BIRKBECK COLLEGE
University of London

MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

13 May 2015

Present
Professor Stephen Frosh (Chair), Professor Julian Swann, Professor Rick Cooper, Mr Paul Turnbull, Professor John Kraniauskas, Dr Maya Topf, Ms Tricia King, Professor Alex Poulosilis

In Attendance
Ms Rachael Boyle (Committee Administrator), Mr Robert Atkinson (Director of Library and Media Services), Ms Liz Francis (Head of Research Grants and Contracts Office), Professor Ted Melhuish, Ms Catherine Griffiths, Dr Suzanne Konzelmann, Mr Luca Andriani, Dr Ioanna Boulouta

Apologies
Professor Costas Douzinas, Professor Philip Dewe, Professor Sue Jackson, Professor Matthew Weait, Professor Sasha Roseneil, Professor John Kelly, Ms Anna Gaze, Professor Marjorie Lorch

28 MINUTES
Received and Confirmed
28.1 The minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee 4 February 2015.

Noted
28.2 The Chair of the Research Committee requested further information regarding the Fulbright Birkbeck Scholar Award Scheme. It was confirmed that the appointee for 2015-16 had been confirmed and that the appointee in 2016-17 was likely to go to the School of Science.

28.3 It was reported that the School of Law had been approached directly by Fulbright with an applicant; however the application was not considered to be of a high enough academic quality.

28.4 It was agreed that the Assistant Dean for Research in the School of Science would raise awareness of the programme throughout the School and encourage applications. If no suitable applications came forward then the college might consider applicants to other Schools for 2016-17.

28.5 It was confirmed that the programme was administrated by Registry Services.

29 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
29.1 The receipt of the report of the Research Committee following its last meeting by the Academic Board (RC 2014 41)
CHAIR’S REPORT
Noted
30.1 The results of REF 2014 had been discussed at various committees including Governors and the Strategic Planning Committee. Response to the results had been very positive. The REF Working Party had been reconstituted to oversee the REF2020 submission.

RESEARCH STRATEGY
Noted
31.1 Members heard that an implementation plan for the Research Strategy 2014-19 had been widely circulated and that various aspects were being rolled out across the College.

31.2 It was noted that the Chair would be meeting with the Vice Master and the College Secretariat in relation to centralised support for identified potential impact cases for the REF 2020 and research support in general.

RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS
Received
32.1 A Report from the Research Students Sub-Committee (RC 2014 42)

Noted
32.2 Members noted that the Review of Postgraduate Research Provision would be reporting initial findings in June 2015. It was anticipated that the review would offer some clarification as to where research student matters would sit in relation to the Pro Vice Master Portfolios. The area was currently being addressed within the PVM portfolio.

32.3 Birkbeck’s current standing in regards to Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) studentship funding was outlined to the Committee. The College had been part of a proposed Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) that was unsuccessful in its bid to secure AHRC funding. It had however been successful in becoming a member of the Consortium of Humanities and the Arts South-East England (CHASE). CHASE’s founding members had been successful in their DTP bid and the benefits of joining them should become apparent to the College over time, in particular improving our chances of getting AHRC studentships in the next round.

32.4 The College gets a small amount of studentship funding from the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) DTC, the benefits of this arrangement were noted to be reputational rather than financial.

32.5 Birkbeck continues to be involved within the Bloomsbury Doctoral Training Centre (DTC), which currently has 28 Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) funded studentships. The College benefits from this arrangement primarily in the subjects of Psychology, Economics and Politics.

32.6 There had been proposals made by other notable Higher Education institutions for a joint DTC arrangement should the Bloomsbury DTC not continue. However, the Bloomsbury DTC had been a noted success and the College’s high level management
had agreed that the preferred way forward would be an enlarged Bloomsbury DTC. This now seems to be the most likely option.

32.7 The Research Students Sub-Committee had discussed the introduction of an independent chair to be present at PhD oral examinations where the candidate had declared a disability. Members of the Research Committee were in favour of this amendment and would await the formal paper to pass through the RSSC.

32.8 The RSSC had considered the issue of PhD thesis embargo requests. This was noted to be of particular concern for students as publishers were unlikely to publish PhD theses that appeared elsewhere. It was determined that in instances where the reasons for granting an embargo where not clearly defined the PVM for Research would request additional information.

33 EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

33.1 The Reports of the Research Grants & Contracts Office:
- Research Income 2014/14 (RC 2014 43)
- All Research Grants Current and Confirmed (RC 2014 44)
- Grant Applications 2013/14 (RC 2014 45)
- Grant Applications 2014/15 (RC 2014 46)

33.2 The Committee received its regular report from the Research Grants and Contracts office. Members were pleased to note that the 200 applications submitted to date for 2014-15 indicated that there would be an overall increase on the annual number of applications submitted, given the total of 212 applications made in 2013-14.

33.3 The College was noted to have maintained a good success rate of approximately 30%, with returns from Research Funding Councils being high compared to the institutional average.

33.4 It was noted that those departments more successful in their applications also had a higher proportion of unsuccessful applications. Information on such trends should be made more widely available so as to encourage junior researchers in their applications.

33.5 It was reported that the College had submitted 18 applications to the British Academy Postdoctoral Scheme and that so far 1 had been confirmed to be successful. The scheme in question had an average success rate of 5% and so the College’s submissions were likely to skew the overall research application success rate of the College.

33.6 Nine submissions had been made to the Leverhulme Trust, so far SSHP had been awarded 5 grants and Arts had been awarded 1, indicating a 63.3% success rate. The College had recently held an event concerning how to tailor applications to the Leverhulme Trust which may have contributed to this high success rate.
Approximately 75.7% of research income was noted to come from the School of Science. This was a typical trend across the higher education sector. There was also a noted correlation between higher research income per FTE staff member and the Ref 2014 results.

Members considered potential areas of concern for the future and noted that the School of BEI would receive a relatively small amount of QR funding, reflecting its performance in REF2014, and the School of Arts would need to make up a significant shortfall once the AHRC award was finished.

**OPEN ACCESS**

Received

34.1 The Report of the Open Access Working Group (RC 2014 47)

Noted

34.2 Members were informed that the Open Access Working Group had been reconstituted and would be reporting formally to the Research Committee on a termly basis. It was confirmed that the Working Group would be chaired by Dr Martin Eve, a new appointment to the College with previous experience and expertise in the field of open access.

34.3 The primary focus of the Working Group would be to ensure that the College was compliant with the HEFCE REF guidelines regarding open access, with specific regards to the green publication route.

34.4 It was noted that from 1 April 2016 relevant publications that were not made available through Birkbeck’s institutional repository, BIROn, would not be eligible for REF submission. It was noted that all new publications were required to be deposited within 3 months of acceptance.

34.5 It was confirmed that a deposited publication could be subsequently updated if changes were made later. The requirement would pertain only to those works published after the 1 April 2016.

34.6 The first action of the Open Access Working Group would be to roll out a reporting system whereby ASMs for Research would report to relevant library staff on a monthly basis as to whether any of their staff had work that had been accepted for publication and would therefore need to be deposited in BIROn.

34.7 Members proposed to the co-optation of Dr Martin Eve onto the Research Committee from October 2015.

Recommended

34.8 The Research Committee Recommends that Academic Board approve the co-option of Dr Martin Eve to the Research Committee from October 2015.

**REF UPDATE**

Received

35.1 The report of the REF Working Party (RC 2014 48)
The funding outcomes from the REF2014 were reported to members. It was reported that HEFCE had altered the QR funding formula slightly with funding now to be acquired on the basis of 3 and 4* outcomes at a ratio of 4:1 rather than 3:1. Furthermore, funding for sub-scores would be based on outputs, impact and environment rather than overall scores.

It was confirmed that the College’s total research income from HEFCE sources was approximately £10.5M, with almost £7M of this resulting from the REF2014 exercise. Members were pleased with this outcome, which although representing a 3% drop, demonstrated that College income from HEFCE sources had been largely protected.

It was noted that there had been some notable shifts across the College in relation to QR funding from REF performance. Sociology, Law and Modern Languages had seen significant funding increases relating to their much improved performances. Psychology, history, biology and computer science achieved impressive incomes between 590K and 900K. It was confirmed that QR funding was incorporated into the budgets of the relevant School not individual academics.

Members were pleased to note that the College was in receipt of a significant amount of QR funding for research students. The Charity Support Fund had awarded the College £600K, with the Business Research Element contributing £40K. Birkbeck would also receive Research Degree Programme (RDP) funding for PhD provision of just over £2M.

The REF Working Party had been reconstituted in order to prepare the College for the REF2020 submission; reports would be made to the Research Committee on a termly basis. The Chair of the Working Party would be the PVM for Research and the membership would be made up from the UOA Leads and the Assistant Deans for Research. It was confirmed that the College would be seeking to make submissions in the same UOAs as in REF2014, and that the assessment criteria for REF2020 were likely to be very similar to 2014.

The attention of the Committee was drawn to point 2.4 of the report of the REF Working Party, which concerned the administrative support which had been made available by the College for the REF2014 submission. Members expressed disappointment with the lack of progress being made towards the establishment of a centralised research office. Members also noted the inflexibility of the College website and questioned its suitability as the external face of research for Birkbeck.

The reports of the School Research Committees from the Spring term meetings 2015:
- School of Arts (RC 2014 49)
- School of Law (RC 2014 50)
- School of Science (RC 2014 51)
- School of Social Science, History and Philosophy (RC 2014 52)
- School of Business, Economics and Informatics (RC 2014 53)
37 RESEARCH CENTRES
Received and Noted

37.1 The Committees rolling review of research centres (RC 2014 54)
Noted

37.2 The Research Committee reviewed five research centres:
- Centre for Scientific Analysis for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage
- Institute for Criminal Policy Research
- Institute for the Study of Children, Family and Social Issues
- London Centre for Corporate Governance
- London Knowledge Lab

Centre for Scientific Analysis for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage
Received

37.3 The report of the Centre for the Scientific Analysis for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage (RC 2014 55)
Noted

37.4 The Centre for Scientific Analysis for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage had been established in 2002 and had largely been in receipt of European funding for projects.

37.5 The Centre is quite small in comparison to other Birkbeck research centres with a membership of 2. It was noted that both members of staff were appointees from Biological Sciences and that there were no obvious interdisciplinary aspects to the centre.

37.6 It was confirmed that whilst the Centre did have some research grant applications pending, most notably to Horizon 2020 and the Leverhulme Trust in collaboration with English Heritage, its EU grants had finished.

37.7 It was determined that the AD for Research for the School of Science would liaise with the centre members to establish how dependent upon external grants the centre was and how precisely the convening of the centre added value to Birkbeck as a research intensive institution.

Institute for Criminal Policy Research
Received

37.8 The report of the Institute for Criminal Policy Research (RC 2014 56)
Noted

37.9 The Institute of Criminal Policy Research was established at Birkbeck in 2011. The Institute is comprised of 12 members of which half are full-time staff and half are part-time staff.

37.10 In 2013/14 the institute completed projects worth over £1.6M and averages an annual income of £600K, primarily from Research Council Trusts and EU Funding.

37.11 The Institute hosts visiting scholars and offers 1 student per year an internship at the Law School.
37.12 Members enquired as to whether the Institute could become more interdisciplinary in its research projects, it was confirmed that this was a possibility and that furthermore initiatives were underway to bring junior staff into the centre’s projects.

**Institute for the Study of Children, Family and Social Issues**

**Received**


**Noted**

37.14 The Institute for the Study of Children, Family and Social Issues was established in 2001 when a multi-million pound grant was awarded to Birkbeck by the Department of Education and Skills to conduct the National Evaluation of the Sure Start programme. This work was now concluded. The Institute would be moving away from its traditional income of government funding and would be actively seeking grants from Charitable Trusts.

37.15 Members queried the sustainability of the Institute given the ending of the Sure Start grant and the small number of staff involved in the Institute. The AD for the School of Science undertook to discuss with the Department of Psychological Sciences issues of integration of the Institute within the Department and its long term sustainability.

**Centre for Corporate Governance**

**Received**

37.16 The report of the Centre for Corporate Governance *(RC 2014 58)*

**Noted**

37.17 The Centre for Corporate Governance was established in 2008 with its most prominent members being drawn from MSc and PhD corporate governance students and alumni. The Department of Management had increased staff involvement with the appointment of assistant directors.

37.18 It was noted that the centre had achieved a great deal, putting on seminars, conferences and submitting funding proposals despite not having a budget. The School of BEI had agreed to fund a small amount of catering costs to facilitate networking events after seminar events.

37.19 The centre had established and maintained links with various institutions such as University of Bournemouth, London City University and Cass Business School. The Centre was encouraged to engage with other Birkbeck Research Centres such as the BISR.

**The London Knowledge Lab**

**Received**

37.20 The report of the London Knowledge Lab *(RC 2014 59)*

**Noted**
37.21 The London Knowledge Lab was established in 2001 as a joint venture with the Institute of Education (IOE). The IOE had recently merged with University College London and as of yet there was no indication as to the effect this might have on the Centre.

37.22 It was noted that staff involved in the centre had recently relocated from joint premises with the IOE to the Birkbeck Malet Street Extension Building so as to be closer to the rest of the Computer Science Department.

37.23 The Centre was notably involved in interdisciplinary projects with evidenced links with staff involved in digital technology and new media work.

37.24 The London Knowledge Lab had worked on 3 impact case studies subsequently submitted to the REF2014. For REF2020 the centre was looking to commence research with specific regard to impact on the relevant industries and workplaces.

37.25 Received

A proposal to establish a new research centre; The Centre for Technology and Publishing (RC 2014 60)

37.26 Noted

The Committee received and endorsed a proposal to establish a new Centre for Technology and Publishing. The proposed centre had already attracted interest from members of Birkbeck staff and funding applications were underway to both the Leverhulme Trust and the Mellon Foundation.

37.27 Members supported the proposal, noting its interdisciplinary dimensions and its aim to add value to Birkbeck by way of keeping senior management informed of best practice publishing policy.

37.28 Received

A proposal to establish a new research centre; The Birkbeck Institute for Data Analytics (RC 2014 61)

37.29 Noted

The Committee received and endorsed a proposal to establish the new Birkbeck Institute for Data Analytics (BIDA). The proposal was noted to be a response to the REF2014 results in so far as it would address the need to promote interdisciplinary research, support research that has the potential to have impact and invest more in the Birkbeck research environment.

37.30 The Centre would bring together technological and domain specific areas of research, and in the longer term develop new areas of research. It was reported that the proposal had been met with support at various levels within the five Schools and by the Library.

37.31 It was noted that a new job post of Academic Director for the Centre was awaiting approval. The structure of the position would likely mirror similar posts across the College, being a relatively senior academic appointment with a 0.5FTE secondment to the Institute.
37.32 It was confirmed that the work of the Centre would not overlap significantly with the work of the Centre for Cognition, Computing and Modelling and that communication channels were open so as to allay any concerns.

Received
37.33 A proposal to establish a new research centre; The Centre for Comparative Research in European Cultures and Identities (RC 2014 62)

Noted
37.34 The Committee received and endorsed a proposal to establish a new Centre for Comparative Research in European Cultures and Identities. It was envisioned that the Centre would facilitate the research activities of staff within the Department of Cultures and Languages that were not currently being catered for by the two existing research centres based within the department.

37.35 The Centre would engage in interdisciplinary work with other research centres with a European focus. It was reported that there had been expressed interest from various departments such as; History, Politics, Applied Linguistics and Law.

37.36 It was confirmed that care would be taken to ensure that the outward representation of the Centre would not encroach upon the ground of the Birkbeck Institute for the Humanities.

Recommended
37.37 Research Committee endorsed the proposals to establish the following research centres:
- Centre for Technology and Publishing
- Birkbeck Institute for Data Analytics
- Centre for Comparative Research in European Cultures and Identities

38 PRO VICE MASTER PORTFOLIOS
Noted
38.1 Members were informed that from October 2015 Professor Stephen Frosh would be standing down as PVM for Research, in order to take up the PVM for International portfolio. Professor Julian Swann would be stepping into the PVM for Research portfolio. Members thanked Professor Frosh for his service to the Committee over the past six years, who in turned thanked the members for their hard work.

40 DATES OF THE NEXT MEETINGS
Noted
40.1 Members noted the dates of the 2015-16 meetings of the Research Committee:
- Thursday 8 October, at 2pm
- Thursday 4 February, at 2pm
- Wednesday 4 May, at 2pm