

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number 16
held on Thursday 1 December 2005 at 4.00 pm in Room 7.28
Operations Subgroup

Present: Professor GA Morris (Chair), Dr S Faulkner, Professor DB Kell, Dr PLA Popelier, Dr AC Regan, Professor ML Turner, Dr A Fretwell (Secretary)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Morris and Dr Schroeder

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes were approved subject to the following clarifications in *actum* 5: Professor O'Brien will chair the Research Committee (strategy) meetings and Dr Faulkner is a member of the RAE subgroup.

3. Matters arising

Professor Morris noted that 'RAE 2008' will not be a standing item of the Operations subgroup but will instead be dealt with through the RAE subgroup. He also noted that Professor O'Brien has not yet contacted Professor Donovan regarding him becoming a third external reviewer for the School external review exercise.

Dr Regan reported that links to 'Research Studentships' and 'Research Colloquia' are now available on the School website. The Committee requested that there should be links to these areas directly from the home page, rather than indirectly through 'Current Vacancies' and 'News and Events'.

4. Terms of reference of the Operations Subgroup

Professor Morris circulated the previous terms of reference of the Research Committee. These were discussed and the various functions of the Committee were apportioned to the Research Committee and the Operations and RAE subgroups.

Action: It was agreed that Dr Fretwell will redraft the terms of reference, circulate for approval to the Research Committee, and copy to the Management Team for information.

Professor Kell felt that the Committee should have a role in coordinating the software resources available in the School. Professor Kell requested that a list of site licences available for the University be made available within the School, along with details of where to purchase relevant software with associated prices, and agreed to supply a list of potential candidate items of software for consideration.

Note: Information on software applications currently available through the University is well-hidden, but can be found by entering a blank search criterion at <http://www.itservices.manchester.ac.uk/applications/info/>.

Action: Professor Morris will once again approach the Head of Faculty IS to look at the possibility of coordinating University site licences for software.

Dr Popelier informed the Committee that he had been invited to attend an 'ad hoc' IT Strategy Group meeting set up by Dr Morris, where the issue of non-standard software within the School and the associated support required from IT Technicians was discussed. It was noted by the Committee that there is, by necessity, a diversity of IT needs across the School. It was agreed that the remit of any School IT Strategy Group should be clarified, and that such a group should include representation from the Research and Teaching Committees.

Action: Professor Morris to raise the remit of the School IT Strategy Group under 'Any Other Business' at the next Management Team meeting.

Professor Morris informed the Committee that Dr Liem has implemented the Research Grants database, which is available on the School intranet. It is now possible to search for research grants and applications by PI name and research grouping. Members of the Committee were asked to provide feedback on the new facility.

Note: this information is available at
<http://www.chemistry.manchester.ac.uk/intranet/staff/grants/groups.php>

It was noted that Ms Onabanjo is putting details of all postgraduate applicants on the intranet. The Committee wished also to have contact and funding details for all current postgraduates and postdoctoral researchers available on the School intranet. These data are available on the central Oracle student database. If any inaccuracies are spotted, this information should be passed on to Ms Onabanjo who will request changes on the central database.

Dr Regan informed the Committee that there is a URL for the Estates and Services web-site where live timetabling booking of central rooms can be made. The Committee wished to see a similar service available on the School intranet for internal School rooms, together with a link to the central timetabling unit's page.

Note: The central room booking service is at
<http://estatesoffice.man.ac.uk/SupportServicesGroup/CTU.asp>

Action: Dr Regan to ask Dr Liem to advise on the possibility of web booking of internal Chemistry committee rooms.

The Committee requested that a list of previous visitors to the School be made available on the intranet, to include dates, visitor contact details, home institution and a link to a home web page.

Action: Dr Fretwell to ask Mrs Taylor for information and to maintain a list of visitors to the School on the intranet.

The Committee requested that a list of previous colloquia given in the School be made available on the intranet, to include information on speaker, dates, title of talk etc.

Action: Dr Faulkner to assemble the information and maintain a list of previous School colloquia on the intranet.

6. External presentation

It was requested by the Committee that detailed information on studentships and postdoctoral positions available in the School should be made available to potential applicants on the website.

Action: Dr Morris and Ms Onabanjo to ensure that information on studentships and postdoctoral positions is available and maintained on the website.

The Committee requested that the list of School colloquia be publicised to colleagues in other Schools and Faculties, and that similarly we make lists of other School and Faculty colloquia available on our website.

Action: Dr Regan to ask Dr Liem to share information on colloquia with other School and Faculty on the School website.

The Committee requested that details of all facilities and equipment are made available on the website.

Action: Professor Morris to ask Dr Morris to assemble information on facilities and equipment within the School for the internet.

7. Any other business

Dr May and Professor Livens will lead the School involvement in the visit to the University by the EPSRC Energy Team scheduled for 30 March.

Professor Morris warned the Committee that the University will shortly be making funds available internally for strategic initiatives.

[Clarification from the minutes of the Faculty Research Committee of 11 November:

- a number of strategic research funds had been made available internally including the President's Fund, the Faculty Strategic Fund and the University Research Group Fund;
- a number of issues had arisen from the President's Review and the President's Fund was likely to be focused on efforts to move up activity currently sitting on the 3*/4* boundary ahead of the RAE08;
- the Faculty Strategic Fund had previously been used to support key appointments anticipated to generate significant research income, with bids coming through Heads of School. However, this process could miss interdisciplinary areas and it would be beneficial for some bids to come via FRC;
- the University Research Group had recently announced the availability of £5M to be committed by the end of January 2006. This fund would also be focused on areas with the potential to be immediately enhanced ahead of the RAE08. It would not necessarily be evenly distributed between the Faculties so it was important that EPS identified its priority areas through the sharing of strategic planning information as above. Funding might be directed to the following:
 - interdisciplinary activity;
 - delivery of 4* outputs (including buy-out time for academics);
 - pump-priming of innovative research proposals;
 - recruitment of high quality research fellows;]

The Faculty have circulated a list of EPSRC Advanced Research Fellows; these people are prime targets for attracting to the University for future academic appointments. It was noted that the list of Royal Society Research Fellows is available on the Royal Society website.

Action: Professor Morris to circulate details of EPSRC Advanced Research Fellows to members of staff.

Professor Morris informed the Committee that he has compiled and submitted a list of School priority areas for the next round of RCUK fellowships, following his request to Heads of Research Groupings for their input.

Action: Professor O'Brien to prioritise the School RCUK list by the end of the week.

Dr Mair has circulated information from the recent SUSCHEM stakeholder meeting.

Action: Professor Morris to assimilate the details and decide how to proceed.

Professor Turner tabled a copy of the University of Bristol's 'newsletter for chemistry alumni and friends'. The Committee commented that the School had the resources to produce a detailed biennial Research Report brochure or a more frequent less detailed newsletter, but not both. The question was posed 'how does the School best engage with its stakeholders?'

Action: Dr Regan to photocopy the newsletter and circulate to members of the Research Committee.

8. Date of next meeting

Operations subgroup: Thursday 5 December, 4.00 to 5.00pm in room 7.27.

Ann Fretwell
9 December 2005