Minutes of the Research Committee Meeting of 11 January 2011

Summary

These are the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of 11 January 2011.

Recommended action

The Committee is asked to confirm these minutes.

Trevor Pearce
April 2011
MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
11 January 2011

Present:
Professor Stephen Frosh (Chair), Dr Tracey Bartlett, Professor Rick Cooper,
Professor Patrick Hanafin, Dr John Kraniauskas, Professor Esther Leslie, Professor Li
Wei, Professor Joni Lovenduski, Professor Alex Poulovassilis

Apologies
Liz Francis, Dr Oscar Guardiola-Rivera Professor John Kelly, Dean Pateman

In attendance:
Robert Atkinson (Library), Martin Hodkinson (Representative of the School
Managers), Trevor Pearce (Secretary)

15 MINUTES RC15 (2010/11)
Confirmed:
15.1 the minutes of the meeting of 10 October 2010 were confirmed with the
following addition:

“Noted:
8.1 (viii) that the College interpretation of employment law apparently
militated against the use of research students for short term research
work.”

16 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES
Noted:
16.1 (i) that the recommendation that the Sports Business Centre circulate details
of its activities to colleagues across the College with a view to inviting potential
collaborators to contact the Centre directors had been fed to the Centre; a
response to the recommendation would be supplied to the next meeting.
ACTION: Trevor Pearce

(ii) that the College Research Strategy had been revised following comments
made at the last Committee meeting and also in response to comments made
by the Executive Dean for Science. The amended version had been approved
by the College Research Strategy Working Group and adopted by Academic
Board at its meeting in November 2010.

(iii) that the ESRC planned to announce a decision on the Bloomsbury
consortium’s application for recognition as a Doctoral Training Centre in the
week beginning 10th January 2011. It was likely, even if the consortium were to
be successful, that there would be a significant reduction in the number of
ESRC funded studentships that the College was able to offer.
17. REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD RC16 (2010/11)
Noted:
17.1 that Academic Board had endorsed the Research Committee’s recommendations to adopt the revised College Research Strategy, to establish the Centre for British Political and Public Life and to mandate the inclusion of publications produced by new Birkbeck academic staff published before the date that their employment with Birkbeck commenced, in the Institutional Repository.

18 CHAIRMAN’S REPORT
Noted:
18.1 that there were no issues to report other than items already featured elsewhere on the agenda.

19 RESEARCH CENTRE REVIEW RC19 (2010/11)
Noted:
19.1 that this was the second round of the Committee’s rolling review of research centres.

Birkbeck Institute of Lifelong Learning
Noted:
19.2 (i) that the Birkbeck Institute of Lifelong Learning was a long-established Centre, formally run from the Faculty of Lifelong Learning and now based in the Department of Social Policy & Education;

(ii) that the Institute had established links across the College and also externally.

Birkbeck Institute of Humanities
Noted:
19.3 (i) that the Birkbeck Institute of Humanities now shared an administrative home with the Birkbeck Institute of Social Research;

(ii) that the Institute incorporated colleagues from Arts, Law and Social Sciences, History & Philosophy, with its director seconded from one of these Schools (currently the School of Law);

(iii) that the Institute had three permanent academic staff contracted to it, Slavoj Zizek (the International Director of the Institute), Etienne Balibar and Sandor Gilman; it was important that publications from these staff were attributed to the College.

that the Institute remained a highly active research centre of the College.

Birkbeck interdisciplinary Gender & Sexuality Studies
Noted:
19.4 (i) that Birkbeck Interdisciplinary Gender & Sexuality Studies now formed a part of the Birkbeck Institute of Social Research, but retained a separate identity to ensure that a space for work on gender and sexuality remained;
(ii) that it was hoped that confirmation of the administrative arrangements to support the Centre would increase the amount of activity undertaken.

Centre for Contemporary Theatre
Noted:
19.5 that the Centre had been successful in establishing links with external organisations and had been a fully active research centre since its establishment.

20 REF RC20 (2010/11)
Noted:
20.1 (i) that the College's 2010 Dry Run was continuing, with reports due from units of assessment towards the end of February. The REF Working Party would shortly meet to receive reports from School representatives on progress and to hear feedback on the process;

(ii) that HEFCE had now published the report from its impact pilot exercise, and had held a seminar on the pilot which had been attended by the chair and secretary of the Committee. HEFCE now appeared to be committed to including an assessment of impact within the REF; it was likely that this assessment would form less than 25% of the overall score for each unit of assessment;

(iii) that the Pilot had emphasised that it was vital to support case studies with good quality evidence to support any assertions made;

(iv) that the report had indicated that the pilot panels had not found the impact statements useful; however the feedback at the seminar had suggested that some respondents felt that the guidance given for the production of these statements could be improved rather than abandoning the statements altogether.

(v) that it appeared to be likely that units of assessment would be required to produce 1 impact case study for every 10 submitted staff members, subject to a minimum of 2 case studies for each unit of assessment;

(vi) that the REF Working Party was now considering whether to undertake an impact dry run in 2011, as well as an impact pilot to enable the College to ascertain the evidence base currently available to support case studies. The Working Party was also considering whether to recommend the appointment of an impact officer

(vii) that the REF Working Party would provide guidance in the form of a template to units of assessment when asking for case studies to be provided.

(viii) that impact would not follow staff moving to new institutions in the way that outputs did, but would stay with the institution that any research leading to impact was undertaken.
21 RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS RC21 (2010/11)

Noted:
21.1 (i) that a review of the College Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Programmes was underway; this was particularly important now that the College had assumed full responsibility for the award of research degrees;

(ii) that the transition of responsibility for research degrees to the newly-established Research Student Unit in the Registry at the College was going smoothly; it was hoped that the College would shortly establish a dedicated web-space for research students;

(iii) that the AHRC would shortly hold a seminar which would discuss the transition of the Block Grant Partnership system to one modelled more closely on the Doctoral Training Grant system operated by the science-based research council;

(iv) that the College had not yet found a permanent space for research students to be operated by the Birkbeck Graduate Research School; the School was temporarily in possession of a room provided by the School of Arts, but would need to be provided with a permanent base;

(v) that it was often difficult to find a room to hold research school events in if they were scheduled in weekday evenings; the College could consider booking a room on a weekly basis for research student training, which could be used by the BGRS and also for school events.

ACTION: Trevor Pearce to investigate whether it would be possible to book a room on a regular basis for research student training.

(vi) that the website presence for the Birkbeck Graduate Research School was low; the School would consult shortly with the College’s web team with a view to increasing its visibility.

22 ESRC DELIVERY PLAN RC25 (2010/11)

Noted:
22.1 (i) that the Delivery Plan was not able to include much specific detail, as resources to support any delivery plan were not yet in place;

(ii) that the council confirmed that they were discontinuing a number of schemes, including their small grant schemes; it was likely that future funding would be limited to smaller numbers of large grants;

(iii) that the council were currently consulting on proposals to apply sanctions to institutions who submitted applications for grants that were not subsequently funded; this was likely to impact negatively on early career researchers in particular;
(iv) that it was likely that Doctoral Training Centres would have fewer studentships to award as a result of declining government financial support for the Councils; studentship awards were likely to focus on themes.

(v) that all research councils were reducing their capital budgets by significant amounts;

(vi) that the ESRC were increasing their programme grants slightly, but cutting other grants; this was likely to impact negatively on the College which had not attracted many programme grants previously.

(vii) that the College had not been asked directly to respond to the consultation; however, the Committee felt that the College should submit a response in view of the strong concerns of the Committee. The proposals suggested that the College would be required to establish a scrutiny committee which was unlikely to be able to predict responses from the ESRC procedure given the marginal difference between applications that were funded and those that were unfunded.

(viii) That the College may need to revisit its commitment that all academic staff should submit one grant application during the life of the Research Strategy, and may also need to consider how best to use research support funds in view of the changing practices of the research councils.

**Action:** Trevor Pearce to draft a response to the ESRC review and forward to Professor Stephen Frosh to consider. This response would be sent to the ESRC through Liz Francis, who has been asked to reply to the consultation.

23 **COLLEGE RESEARCH STRATEGY RC22 (2010/11)**

Noted:

23.1 (i) that the Committee requested that the Human Resources department clarify the interpretation of employment law that militated against the use of casual labour to support research projects

**Action:** Trevor Pearce

(ii) that future reports on the Strategy would include updates on the projects incorporated into the Strategy.

24 **SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMITTEES RC23 (2010/11)**

Noted:

24.1 the reports from the School Research Committees

25 **EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS RC24i-iv (2010/11)**

Noted:

25.1 (i) that the success rate for grant applications in 09/10 was similar to that of 08/09, but there had been fewer applications;
(ii) that it would be useful to view the processes used to support grant applications within the Department of History, Classics & Archaeology, which had an excellent record of success.

Action: Professor Joni Lovenduski to liaise with the Department of History, Classics & Archaeology to produce a report on their practice in relation to research grants.

26  RESEARCH CENTRE APPROVAL RC17 (2010/11)
Noted:
26.1 the criteria for approval of proposals for new research centres.

Vasari Digital Media Research Centre RC18 (2010/11)
Noted:
26.2 (i) that the Centre built on existing, pioneering and well regarded work in the field, which had won significant grant money;

(ii) that the management structure was focussed on two people; it may benefit from broadening to ensure sufficient cover.

Agreed:
26.3 that the Committee recommended the approval of the establishment of the Vasari Digital Media Research Centre, with the recommendation that the Department of History of Art & Screen Media consider broadening the management structure.

27  FUTURE MEETINGS
Noted:
27.1 That the next meeting of the Committee would take place on 10 May 2011.

Signed________________________________________________________

Date _________________________________________________________