MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

4 May 2016

Present
Professor Julian Swann (Chair), Professor Anthony Bale (AD-R Arts), Mr Paul Turnbull (AD-R Law), Professor Haris Psaradakis (AD-R BEI), Professor Hallvard Lillehammer (AD-R SSHP), Professor John Kraniauskas (School of Arts Representative), Dr Maya Topf (School of Science Representative), Professor Marjorie Lorch (School of SSHP Representative), Professor Rick Cooper (School of Science AD-R), Professor Alex Poulavassilis (School of BEI Representative)

In attendance
Dr Leslie Topp (Architecture, Space and Society Centre), Dr Anton Schutz (Centre for Research in Political Theology), Professor Michelle Everson (Centre for Critical European Law), Dr Eddie Bruce-Jones (Centre for Critical European Law), Dr Jo Winning (Centre for Medical Humanities), Mr Robert Atkinson (Director of Library and Media Services), Mrs Rabinder Bery (School Manager Representative), Ms Liz Francis (Head of Research Grants and Contracts Office), Dr Sarah Lee (Head of Research Strategy Support), Ms Tara Velez (Commodities and Finance Centre)

Apologies
Mr Richard Wilson (Deputy Director of HR), Mrs Hazel Lindley-Milton (HR Strategy and Policy Partner), Mr Frasier Keir (Academic Registrar), Dr Martin Eve (Chair of the Open Access Working Group), Mrs Katharine Bock (Deputy College Secretary (Governance))

28 MINUTES
Received and confirmed
28.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee 4 February 2016.

29 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
29.1 The Academic Board’s receipt of the Report of the Research Committee following its last meeting (RC 2015 43).

30 CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
30.1 The Committee welcomed the newly appointed Head of Research Strategy Support, who will be supporting the development of a College Impact Strategy and will support the REF2021 submission.

30.2 Meetings have been taking place with a view to including a centralised research budget in the 2016/17 planning round.

30.3 So far this year approximately £6.5M - £7M of College expenditure has been directly research related.
Funds from the budget will be used to strategically support research initiatives across the College and will be administrated by the Research Strategy Group.

It was confirmed that currently QR funding as allocated by the REF is shown by department in the IDM. The centralised budget will not affect this distribution.

Members heard that the centralised research budget and the implications for post-doctoral research funding and PGR Studentships will be discussed at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee.

It was noted that interviews for the ESRC DTP bids will take place on 28 June 2016. Initial feedback on the college’s application has been positive.

RESEARCH CENTRES
Noted

The College’s rolling review of Research Centres (RC 2015 44)

The Research Committee reviewed six Research Centres:
- Centre for Medical Humanities (RC 2015 45)
- Centre for Research in Political Theology (RC 2015 46)
- Architecture, Space and Society Centre (RC 2015 47)
- Commodities and Finance Centre (RC 2015 48)
- Centre for Critical European Law (RC 2015 49)
- Centre for Educational Neuroscience (RC 2015 50)

Centre for Medical Humanities

The Centre for Medical Humanities was established in 2013 and is currently in its second full year of operation.

In 2015/16 the centre hosted two high profile events; screenings of Abandoned Goods (Fly Films 2015) and the Positive Living: Art and Aids in South Africa exhibition. The Centre also hosts a cross-College medical humanities reading group which meets twice termly and is open to both staff and students.

The centre has taken the lead on organising the CHASE consortium medical humanities network, the inaugural workshop of which will be held in mid-May 2016.

In 2016/17 the Centre will be hosting a termly lecture series with external speakers and several conferences. The centre will also be looking to develop cross-College links outside of the School of Arts.

Members heard that the Centre is developing its mentoring programmes to encourage research grant applications. Staff associated with the Centre have had some success with Wellcome Trust funding.

Centre for Research in Political Theology

The Centre for Research in Political Theology was established in 2014. The centre aims to build an international Birkbeck platform for the rising number of
international researchers in the fields of Western-Christian and Western-secular law.

31.9 In the past year academics attached to the centre have produced three volumes and are currently working on a fourth.

31.10 In 2016/17 members of the centre will participate in a conference in Germany and submit grant applications.

31.11 The centre has been focusing on its international links, but moving forwards will be looking to increase its cross-College collaborations.

Architecture, Space and Society Centre
31.12 The Architecture, Space and Society centre was established in 2015 and has just finished its first full year of operation.

31.13 The centre has established itself firmly in its first year with the launch of a website, establishing a social media presence and holding conferences.

31.14 The centre is pleased to report the appointment of a Professor of Architectural History, and it is looking to actively collaborate with other research centres and departments across the College.

31.15 It was reported that the Centre is actively collaborating with the Centre for Medical Humanities and departments across the College.

31.16 Members expressed a need for facilitation of communication and collaboration between the College’s research centres. It was agreed that this will be discussed at the next meeting of the Research Strategy Group.

Commodities and Finance Centre
31.17 The Commodities and Finance Centre was established in 2006.

31.18 In previous years the centre has run Graduate Programme PhD days and has co-organised a summer school on energy and risk management with the University La Sapienza.

31.19 Academics attached to the centre have published a number of articles and have spoken at a variety of conferences.

31.20 Funding for the Centre is allocated from the School of BEI budget.

Centre for Critical European Law
31.21 The Centre for Critical European Law was established in February 2015, and has been in operation for one year.

31.22 In the last year the centre has hosted a symposium on the concept of legal transfers.

31.23 Members attached to the centre continue to co-ordinate the EU funded Jean Monnet Network on Agency Governance (TARN).
31.24 The centre will be holding an event concerning the European Union in the upcoming Law on Trial week.

31.25 Moving forward the centre will be looking to collaborate with other centres.

Centre for Educational Neuroscience
31.26 The Centre for Educational Neuroscience was established in 2008. The centre was initially a collaboration between Birkbeck, IoE and UCL, now it is a partnership between Birkbeck and UCL.

31.27 The Centre has adopted an innovative approach to funding by running a joint MSc in educational neuroscience between the two institutions, a small percentage of the fees paid for this course go towards funding the centre.

31.28 Academics attached to the centre are currently in receipt of a variety of research grants, with a £1M grant recently being secured.

31.29 Academics attached to the centre continue to publish their work regularly.

32 BIRKBECK UNIVERSITY OF LONDON KNOWLEDGE LAB
Noted
32.1 Members heard that the London Knowledge Lab, a collaborative partnership between Birkbeck and the IoE since 2001 has been ended.

32.2 As that decision was initiated by UCL, it was agreed by Chair’s action to approve the launch of a separate Birkbeck University of London Knowledge Lab.

32.3 The online presence of the centre will undergo a rebranding, but it will display a legacy statement which recognises the historical links to the London Knowledge Lab.

32.4 A variety of individuals across Birkbeck’s Schools and departments have expressed interest in being involved in the new centre.

Approved
32.5 The Research Committee approved the relaunch of the Birkbeck University of London Knowledge Lab.

33 SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMITTEES
Received and considered
33.1 The annual reports of the School Research Committees 2015-16:
- School of Arts (RC 2015 51)
- School of Law (RC 2015 52)
- School of Science (RC 2015 53)
- School of SSHP (RC 2016 54)
- The School of BEI will report in the autumn term.

School of Arts
Noted
33.2 The School of Arts continues to monitor and report REF activities to the School of Arts Research Committee.

33.3 The School Impact Officer is currently shortlisting potential impact case studies and is aiming to present the list in October 2016; this will clarify impact development funding needs and priorities.

33.4 It was reported that research centres and institutes attached to the School would like improvements to be made to cross-College communication channels that might facilitate collaborations between research centres across Birkbeck.

33.5 Members were assured that the research environment of the School was fit for purpose.

33.6 The School of Arts continues to maximise open access compliance rates.

33.7 Moving forward the School will be looking to centralise and define its research culture and identity.

33.8 Members queried the need to provide assurance on compliance with the College’s Data Management and Sharing Policy as they were not aware of it. It was confirmed that the policy has not yet been rolled out and that workshops to promote awareness are scheduled for later in the term.

School of Law

33.9 The School of Law has convened a School REF Working Party which is scheduled to meet once termly. This body is composed of researchers at all career stages from both Law and Criminology. The School continues to monitor potential REF outputs; the Committee was assured that the target of 140 outputs for the School seems achievable at this stage in the process.

33.10 It was reported that whilst impact activities are occurring and several potential impact case studies have been identified as of yet there has been no targeted interventions to increase or stimulate impact activities.

33.11 Four research centres are attached to the School of Law which are overseen by the School Research Committee. From 2016/17 the School will be moving to a departmental structure, this will go some way towards developing the research environment of the School. Efforts have also been made to improve the School’s research environment for postgraduate research students.

33.12 The School of Law continues to maximise open access compliance rates.

33.13 It was agreed that the form’s requirement to report on ongoing research grant applications should be removed.

School of Science

33.14 The School of Science assured the Research Committee that staff within the School are aware of the requirements for REF outputs; monitoring of outputs continues to
take place through PDRs, with department heads working in close contact with UoA Leads.

33.15 It was noted that the three departments in the School of Science adopt slightly different approaches towards REF preparation due to the collaborations between the Earth Sciences and Biology departments with UCL.

33.16 The Impact activities of Earth Sciences and Biology are monitored by UCL academics and impact staff.

33.17 The Impact Officer for Psychology has identified 7 potential impact case studies and is currently working towards gathering funding where necessary.

33.18 The departments of the School of Science are attached to successful research centres such as the Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development and the Institute for Structural and Molecular Biology, which continue to enhance the School’s research environment.

33.19 It was noted that space is an issue for the School in regard to developing its research environment.

33.20 Open access compliance rates remain an issue within the School, whilst it is believed that deposit rates are high reporting mechanisms across the three Schools require improvement.

33.21 The rate of research applications submitted across the departments remains strong. The AD-R for Science and the Head of Research Grants and Contracts Office will meet to discuss the issue.

School of SSHP

33.22 The School of SSHP reported that all REF eligible staff have been subject to review in 2015/16, and that monitoring of outputs is ongoing with a view to maximum submission rates in the next REF.

33.23 A shortlist of potential impact case studies has been identified, some of which are tied to substantial grants.

33.24 The School has enhanced its research environment with the addition a new research centre for the study of internationalism, the School continues to support its other thriving research centres.

33.25 It was noted that the School will be looking to improve procedures for the mentoring of non-established research staff.

33.26 The School of SSHP continues to maximise open access compliance rates.

33.27 It was agreed that form’s requirement to report on the activity of the Impact Officers should be removed.

34 EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
34.1 The reports of the Research Grants and Contracts Office:
- Research Income 2014/15 (RC 2015 55)
- All research grants current and confirmed (RC 2015 56)
- Grant Applications 2014/15 (RC 2015 57)
- Grant Applications 2015/16 (RC 2015 58)

Noted
34.2 It was reported that the Research Grants and Contracts Office are continuing their work to support College researchers; the finance system has been updated so that research grants are now linked to research centres as well as the relevant PI.

34.3 The Head of the Research Grants and Contracts Office will continue to meet with contacts from each of the Schools to determine how best the office can support academic staff.

34.4 It was noted that the College had achieved a 100% success rate in reporting to Research Fish for researchers and an 86% success rate for students.

34.5 Members heard that the College’s research income in 2014/15 was a total of £10.4M which constituted 9.8% of the College’s total income.

34.6 The total value of current projects totalled £42.7M.

34.7 It was confirmed that so far in 2015/16, eighty-two research grant applications have been successful.

35 RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS
Received
35.1 The report of the Research Student’s Sub-Committee (RC 2015 59)

Noted
35.2 The BGRS open day has been confirmed for Monday 23rd May 2016. The event will begin with a talk and a Q&A session between the PVM-R and the attendees, followed by a debate on the Europe referendum with delegates from both the leave and remain campaigns. The evening will close with a social event and drinks and snacks will be provided.

35.3 It was noted that progress is being made towards the central advertisement of postgraduate research studentships.

36 OPEN ACCESS
Received
36.1 The report of the Open Access Working Group (RC 2015 60)

Noted
36.2 The Chair of the Open Access Working Group, the PVM-R and the Head of Research Strategy Support continue to meet with Schools and departments in order to disseminate information about the HEFCE Open Access policy and compliance.
36.3 Members noted progress regarding the linking of BIROn deposits to staff profiles; the Research Support Group are working on resolving the issue of citations.

36.4 To date 50% of staff who were submitted to the last REF have not deposited anything in BIROn. The Committee heard that at the next meeting of the REF Working party there will be an item on Open Access detailing the current compliance rates of each UoA.

36.5 It was agreed that during academic reviews staff should be asked to supply the BIROn number or URLs for their publications.

36.6 It was further agreed that open access compliance should be added to probation and promotion forms in order to raise awareness.

37 REF
Received

37.1 The report of the REF Working Party (RC 2015 61)
Noted

37.2 Incorporating the comments of the REF Working Party the PVM-R has written a response to the Stern review on behalf of the College.

37.3 The response of the College is in favour of: the Haldane Principle; caution around ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies, especially in regards to metrics; the need for more feedback; a lack of confidence in the cross-referral system; 100% mandatory inclusion rates; further integration of equality and diversity within the REF process.

37.4 It was noted that an impact event will be held in September, and that a College impact strategy is being developed.

38 RESEARCH STRATEGY
Received

38.1 Members of the Research Strategy Group met in the spring term to assess the potential Leverhulme Leadership Award applications from across the five Schools. Members unanimously agreed that Dr Tim Smith’s proposal, ‘Modelling the Influence of Media on the developing Mind’, would be the College’s official submission to the Leverhulme Leadership Award Scheme 2016.

38.2 The PVM-R and the Head of Research Strategy Support are in ongoing conversations with London Higher Europe regarding how the organisation can assist the College.

38.3 Work towards the College’s application for the HR Excellence in Research award is ongoing. An informal gap analysis will take place over the summer term. A formal gap analysis will be undertaken in the autumn term and the College plans to make its application in 2017.

39 DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS
Noted
39.1 The dates of the 2016/17 meetings of the Research Committee:

- Wednesday 12 October 2016, 2pm-4pm
- Thursday 9 February 2016, 2pm-4pm
- Wednesday 24 May 2017, 2pm-4pm