscience, fostering communication between neuroscientists, psychologists, cognitive scientists, teachers, and policymakers to harness new findings from neuroscience about the mechanisms of learning to enhance educational outcomes in the classroom.

20.12 The CEN is currently involved in two major research projects; UnLocke which is funded by the Wellcome Trust and the Education Endowment Foundation. This project is developing a new method to improve maths and science learning in primary schools. The second project SCAMP, is funded by the Department of Health and will be investigating the effects of mobile phone usage on teenage brain development.

Approved

20.13 The Research Committee approved the continuation of the Birkbeck centre for Educational Neuroscience.

Birkbeck Centre for Applied Macroeconomics

20.14 The centre for Applied Macroeconomics was established in 2013 and its objectives are to bring together individual researchers, research centres both within and outside of the UK and economic policy circles. By doing so, the centre aims to help raise the visibility of the College’s research and contribute to current economic debates in the public arena.

20.15 The centre naturally creates invaluable connections within and outside the sphere of academia which enhances the impact and reputation of the Department of Economics and the College as a whole. These connections are harnessed through a series of activities which include an annual workshop, hosting visiting researchers, organising seminars and launching a working papers series which is open to staff as well as affiliated members.

20.16 Since the centre’s formation, it has hosted five daily workshops and conferences all of which are very well attended and the key annual event is organised at the end of May. The keynote lectures and other presentations are recorded and posted online on the Centre’s website.

Approved

20.17 The Research Committee approved the continuation of the Birkbeck centre for Applied Microeconomics.
21  **EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS**

Received

21.1  The reports of the Research Grants and Contracts Office:

- Research grants current & confirmed *(RC 2016 30)*
- Grant applications 2015/16 *(RC 2016 31)*
- Grant applications 2016-17 *(RC 2016 32)*
- Grants starting 2016-17 *(RC 2016 33)*

Noted

21.2  Members noted the list of current and confirmed grants. Since the list was compiled, the School of SSHP has received notification of an additional 3 Wellcome Trust grants totalling £2M.

Noted

21.3  The Research Committee noted that the total value of the grants portfolio, which includes the additional 3 grants received by SSHP, stood at over £46M. This is an increase of 15% on last year and a direct reflection on all 5 Schools increasing the value of their respective portfolios compared to last year.

21.4  In 2015/16, a total of 217 applications were put forward which resulted in 50 successful applications at a success rate of 24%. This year, the College has submitted 106 applications to date.

21.5  The Research Committee heard that the College’s application success rate has been falling over the past few years however, the total value of the portfolio is maintaining as the College brings in fewer but higher value grants.

21.6  Members heard that the total value of grants starting this year was £10M compared to £6.4M this time last year.

22  **RESEARCH STUDENTS SUB COMMITTEE**

Received

22.1  The report of the Research Students Sub Committee *(RC 2016 34)*

Noted

22.2  Members noted that the NERC doctoral training partnership is due for renewal and preparations are ongoing for the next round of AHRC doctoral training partnerships.

22.3  Research students’ training needs analysis discussions are ongoing and aims are to develop an internal system to track and monitor research student information that will be comparable to the PhD Manager, which is used by several other HE institutions in the sector.

Noted

22.4  The Research Committee also noted that the work related to the Carol Watts report on postgraduate research students was ongoing and a full time BGRS manager will be joining on the 14th of February.
23  **OPEN ACCESS**

Received

23.1 The report of the Open Access Working Group (**RC 2016 35**)  

23.2 Members heard that BIROn deposit rates still needed improving. ITS had developed a solution to import data into personal profiles however, the process was not acceptable due to its complexity. The Scholarly Communications Licence work is progressing and it is still unknown as to whether the ORCID ID system will be part of the 2021 REF cycle.

23.3 Members expressed concerns around the difficulty of communicating important issues across the College community. The College does not have a central body to whom matters can be communicated then filtered down to Schools / departments.

23.4 Members suggested that the most appropriate people for this would be the School Managers as they attend School executive meetings which is where they can communicate essential issues to their respective Schools.

24  **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH IMPACT COMMITTEE**

Received

24.1 The report of the Public Engagement and Research Impact Committee (**RC 2016 36**)  

24.2 The Research Committee heard that Professor Miriam Zukas is preparing a report on the College’s approach to public engagement going forward. Further details will be reported in due course.

25  **REF WORKING PARTY**

Received

25.1 The report of the REF Working Party (**RC 2016 37**)  

25.2 It was reported that most of the Research Output Census returns have been received. A response to the HEFCE consultation is being prepared and will be circulated amongst appropriate colleagues for commentary before submission which is on the 17th of March. It was noted that the College is in a good position but further improvements could be achieved.

26  **RESEARCH STRATEGY GROUP**

Received


26.2 Research Strategy Group has considered potential themes for fundraising for research. It noted support for a physical space for research students, early career support, and London and sustainable futures themes.

26.3 Research Strategy Group also approved Birkbeck’s studentships for the 2017-18 Bloomsbury studentships, applications for impact seed corn funding, School research plans and the College’s participation in the UK Scholarly Communications Licence initiative.
26.4 Research Strategy Group reported that the College’s research activities will now be more prominently showcased on the College’s website. The BGRS website has also been updated and will be further enhanced once the BGRS manager starts.

26.5 As the REF working party is too large to effectively make decisions, it has been agreed that the Research Strategy Group will be the executive body of the REF working group.

27 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING
Noted
27.1 The date of the next meeting of the Research Committee:
  • Wednesday 24 May 2017, at 2pm