MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
13 October 2009

Present:
Professor Stephen Frosh (Pro-Vice Master for Research; Chair),
Dr Tracey Barratt, Jack Bovill (vice Mukesh Bhatt), Professor Martin Eimer, Professor Michelle Everson, Professor Patrick Hanafin, Dr John Kraniauskas, Professor Esther Leslie, Professor Mark Levene, Professor Li Wei, Dean Pateman, Dr Amanda Perry-Kessaris, Professor Alexandra Poulovasillis. Jane Stephenson (vice Tricia King)

Apologies for absence:
Professor Sasha Roseneil

In attendance:
Richard Abbott (Registry Officer), Robert Atkinson (Deputy Librarian), Liz Francis (Head, Research Grants & Contracts), Martin Hodkinson (Manager School of Arts), Trevor Pearce (Head of Academic Services),

1 MEMBERSHIP AND TERMS OF REFERENCE
Noted:
1.1 The terms of reference of the Research Committee (RC1 (2009/10)). The membership of the Research Committee is now consistent with that of other committees. A representative from the School of Business, Economics and Informatics section had not yet been appointed

2 MINUTES
Agreed:
2.2 The minutes of the meeting of 30 April RC2 (2009/10) were confirmed

3 MATTERS ARISING
Noted:
3.1 (i) Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of 30 April RC2 (2009/10) were as follows:
(ii) The working group to review the operation for the College Research School had now met. The group will report to the January meeting of the Research Committee.
(iii) The establishment of the Centre for Media, Culture and Creative Practice had been approved by Academic Board.
(iv) A Research Excellence Framework working group, to oversee strategic matters in relation to the REF, and a Research Excellence Framework Support Group, to oversee College support for submissions had now been established.
4 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted:
4.1 At its meeting on 9 June 2009 the Academic Board received and noted the Research Committee’s report of the meeting of 30 April 2009 (RC4 (2009/10)).

5 THE CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
Noted:
5.1 The Chair was organizing meetings with representatives of each of the new Schools’ research committees in order establish and strengthen relationships under the new structures.

6 RESEARCH CENTRES
Noted:
6.1 The criteria for the approval of Research Centres, as outlined in RC5 (2009/10)

6.2 Agreed: The application for the establishment of a new Commodity Finance Centre (RC6 (2009/10)) was referred back for clarification of the management structure, which currently appeared to consist of only one member of staff and as such might not be sustainable in the future. This issue and the issue of integration of the new Centre with cognate research areas within the College should be discussed by the relevant School Research Committee, but the Committee was happy for the amended application to be dealt with by Chair’s action as it was approved in principle.

7 RESEARCH CENTRE REVIEW
Received:
7.1 The Committee received a review of Research Centre activity RC7 (2009/10) with annual reports from the Centre for Nineteenth Century Studies and the Contemporary Poetics Research Centre.

Noted:
7.2 (i) The Information Management and Web Technologies Group, and The Governance, Innovation and Public Policy Centre were not officially constituted as Research Centres and had not sought this status.
(ii) The Cultures of Consumption Centre was now closed.
(iii) the current funding mechanism in place for Institutes involving more than one School was under review, with a view to finding options more in line with the College’s new financial structures.

Agreed:
7.3 (i) That the Information Management and Web Technologies Group and the Governance, Innovation and Public Policy Centre should not be considered as Research Centres;
(ii) that the Cultures of Consumption centre was now closed.
8 COLLEGE RESEARCH STRATEGY
Noted:
8.1 (i) The Committee received a proposal to establish a Research Strategy Working Group as outlined in RC8 (2009/10).

(ii) The Research Strategy would include mechanisms to ensure that the Strategy was well publicised and understood and that School and Departmental Strategies are consonant with the College Strategy.

Agreed:
8.2 It was agreed to establish a working group, with representatives to include, or be nominated by, Assistant Deans for Research.

9 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK
Noted:

(ii) The REF Working Group were co-ordinating the College response to the second HEFCE REF consultation. Committee members were asked to forward any comments to Trevor Pearce by the end of October 2009.

Agreed:
9.2 The Committee endorsed the proposal that the REF working party and support group co-ordinate an “REF dry run” in the autumn term of 2010.

10 RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEES
Noted:
10.1 Proposals relating to the operation of Departmental, School and College Research Ethics Committees were received RC10 (2009/10). It was noted that the Committee had responsibility for advising Academic Board and Governors on ethical matters related to the College’s research. Further, it was made known to the Committee that some funding bodies had specific and detailed requirements about ethical approval of funded projects.

Agreed
10.2 Trevor Pearce and Liz Francis would consult with the College Secretary and the Vice Master on amended proposals and communicate with Schools via the Executive and Assistant Deans about the proper constitution of research ethics committees to be compliant with funding bodies’ standard eligibility requirements.

11 CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENTS
Noted:
11.1 Draft guidance regarding confidentiality agreements for PhD theses with the potential for commercial exploitation (RC11 (2009/10)).

Agreed:
The guidance was approved; this guidance will be published and disseminated to Schools.

12 **LIBRARY SUPPORT FOR RESEARCH**

Noted:

12.1 A report on library support for research **RC12 (2009/10)** was received and noted.

13 **RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS**

Noted:

13.1 The Committee received and noted reports on the AHRC Block Partnership Awards 2009/10 **RC13 (2009/0)**, the ESRC Revised Postgraduate Training Network 2011/12 **RC14 (2009/0)**, and the MRC Doctoral Training Grant Competition 2010/11 **RC15 (2009/0)**.

14 **DEGREE EXAMINERS**

Recommended:

14.1 Under the University of London Ordinances and the College regulations for the appointment of research degree examiners, the College is responsible for providing guidelines for the appointment of research degree examiners. Draft amended procedures, taking into account the revised School structures, were presented to the Committee (**RC16 (2009/10)**).

Agreed:

14.2 (i) The Committee recommended the adoption of the amended guidelines.

(ii) It was further agreed that the following guidance should be given in cases where it was not possible to find a suitable University of London expert from outside Birkbeck to be appointed as an internal examiner: in the first instance, to appoint two external examiners; secondly, to appoint one external and one overseas examiner; lastly, that it was possible to consider the appointment of an internal examiner from within Birkbeck where it was demonstrable that there was no conflict of interest in the impartial assessment of the candidate’s thesis.

15 **RESEARCH COUNCIL SUCCESS RATE**

Noted:

15.1 The Times Higher Education had recently published a ranking of institutions by the success rate of Research Council awards, reproduced as **RC19 (2009/0)** on which Birkbeck is ranked as 40th out of 160.

16 **SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMITTEES**

Noted:

16.1 The terms of reference of the Schools’ Research Committees were noted as in **RC17 (2009/0)**.

Agreed:

16.2 It was agreed that the responsibility for signing off PFACt proposals for the Research Grants Office was vested, under the current terms of reference, in
17 STUDENT COMPLETION RATES
Noted:
18.1 The Director of the College Research School would report on student completion rates at the next Committee meeting.

18 EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS
Noted:
18.1 The Committee noted the following reports from the Research Grants and Contracts Officer:
RC18/i Research Income 2008/9
RC18/ii Overheads and staff costs returned to Schools 2008/9
RC18/iii Research projects current or confirmed
RC18/iv Research projects started in 2008/9
RC18/v Grant applications submitted 2008/9 with outcomes to date

19 AWARD OF RESEARCH STUDENTSHIPS
Noted:
20.1 The Committee noted that 1 ORS and 4 ESRC studentships had been awarded in 2009/10. The current academic year 2009/10 was to be the last when ORS funding for new students would be available.

20 FUTURE MEETINGS IN 2009/10
Noted:
20.1 The date of the next Research Committee Meeting was 12 January 2010.

Signed________________________________________________________________________

Date __________________________________________________________________________