Minutes

Summary
These are the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee of May 2011.

Recommended Action
The Committee is asked to confirm the minutes

Trevor Pearce
May 2011
MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
10 May 2011

Present:
Professor Stephen Frosh (Chair), Dr Rick Cooper, Professor John Kelly, Professor Esther Leslie, Professor Li Wei, Professor Alex Poulovassilis

Apologies:
Dr Tracey Barrett, Dr John Kraniauskas, Professor Joni Lovenduski

In attendance:
Robert Atkinson (Library), Professor David Feldman (Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism – for item 32), Liz Francis (Research Grants and Contracts Office), Martin Hodkinson (Representative of the School Managers), Helen Lawrence (Business Relations – for item 31), Trevor Pearce (Secretary)

Observer:
Professor Anne Curry (QAA; Degree Awarding Powers assessor)

28 MINUTES
Confirmed:
28.1 that the minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2011, RC26 (2010/11) were confirmed as an accurate record, subject to the correction of Dr Rick Cooper’s title and correct name for Dr Tracey Barrett.

29 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
Received and noted:
29.1 The report on matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2011, RC27 (2010/11)

Noted:
29.2 (i) That Dr Sean Hamil had now supplied an invitation to staff of the College to contribute to the Sports Business Centre; this would be circulated to all academic staff shortly;

(ii) that the College’s bid, in collaboration with the Bloomsbury consortium for Doctoral Training Centre recognition from the ESRC had been successful.

(iii) that it may be possible to book a regular room for research student events on Friday evenings;

(iv) that the Human Resources department had now produced template contracts to enable the employment of casual staff on short term contracts funded from research grants. The procedure for appointment of such staff was
normally less onerous than for permanent staff; payment of such staff would normally be subject to national insurance and tax.

Action: Trevor Pearce to confirm with the Human Resources departments what the requirements were for a recruitment process for casual staff, funded from research contracts.

30. REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Received and noted:
30.1 The report to Academic Board of the meeting of 11 January 2011, RC28 (2010/11)

Noted:
30.2 That the Committee’s recommendation to establish the Vasari Research Centre had been endorsed by Academic Board

31. EXPERTS’ DATABASE
Received and noted:
31.1 The report on the establishment of the experts’ database and other support for research from Business Relations, RC35 (2010/11).

Noted:
31.2 (i) That the report gave detail of the work undertaken by Business Relations to support research, including the efforts to link knowledge transfer, research and research impact;

(ii) that Business Relations had developed a software tool previously used to help potential PhD students to find a supervisor; this tool would enable access to the database for three external audiences; PhD students, media and potential clients for research consultancy, training and applied expertise;

(iii) that the database was a single database with three user interfaces, with a different vocabulary aimed at the different audiences;

(iv) that Business Relations were now trying to raise the profile of the database to increase interactions and impact, as well as continuing to add to the information contained within the database. A procedure had been established to ensure that Business Relations were informed of all joiners and leavers by HR, to ensure that the database was kept up to date;

(v) that there were 364 entries in the database so far; there were approximately 500 academic staff of the College not including sessional lecturers;

(vi) that there was a web-based user interface with the database for potential PhD students; Business Relations were proposing to use HEIF money to create search engines to assist other audiences, as part of a larger project to establish a business gateway from the College’s home page.
(vii) that Business Relations were happy to help with the development of impact case studies and in increasing the impact of College research.

**Action:** Professor Li Wei to discuss with Helen Lawrence further measures to raise the profile of the database.

### 32 RESEARCH CENTRES

#### Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism

**Received and noted:**
32.1 The College’s criteria for the establishment of a Research Centre, RC29 (2010/11).

**Received:**
32.2 A proposal to establish the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism

**Noted:**
32.3 (i) that the Institute wished to be designated as a research centre of the College to aid its integration with other departments and schools. Events run by the Institute had been offered in collaboration with a range of departments and schools, and this designation would help draw together College research in this area further.

(ii) that the Institute wished to focus on the comparative study of antisemitism and its points of similarity and difference with other forms of hatred.

(iii) that the Institute had already held a number of events that drew together research from across Schools of the College including Social Sciences, History & Philosophy, Arts and Law.

(iv) that the Institute was taking a lead on the development of a grant proposal for funding from the Runnymede Trust;

(v) that the Institute now had 15 listed associates from 3 different schools;

(vi) that Professor Feldman was the Director of the Institute; the management group for the Institute was chaired by the Master and included Trevor Pears and the Chairman of the Board of the Wiener Library.

**Agreed:**
32.4 That the Committee recommended approval of the Institute as a Research Centre of the College to Academic Board.

### 33 RESEARCH CENTRE REVIEW

**Received and noted:**
33.1 Progress reports from Research Centres, RC31 (2010/11).

**Birkbeck Research in the Aesthetics of Kinship & Community**

**Noted:**
33.2 That this Centre had a very active seminar series, and had also staged film screenings and had an active website. The Centre had received funding from the School of Arts for further activities.

**Centre for Brain and Cognitive Development**

Noted:

33.3 (i) That this Centre had been extremely successful in attracting external funding; issues had been raised in its report about internal funding mechanisms, and particularly the return of research overheads and taught programme fees to the Centre, but these had largely been resolved following further discussions within the School;

(ii) that the Centre had now attracted additional Marie Curie studentships.

**Institute of Children, Family & Social Issues**

Noted:

33.4 (i) That this Institute was likely to be a key part in the development of the impact submission for the Psychology submission to the REF;

**Commodity Finance Centre**

Noted:

33.5 (i) That this was a relatively small research centre with a small number of PhD students;

(ii) that this Centre would be contributing to the Business, Economics & Informatics Research Week by providing a major keynote speech;

(iii) that the report did not explain how the work of the Centre went beyond the normal work of the individuals involved; future reports should explicitly ask Centres to demonstrate what added value the “Centre” designation had brought to the College.

**Contemporary Poetics Centre**

Noted:

33.6 That this Centre brought together a wide range of contributors and was a centre for events, conferences and publications. It was likely to contribute to the impact submission to the English submission to the REF.

34 **REF**

Received and noted:

34.1 An update report on preparations for the REF, RC32 (2010/11)

Noted:

34.2 (i) That the REF 2010 Dry Run on outputs had now been completed. Reports had been received from all units of assessment, and further information requested where necessary. Professor Frosh had circulated reports to Executive Deans and would be writing a report on the Dry Run to the Master;
(ii) that schools, departments and units of assessment would be responsible for providing support and developing local policy for submissions; decisions on submission of individual members of staff would remain the responsibility of the Working Party;

(iii) that there were no planned submissions that looked weak, and some of the submissions looked very strong. There were a reasonable number of individual borderline cases who should be supported by schools, for example by provision of mentoring schemes and sabbatical leave.

(iv) that the Working Group would be proposing that the College submit to the Geography, Environmental Studies & Archaeology unit of assessment; this decision would be further reviewed in 2012 to ensure that the expected progress was being made within this unit of assessment.

(v) that the College was still in discussions with UCL over a joint submission in the Earth Sciences and Environmental Systems unit of assessment;

(vi) that HEFCE had now published preliminary guidance on impact. Impact would form 20% of the overall assessment for each unit of assessment and will almost certainly be measured by assessment of case studies – one case study would be required for every ten members of staff, with a minimum of two case studies required.

(vii) that units of assessment had provided preliminary lists of case studies to the Working Group; some areas looked very strong. Problems raised included ensuring that impact case studies were correctly attributed to the institution where the research had actually taken place (particularly in respect of staff that had moved institution), and also ensuring that evidence trails to support impact case studies were adequate.

35 COLLEGE RESEARCH STRATEGY
Received and noted:

Noted:
35.2 That the Strategy included a range of projects designed to implement the Strategy; the Committee would receive regular reports from these projects as part of its role in ensuring the implementation of the Strategy across the College.

Training for Assistant School Managers
Received and noted:
35.3 A report on the Training for Assistant School Managers project, RC34 (2010/11).

Noted:
35.4 (i) That this programme had been developed in collaboration with senior managers and School Managers, and had been designed to give Assistant School
Managers the opportunity to consider their role. The project began in November 2010 and had used an action learning approach.

(ii) that Learning & Organisational Development had been working with School Managers to assess the impact of the project; initial feedback had been positive, and participants had particularly appreciated the opportunity to interact with other Assistant School Managers across the College. A full review of the project would take place across the Summer.

(iii) that the Research Grants and Contracts Office continued to hold regular briefing events for Assistant School Managers (Research).

Development of the College Website to Support Research RC36
Received and noted:
35.5 An update report on the development of the College website to support its research, RC36 (2010/11)

Noted:
35.6 (i) That this project was taking place as part of a general review of the College website. Analysis had suggested that the website had not been well used for research and so the College’s web team were increasing the number of stories on research on the College website;

(ii) that, in addition to the development of the Experts’ Database, the web team were also making further provision for use of podcasts and videos of research events; this could include interviews with Birkbeck academic staff on radio and television;

(iii) that it was intended to use social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to ensure that research events reached a wider audience. The College had over 2900 Facebook followers and over 700 Twitter followers;

(iv) that redevelopment of the website was projected to be completed by the start of the academic year.

(v) that maintenance of school websites had now been devolved to Schools, but processes were in place to ensure that, where a School based event was placed on a central website it would also link to the website of the appropriate School.

Provision of Specialist Assistance
Received and noted:
35.7 A report on the provision of specialist copy-writing assistance to support research grant dissemination, RC37 (2010/11).

Noted:
35.8 (i) that the results of research grants were typically promoted, where appropriate, through College website and to relevant media outlets. The College had hoped, by this project, to increase these avenues for dissemination by the utilisation of research grant dissemination budgets, but both the
Leverhulme Trust and Wellcome Foundation had advised that use of dissemination budgets for this purpose would not be appropriate.

(ii) that there was no internal resource that could be used for copywriting for all research grants, although External Relations continued to work with departments to help disseminate the results of research. It may be appropriate to consider provision of training programmes for academics on the translation of research outcomes to media-friendly copy.

Action: Jane Stephenson / Helen Lawrence to liaise to discuss provision of a workshop aimed at staff members on production of press releases and media-friendly copy

36  BIRKBECK GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL
Received and noted:
36.1 Proposals for a revised funding methodology for the Birkbeck Graduate Research School, RC38 (2010/11).

Noted:
36.2 (i) That “Roberts” funding had been used by the College to provide centrally organised generic skills training and training events offered by schools and departments;

(ii) that Roberts’ funding was now being discontinued; the research councils had confirmed that the maximum level of fee which they would pay for a research student’s tuition fee would be uplifted by £200 to cover this shortfall from 2011/12;

(iii) that Roberts’ funding had funded events offered by all five Schools, and students from all Schools had accessed the events offered in reasonably similar numbers;

(iv) that it was proposed to use the uplifted fee to continue to fund centrally delivered and school based generic skills training events as in previous years, in order to be able to demonstrate to the research councils the strength of the College’s commitment to the delivery of generic skills training;

(v) that the proposals would be considered by the Strategic Planning Committee as well as the Research Committee, prior to consideration at ABExCo and Academic Board.

Agreed:
36.3 To recommend approval for the proposals to Academic Board.

37  RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATIONS

ESRC Demand Management
Received and noted:
37.1 An ESRC paper entitled Demand Management – Next Steps.
37.2 (i) that this was a follow up paper to the one received at the January meeting of the Committee, and was a consultation on options under consideration by the ESRC in relation to demand management;

(ii) that the ESRC anticipated implementing demand management measures with a review of these measures after 12 months;

(iii) that the College preference would be for sanctions against individuals rather than institutions to be applied; the College would also prefer there to be a common approach across Research Councils but the ESRC had already indicated that they did not consider the EPSRC approach to demand management to be appropriate for them;

(iv) that Professor Frosh would supply a response to the consultation on behalf of the College.

History, Classics & Archaeology Research Grant Applications Support

37.3 Details of the methods used to support research grant applications within the Department of History, Classics & Archaeology, RC47 (2010/11).

38 GOOD PRACTICE IN RESEARCH POLICY

38.1 A proposal to update the College’s Good Practice in Research Policy, RC40 (2010/11)

Agreed:
38.2 To recommend approval for the updated Good Practice in Research Policy.

39 RCUK PUBLICATIONS

Efficiency 2011-15


Noted:
39.2 (i) that research grants would no longer be uplifted annually in line with inflation; this would need to be taken into account when producing contracts for research assistants on research grants and when purchasing equipment.

(ii) that School Research Committees should be made aware of these developments.

Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research

39.3 A publication from RCUK, the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research, RC42 (2010/11)
40 LIBRARY SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH
Noted:
40.1 The Library would be doing a survey of academic staff on attitudes to open access, specifically including details of the BIROn institutional repository system.
Action: Robert Atkinson to forward the email address for the survey to Trevor Pearce for onwards transmission to Committee members.

41 RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS
Received and noted:
41.1 A report from the Research Student Sub-Committee meeting of 1 February 2011, RC44 (2010/11)

Agreed:
41.2 (i) To recommend approval of the proposal to permit Geography PhD theses to be of up to 100,000 words (PhD) and 80,000 words (MPhil);
(ii) to recommend approval of the proposed new Appeals Procedure for Research Degree Examinations to Academic Board.

Noted:
41.3 That HEFCE had proposed a new allocation method for postgraduate research student funding, linking funding to research quality. Comments on the proposal were invited to Professor Frosh.

42 SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMITTEES
Received and noted:
42.1 Reports from the School Research Committees, RC45 (2010/11)

43 EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS
Received and noted:
43.1 Reports on externally funded research grants and contracts, RC46i-iv (2010/11).

Noted
43.2 (i) that numbers of research student grant applications made in 2010/11 had increased on those made in 2009/10;
(ii) that 33% of research grant applications made by the College in 2009/10 had been successful; the total value of research grants held by the College in 2010/11 had gone up 2%. Total funding received in 2009/10 had declined slightly to that achieved in previous years;
(iii) that charity funding received by the College had increased in 2009/10;

44 FUTURE MEETINGS
Noted:
44.1 That dates of future meetings would be circulated shortly.
Signed______________________________

Date ______________________________