BIRKBECK COLLEGE
University of London

MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

8 October 2015

Present
Julian Swann (Chair), Paul Turnbull, Anthony Bale, John Kraniauskas, George Christodoulides, Maya Topf, Hallvard Lillemo, Marjorie Lorch

In attendance
Frasier Keir, Robert Atkinson, Richard Wilson, Katharine Bock, Sean Hamil, Nick Keep, Fiona Macleod, Henry Rummins, Martin Eve, Lyn Nead, Keith Harrison, Liz Francis, Rabinder Bery, Rachael Boyle

Apologies
Rick Cooper

1 TERMS OF REFERENCE
Received and confirmed
1.1 The Research Committee Terms of Reference and Membership for 2015-16 (RC 2015 01)

Noted
1.2 The Chair of the Open Access Working Group should be added to the membership of the committee under 'co-opted members'.

2 MINUTES
Received and confirmed
2.1 The minutes of the Research Committee 13 May 2015

Noted
2.2 Members noted matters arising from the minutes.

2.3 Under minute 35.4 the UoA title should be amended to Modern Languages and Linguistics

2.4 The viability of the Centre for Scientific Analysis for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage, in regards to its dependency on external grants had yet to be established. The matter will be raised at a later meeting of the School of Science Executive.

2.5 It was confirmed that the Institute for the Study of Children, Family and Social Issues will be wound down following the retirement of staff on its membership.

2.6 The Assistant Dean for Research in the School of Science had ascertained that the School of Science did not feel it was the right fit for a Fulbright Birkbeck Scholar. Members determined that the School of Law would be next in line; however, they had already rejected applications based on quality. The Academic Registrar will take
the matter forward and establish which School is next in line to accept a colleague through the Fullbright Birkbeck Scholar Award Scheme.

2.7 The Review of Postgraduate Research Provision will be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee on 19 October 2015. The author of the review will be invited to speak at the spring term meeting of the Research Committee.

3 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
3.1 The Academic Board's receipt of the Report of the Research Committee following its last meeting.

4 CHAIR'S REPORT
Noted
4.1 Members heard that the College was currently involved in discussions about the ongoing ESRC Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) bid that will combine the existing Bloomsbury and UCL consortia.

4.2 The new bid will extend the current Bloomsbury DTC collaboration involving Politics, Psychology and Economics to include such areas as Applied Linguistics, Sociology and Law. There is also the possibility of a gender pathway and a history and heritage cluster.

4.3 The PVM Research has set up a steering group to coordinate Birkbeck’s contribution to the application process.

5 RESEARCH CENTRES
Received
5.1 The College guidelines for establishment of Research Centres (RC 2015 03)
Noted
5.2 It was agreed that an audit of currently established research centres should be conducted. The audit will include details of the centre’s membership and when it was last reviewed by the Research Committee. Once in receipt of this information the Research Committee will be able to ascertain whether or not centres are currently active and what further action need take place, if any.

Action
5.3 The College Secretariat will complete the initial stages of Research Centre Audit.

Noted
5.4 The Research Committee reviewed four research centres:
- Institute of Structural Molecular Biology (RC 2015 05)
- Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism (RC 2015 06)
- Sports Business Centre (RC 2015 07)
- History and Theory of Photography Research Centre (RC 2015 09)
The Contemporary Poetics Research Centre (RC 2015 08) was unable to be reviewed at this meeting and will be presented at the spring term meeting of the Research Committee.
5.5 The report of the Institute of Structural Molecular Biology (RC 2015 05)

Noted

5.6 The Institute of Structural Molecular Biology was created in 2003 to promote Structural Biology, Proteomics, and Chemical Biology at UCL and Birkbeck and to foster closer links between departments at the two institutions. Between fifty and seventy academics from both UCL and Birkbeck are attached to the Institute.

5.7 The Institute brings in substantial research grants and the links forged by it contributed significantly to the Biology REF2014 submission. The Institute also coordinates activities such as research seminars and retreats for staff and students. Its focus is on work with UCL rather than interdisciplinary work in the College.

5.8 The Committee commended the Institute’s work in establishing and developing this strategically important link.

5.9 The report of the Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism (RC 2015 06)

5.10 The Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism launched in November 2010 and has proved to be an important addition to the intellectual life of the College. Three academic staff are permanently attached to the Institute and there were currently two research fellows.

5.11 Academics attached to the Institute had produced several publications and had introduced an undergraduate teaching module for 2015-16. The Institute’s programme also featured conferences and PhD and international work.

5.12 It was noted that the Institute was well funded by external sources and that it had recently received a £4.5M donation that will help to finance its activities until 2020.

5.13 The Institute contributed one of the impact case studies for History, Classics and Archaeology in 2014 and it is hoped that it may be able to provide an even stronger case in 2020.

5.14 The report of the Sports Business Centre (RC 2015 07)

5.15 The Sports Business Centre was established in 1999. The Centre was comprised of five academic members, several research associates, two teaching associates and three PhD Students.

5.16 Academics attached to the Centre were noted to be active in their research; the focus in recent years has been on impact rather than publication but this will be changing moving forward. There was evidence of a structured approach to REF by
management, with members being encouraged to target their work towards publication in journals.

5.17 In the last REF the centre had submitted a top rated impact case study, which it is hoped can be developed further for submission into the next REF. A further two potential impact case studies have been identified by the Centre.

5.18 It was noted that the majority of the Centre’s work focussed on the economics, structure and governance of the sector.

5.19 The Centre was well publicised and could be credited as a key factor in attracting students to study at the College.

5.20 The Centre organised its finances on a project-by-project basis. Over the 2013-2015 period all activity had been self-financed.

5.21 It was noted that the Centre is not exclusively focussed on football and can accommodate work which focusses on a wide variety of sports. Members noted possible areas for interdisciplinary work and asked whether the Centre had made an effort to collaborate with staff across the College. A previous College wide call had led to fruitful collaboration and it was agreed that a new communication would be sent out.

History and Theory of Photography Research Centre

Received

5.22 The report of the History and Theory of Photography Centre (RC 2015 09)

Noted

5.23 The History and Theory of Photography Research Centre was formally established in 2012; the Centre supports teaching and research on photography in the School of Arts through the MA in History of Art with photography and MPhil-PhD supervision.

5.24 There are approximately eleven academic staff attached to the Centre. The Centre facilitates several activities such as; exhibitions, panel discussions, reading groups and workshops.

5.25 The Centre was currently operating on a small amount of funding drawn from the School of Arts budget of approximately 1K.

5.26 The Centre would be particularly interested in how the College might be able to support its work in terms of both funding and improving web based resources.

5.27 It was noted that External relations did not allow individual centres to set up and manage their own websites. This is so that the Birkbeck visual signifiers remain consistent across all websites.

Actions

5.28 The College Secretary would identify common visual signifiers for Research Centre webpages and report back to the committee.
5.29 The College Secretary will send an email to all staff informing them of funding that is available for digitisation.

6 **RESEARCH STRATEGY**

Noted

6.1 The College will soon be appointing a Head of Research Strategy Support. This will be a senior administrative post situated within the Secretariat and supporting the work of the PVM for Research. It is hoped that the post will be filled by early January 2016.

6.2 A Research Support Group has been convened. The Group will be chaired by the Deputy Secretary (Governance) and will be comprised of those members of Professional Services that will be involved in supporting the implementation of the Research Strategy 2014-2019. The group will act as a point of co-ordination for research support within the College.

6.3 The Research Strategy Group has been convened. The Group will be chaired by the PVM for Research and will be comprised of the Assistant Deans for Research and Assistant Deans for Postgraduate Research Students. The meetings of the Group will provide a forum in which matters relating to both the implementation of the College research strategy and postgraduate research student matters can be addressed from an academic perspective. The workings of the Group would be overseen by the Research Committee.

6.4 The importance of research support has been recognised by the College with several senior administrative roles being advertised across HR, the College Secretariat, the Library and Finance.

7 **RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS**

Received

7.1 The report of the Research Student’s Sub-Committee *(RC 2015 10)*

Noted

7.2 Members heard of the ongoing work of the Research Students Sub-Committee. It was noted that the Postgraduate Research Students Review had been completed and was due to be presented at the next meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee. Priorities for future actions in regards to research students will be set in the light of the findings of the review.

8 **EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS**

Received

8.1 The reports of the Research Grants and Contracts Office:

- All Research Grants Current and Confirmed *(RC 2015 12)*
- Grant Applications 2014-15 *(RC 2015 13)*

Noted
8.2 The Committee received its regular reports from the Research Grants and Contracts Office. Members noted that overall income had dropped slightly from 11M to 10.4M, however, when funding spikes from the previous year were taken into account a relatively stable trend was maintained.

8.3 Research Councils are providing almost half of the total research income. The College is in receipt of a reasonable amount of EU funding, comparing favourably to funding from Charities.

8.4 Members were pleased to note that 245 grant applications were submitted in 2014-15 of which 43 had been successful to date.

8.5 There was an overall success rate of 18%, this was slightly lower than expected but could be explained by the large number of applications to the British Academy Postdoctoral Scheme in 2014-15.

9 PROMOTING RESEARCH

Noted

9.1 Representatives from the College’s External Relations Department reported on a recently launched project designed to increase the visibility of the College’s research via the website. The website would showcase research, events and the research Centres and Institutes with the aim of increasing both internal and external awareness.

9.2 Members gave feedback on the best ways to engage the College’s researchers with this and other related projects.

9.3 Members asked for the website information on research to be linked with the institutional repository BIROn. It was noted that other universities display their institutional depository prominently on their websites. It was confirmed that talks were ongoing with library staff to determine the possibility of this.

9.4 Members also asked to have their deposited research publications linked directly to their staff profiles.

Actions

9.5 The Chair of the Open Access Working Group will liaise with IT services regarding the possibility of deposited research publications being linked directly to staff profiles.

9.6 Furthermore the matter will feature on the next agenda of the Research Support Group.

9.7 The Committee advised that the first step towards engaging staff should be to collate the existing information on research available on School and Research Centre/Institute websites and identify individuals and teams whose research could be publicised.

9.8 It was noted that there were pockets of good practice in terms of research promotion across the College; the key will be in creating a cross College
communication network. The Research Support and Strategy Groups would consider the most effective ways of doing this from administrative and academic perspectives.

10 RESEARCH WORKFORCE PRIORITIES FOR HR
Received and Considered
10.1 Staffing strategy priorities in regards to shaping the College’s future research workforce (RC 2015 15)
Noted
10.2 The Committee received a discussion paper regarding the shaping of the future research workforce and agreed to consider a more detailed paper at its next meeting.

11 OPEN ACCESS
Received
11.1 The report of Open Access Working Group (RC 2015 16)
Noted
11.2 The Committee received the report of the Open Access Working Group. It was reported that HEFCE had officially postponed the deadline for the deposit of publications on acceptance, from 1 April 2016 to 1 April 2017, although there would still be a requirement to do so on publication. It was agreed that all efforts should still be made to meet the 2016 deadline as compliance would yield benefits for the College.

11.3 Members heard that there had been relatively low engagement in regards to depositing materials in BIROn, though the best performances were seen from the School of Law, the School of Arts and the department of Biological Sciences.

11.4 It was noted that the ASMs for research in each of the Schools should be sending round a spreadsheet to staff on a monthly basis so that they can report any works that had been accepted that month, this would then be passed onto library staff who would assist with depositing the work into BIROn.

11.5 The PVM Research and the Chair of the Open Access Working Group have written to the Executive Deans and will be discussing with them how best to ensure compliance with Open Access policies.

12 REF WORKING PARTY
Received
12.1 The report of the REF Working Party (REF 2015 17)
Noted
12.2 Members heard that the date of the next REF exercise had not yet been confirmed and that publication of the consultation paper had been postponed until after the Comprehensive Spending Review in late November. Once the date of the next REF was known an internal timetable would be prepared and finalised.
12.3 It was reported that two censuses would be taking place, coordinated by members of the Working Party. The first would take place between now and November 2015 and would seek to identify any emerging impact case studies. The second would take place between now and March 2016 and would seek to establish the current position in terms of REF-able outputs across the College.

13 SCHOOL RESEARCH COMMITTEES
Noted
13.1 The reports of the School Research Committees from the Summer term meetings:
   - The School of Arts (RC 2015 18)
   - The School of Law (RC 2015 19)
   - The School of Science (RC 2015 20)
   - The School of Social Science, History and Philosophy (RC 2015 21)

The School of BEI SRC will be reporting at the next meeting of the Research Committee.

13.2 It was agreed that from the January 2016 meeting of the Committee standardised templates for these reports would be adopted.

14 DATES OF THE NEXT MEETING
Noted
14.1 The dates of the next meeting of the Research Committee:
   - Thursday 4th February 2016, at 2pm
   - Wednesday 4th May 2016, at 2pm