MINUTES OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE

4 February 2016

Present
Professor Julian Swann (Chair), Professor George Christodoulides (BEI), Professor Marjorie Lorch (SSHP Representative), Professor Anthony Bale (AD Research Arts), Professor Hallvard Lillehammer (AD Research SSHP), Dr Maya Topf (Science Representative), Dr Martin Shipway (Arts Representative), Professor Rick Cooper (AD Research Science)

In attendance
Ms Liz Francis (Head of Research Grants and Contracts), Mr Robert Atkinson (Director of Library Services), Dr Joel McKim (Director of VASARI Centre), Dr Martin Eve (Chair Open Access Group), Professor Joni Lovenduski (Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life), Professor Tom Cox (Centre for Sustainable Working Life), Dr Kerry Harman (Research Centre for Social Change and Transformation in HE), Ms Rabinder Berry (School Manager Representative), Mrs Katherine Bock (Deputy Secretary (Governance)), Ms Rachael Boyle (Governance Officer), Dr Andrew Asibong (Film, Media and Culture Studies, Co-Director of BRAKC), Mr Fraser Kier (Academic Registrar), Professor Carol Watts (Contemporary Politics Research Centre), Mr Kashim Barrick (Committee Support Administrator) Dr Jessica Reinisch (Centre for the Study of Internationalism)

Apologies
Mr Richard Wilson (Deputy Director HR), Professor Alex Poulovassilis (BEI Representative)

15 MINUTES
Received and confirmed
15.1 The minutes of the Research Committee meeting 8 October 2015.

16 REPORT TO THE ACADEMIC BOARD
Noted
16.1 The Academic Board’s receipt of the Report of the Research Committee following its last meeting (RC 2015 22)

17 FULBRIGHT BIRKBECK SCHOLAR AWARD SCHEME
Noted
17.1 Members heard that the Fulbright Birkbeck Scholar Award scheme had not been met with the enthusiasm anticipated. It was intended that scholars would rotate between the five Schools, however as some Schools were unable to attract applications of the required standard. After consultation with the Executive Deans, the College has been obliged to withdraw from the scheme.

17.2 It was noted that if a centralised research fund is created the College will be able to consider the benefits of participation in schemes such as the Fulbright from a strategic College wide perspective.
18 **POSTGRADUATE REVIEW**

Received


Noted

18.2 Members noted that the Postgraduate Review had been presented at various College committees including the Strategic Planning Committee and the Research Student’s Sub-Committee.

18.3 The Research Strategy Group and the Research Support Group have been set up in order to roll out the recommendations of the review over the next 6 – 18 months. Within the next year a formal progress report will be made to the Research Committee.

18.4 Members expressed specific interest in regards to website improvement. It was confirmed that the Research Support Group was addressing this issue and that the Head of Communications would be invited to take part in any relevant discussions.

18.5 Members heard that the College Registry Service is looking to create a virtual research office for PGR students. The successful coordination of PGR related aspects of the Research grants and Contracts Office, the Registry and School administration will enhance the support of PGR students throughout their Birkbeck journey.

19 **CHAIR’S REPORT**

Noted

19.1 Members heard that the Head of Research Strategy Support and HR Strategy and Policy Partner had been appointed and that the successful applicants will be joining after the Easter break.

19.2 The Committee noted that the ESRC DTP application is due to be submitted by the 16th of February. The Chair and the Committee wished to thank all those who had been involved in putting together the application, and especially Andrew Tolmie (UCL), who has coordinated the bid and Rosie Campbell and Sasha Roseneil who have been Birkbeck’s representatives on the core writing group.

19.3 Members noted that a new Impact and Public Engagement Committee had been established with the PVM Research as the chair. The first meeting is scheduled to take place in early March.

20 **RESEARCH CENTRES**

Noted

20.1 The Research Committee reviewed six research centres:

- The Contemporary Poetics Research Centre *(RC 2015 24)*
- The Centre for the Study of British Politics & Public Life *(RC 2015 25)*
- The Vasari Research Centre *(RC 2015 26)*
Contemporary Poetics Research Centre

Received

20.2 The report of the Contemporary Poetics Research Centre (RC 2015 24)

Noted

20.3 The Contemporary Poetics Research Centre was established in 2000. The Centre is relatively small though notably successful with many enquiries received from potential PhD candidates referencing the work of the centre.

20.4 A recent academic appointment and an increased PhD offering have rejuvenated the work of the Centre.

20.5 Throughout 2014/15 it ran a variety of activities such as the London Festival of Poetry Conference, as well as several readings and book launches. Similar activities and grant applications are intended to take place in 2015/16.

20.6 It was noted that the Centre had been instrumental in the submission of an impact case study for REF2014 and it is expected that it will be in a position to make a contribution to the next REF.

Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life

Received

20.7 The report of the Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life (RC 2015 25)

Noted

20.8 The Centre for the Study of British Politics and Public Life has had a recent change of directorship and steering group personnel. The new arrangements reflect the Centre’s readiness to expand its activities to include more events for policymakers, a focussed impact strategy, and a more intensive research funding strategy.

20.9 It was hoped that the work of the Centre would be integral to the Politics impact agenda for the next REF.

20.10 Members heard that 5 MPs in the current Parliament had links with Birkbeck’s Politics Department including the Shadow Chancellor and 3 other members of the shadow cabinet.

20.11 The Centre is utilising its alumni and research networks to the benefit of the College. It was confirmed that Shadow Chancellor John McDonald has agreed to speak at the College in the next month.

20.12 In 2014/15 the Centre hosted a number of activities including talks, roundtable discussions and workshops; similar events are planned for 2015/16.
The report of the Vasari research Centre (RC 2015 26)

Noted

The Vasari Research Centre was founded in 1989 and is concerned with exploring the evolving relationship between art and technology.

Members heard that the Vasari Centre is currently in a state of transition moving from being attached to the Department of History of Art to attached more broadly to the School of Arts.

The long standing Director of the Centre had recently left the College. Two co-directors have now taken over leadership of the Centre.

The Centre is currently undergoing rebranding from the Vasari Research Centre to the Vasari Centre for Arts and Technology. This move is designed to increase recognition and understanding of the Centre across the School and the wider College.

The Centre is looking at establishing itself as a hub for digital research in arts and culture.

It was reported that the Centre will be making full use of the space and equipment made available through the School of Arts.

Members heard that the Imagine Archives research project; a 3D Virtual Reality Interface platform for digital archiving and collections, was ongoing.

Members noted the ongoing work to establish the Digital Library for Arts and Humanities. It was confirmed that the Centre will be hosting an event soon.

The Centre for Social Change and Transformation in Higher Education (RC 2015 27)

The Centre for Social Change and Transformation was established in 2013. The centre has 6 members and is primarily used as a forum through which staff with shared interests can network, collaborate and submit joint funding applications.

Members heard that key members of the Centre’s staff will be retiring this soon. It is hoped that they will retain some involvement in the Centre’s work.

It was reported that members of the Centre have spoken at various conferences and events both nationally and internationally. The Committee noted numerous publications from staff associated with the Centre.

The Centre for Sustainable Working Life
The Centre for Sustainable Working Life (RC 2015 28)

The Centre for Sustainable Working Life was established in 2012 as a School Level postgraduate research centre in BEI. The report of the Centre covered the first two full years of the Centre’s operation.

Members heard that several key members of the centre had retired thereby necessitating an adoption of a more realistic management approach in regards to expectation of growth.

It was reported that in order to diversify the income of the Centre, and to ensure it is not reliant solely on research grant income, Professional Doctorate programmes are being developed. It was also confirmed that the Centre was seeking external studentship funding for PhD candidates associated with the Centre.

In 2014/15 the centre hosted the 11th Biennual Conference of the European Academy for Occupational Health Psychology. Furthermore, several members of staff associated with the centre had spoken at conferences and events across the country and internationally.

The Birkbeck Research in Aesthetics and Kinship Centre (BRAKC) (RC 2015 30)

The Birkbeck Research in Aesthetics and Kinship Centre was founded in 2009. Although it is one of the smaller research centres, members agreed that it was successful with clear evidence of sustainability.

In 2014/15 the centre had organised a variety of reading groups, termly screenings and symposia, with similar activities planned for 2015/16.

Research Grant Reporting

Research Centre Representatives present expressed concern regarding the reporting of successful research grant applications. The current system associates grants with the department of the lead academic.

Members noted that the managing of research grants involved input from the Head of a given research centre, the relevant School Manager and the Research Grants and Contracts Office.

It was agreed that it would be helpful to report successful grant applications against particular research centres as well as departments.

Action
20.37 Moving forwards the Research Grants and Contracts Office’s financial records will reflect whether successful research grants are attached to a research centre.

Noted

20.38 Members noted the possibility of developing a platform for inter-research centre communication in order to keep members up to date with activities and projects and facilitate collaboration.

**Action**

20.39 The matter will be addressed at the next meeting of the Research Support Group. The Research Committee will be updated on progress.

**Proposal to Establish new Research Centre**

Received and noted

20.40 The College guidelines for the establishment of Research Centres *(RC 2015 30)*

Received and considered

20.41 A proposal to establish a new research centre; the Centre for the Study of Internationalism *(RC 2015 31)*

Noted

20.42 The Committee received and endorsed a proposal to establish the new Centre for the Study of Internationalism.

20.43 It was reported that the new centre would address an absence of College-wide fora dedicated to research into the nature and history of ‘internationalism’

20.44 The proposed centre will be based in SSHP, but it had already attracted interest and support from colleagues in Law and Arts.

**Recommended**

20.45 Research Committee endorsed the proposal to establish the Centre for the Study of Internationalism.

**Research Centre Review**

Received and noted

20.46 The schedule for the Committee's rolling review of Research Centres *(RC 2015 32)*

Received

20.47 The full list of College Research Centres *(RC 2015 33)*

**Noted**

20.48 There are currently 50 research centres which have been identified as ‘active’ in the sense that they are regularly reporting to the Research Committee or have websites linked to the Birkbeck main web page for research centres.

20.49 Of the 50 research centres identified the dates of establishment for 18 are unknown.
20.50 Members heard that several research centres had fallen out of the review cycle over the years. The Research Centre Rolling review document has been updated to include all active research centres.

20.51 It was confirmed that research centres should be reviewed one year after establishment and every three years thereafter.

**Action**

20.52 Those research centres that have not been reviewed for a substantial period will be requested to report the Research Committee as soon in the rolling review cycle as possible.

21 RESEARCH STUDENT MATTERS

**Received**

21.1 The report of the Research Student’s Sub-Committee (RC 2015 34)

**Noted**

21.2 It was reported that the Pro-Vice Master for Research would also be taking responsibility for the portfolio of the Pro-Vice Master for Post-Graduate Research, so as to maintain strategic oversight for the ongoing implementation of the recent post graduate review.

21.3 It was reported that the Pro Vice Master for Research had met with postgraduate research students as a way of opening up a channel of communication between staff and students and informing decision making. Moving forwards this meeting will be held annually.

21.4 The BGRS Open day will be held in summer term 2016; the event will be comprised of both social and academic activities.

22 EXTERNALLY FUNDED RESEARCH GRANTS AND CONTRACTS

**Received**

22.1 The reports of the Research Grants and Contracts Office:

- All Research Grants Current and Confirmed (RC 2015 35)
- New Research Grants 2015-16 (RC 2015 36)
- Grant Applications 2014-15 (RC 2015 37)
- Grant Applications 2015-16 (RC 2015 38)

**Noted**

22.2 The Committee received its regular reports from the Research Grants and Contracts Office. Members noted that the total value of projects totalled just over £40M, this is slightly down from the same time last year, though the value of new starts was almost the same at just under £6.5M.

22.3 Members noted the distribution of awards across departments with all but one department being in receipt of an award and two new awards being conferred upon the Department of Philosophy.
22.4 Members heard that a new research manager system is to be implemented. The system will hopefully be able to produce more user accessible reports on Tableau, though members noted the coding constraints of the current finance system.

22.5 It was confirmed that the RC&G Office will be looking to incorporate information regarding grant links to research centres within the new system.

22.6 Members noted that 54 grant applications have been submitted so far this year and that this is at a similar rate of submission as last year.

22.7 Members discussed ongoing problems with internal room-bookings and particularly the difficulty in facilitating an upcoming meeting with the Wellcome Trust. No suitable rooms were available in which to host the meeting, and it may have to be held in Friends House.

22.8 The Committee heard that the Research Council’s research outcome submission returns are due on 10th March 2016. Returns must be submitted by every research grant award holder from the last 5 years. This is a mandatory requirement and relevant individuals should have been contacted in writing.

23 RESEARCH STRATEGY GROUP
Received
23.1 The report of the Research Strategy Group (RC 2015 39)

Noted
23.2 Members noted the ongoing work of the Research Strategy Group. The Group meets on a termly basis and provides an academic perspective to both issues that arise in the implementation of the recommendations of the recent postgraduate review and those that arise on an ad hoc basis.

23.3 The group is currently overseeing the selection of the College application to be put forward to the Leverhulme Leadership Award Scheme 2016. Staff from across the five Schools have been encouraged to submit applications for final selection by the panel.

23.4 The Committee heard that the Research Strategy Group is proving a useful forum for resolving issues to which solutions have not been found elsewhere. Recently the group took a decision regarding the appointment of PhD examiners as the Research Student’s Sub-Committee had been split on the issue.

24 REF WORKING PARTY
Received
24.1 The report of the REF Working Party (RC 2015 40)

Noted
24.2 The REF Working Party had recently helped to shape the College response to the recent government green paper.
24.3 The Committee noted that a further review of the future of the REF, to be led by Lord Stern, had been launched. The Pro Vice Master for Research will coordinate the College’s response to the call for evidence together with the REF Working Party.

24.4 Stern is due to report in June 2016, after which point it is hoped the future of the REF will become clearer.

24.5 Members heard that the REF Working Party is actively monitoring outputs and emerging impact case studies.

25 OPEN ACCESS

Received

25.1 The report of the Open Access Working Group (RC 2015 41) Noted

25.2 It was reported that the HEFCE’s requirements for compliance with their open access policy will come into effect on the 1st of April 2016 regardless of any delay in confirming the date of the next REF.

25.3 Members heard that the Chair of the Open Access Working Group and the relevant Senior Assistant Librarian had been meeting with individuals and departments across the College in order to further disseminate the need to both report and deposit materials to BIROn.

25.4 It was noted that reporting and depositing uptake is still varying across the Schools, and that the Working Group will continue in its efforts to maximise compliance rates.

25.5 Members considered the possible adoption of a centralised reporting software. After discussion, it was concluded that the cost of such a system is prohibitive.

25.6 Members heard that the Open Access Working Group was continuing with its deliberations regarding the potential adoption of the Harvard Style Model. This license will allow the College to publish works without the publisher’s permission. Approximately two thirds of the Russell Group Universities were considering signing up to the model.

25.7 It was agreed that the Chair of the Open Access Working Group will present a formal proposal for the Harvard Style Model at the next meeting of the Research Committee.

25.8 Members heard that the Open Access Working Group have been working with the Head of Communications to redesign the front end of BIROn in an attempt to make it more user friendly.

25.9 It was confirmed that staff profile integration is still awaiting completion. It was confirmed that the delayed information from the University Computer Centre was holding up the project.
**Action**

25.10 If the issues with code from the University computer Centre are not resolved in the next 10 days the Chair of the Research Committee will make contact with the relevant people and chase the matter.

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**26 RESEARCH DATA MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Received**

26.1 The College's Research Data Management Policy *(RC 2015 42)*

**Noted**

26.2 The Research Data Support Manager is producing a set of guidelines to go with the policy

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**Approved**

26.3 The College's Research Data Management Policy

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**27 DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**Noted**

27.1 The date of the next meeting of the Research Committee

- Wednesday 4th May 2016, at 2pm