

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number 24
held on Thursday 2 November 2006 at 4.00 pm in Room 7.27
Operations Subgroup

Present: Professor GA Morris (Chair), Dr AC Regan, Dr SLM Schroeder, Professor NJ Turner, Dr ML Turner, Dr A Fretwell (Secretary)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr Dryfe, Professor Hillier, Professor Kell, Dr Procter and Professor Winpenny.

Professor Morris welcomed Professor Nick Turner to the committee in his role as External Affairs representative for the School. Professor Turner is a member of the Faculty Corporate Affairs committee and will report back to the School on its activities.

A discussion took place on the role of corporate affairs and Business Development Managers in the Faculty. It was felt that while showcase events with industry organised by Business Development Managers could be useful in terms of networking, the current corporate affairs activity had yet to demonstrate any clear net value to Schools.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

No corrections to the previous minutes of the operations subgroup meeting on 22 June 06 were recorded.

3. Matters arising

3.6

In June Mrs D Faulkner updated the School on the state of the new finance system on behalf of Dr Morris. Professor Morris requested that this be done on a regular basis, e.g. monthly, until the system stabilises.

Action (AF/GAM): Dr Morris to be requested to arrange for regular bulletins on the finance system to all academic staff.

4. RAE 2008 update (GAM)

Professor Morris informed the Committee that centrally-held RAE data on research income for the years 2001 to 2005 had been distributed to academic staff for checking. Data for Joint Research Equipment Initiative (JREI) grants was not included; Dr Fretwell had already discovered £700k of missing research spend for the School. The School was also checking centrally held data for studentships; information on supervisors was missing from central records on ex-UMIST students. It was noted that the School needs to improve its own record keeping for income, students and post-doctoral positions.

The RAE inclusion meeting will take place on 23 November. Professor O'Brien will make recommendations to the Faculty on whom to include. The Faculty has requested the RA5 commentary for Unit of Assessment 18 by the end of November. Dr John Thomas and Dr Claire Evers are new Research Fellows to the School and will be considered for inclusion.

Action: Professor Turner to ensure that Dr Thomas submits details of his four publications to Dr Fretwell.

Professor Turner enquired whether the University had issued any guidance on the difficult issue of 'quality vs quantity' for submission of individual academics. Professor Morris replied that no definitive guidance had been received, but that he anticipated that the Chemistry sub-panel would expect to see a full spectrum of staff submitted.

5. EPSRC DTA allocation (GAM & AF)

Dr Fretwell tabled draft figures for the EPSRC DTA allocation for 2006. The DTA funding for 2006 is sharply down on the previous year (£540k for 2006 compared to £950k for 2005). This fall is due to a reduced profiled EPSRC spend for the School and an increased profiled spend for other departments, resulting in a significantly smaller share for Manchester this year. It is proposed that we allocate funding for 3.5 year studentships, rather than 3 years, as required by EPSRC. Using a similar model to that adopted in previous years, six studentships would again be allocated to each of the Heads of Research Groupings and the remaining four/five studentships would be allocated according to an individual's profiled spend contribution to the DTA grant. The final decision on the form of studentship allocation will be made by Professor O'Brien.

Professor Morris drew attention to the EPSRC collaborative PhD training account held by the Faculty; Dr Simon McKenna is the contact. Funds can be allocated to top up industrial funding to encourage industrially-sponsored doctoral programmes.

6. Proposals for improving efficiency (SLMS)

Dr Schroeder's ideas for improving efficiency in the School had been previously circulated. A discussion of his ideas took place, and the following points were noted:

- Use of the ICON calendar to schedule meetings may be beneficial if everyone uses it and keeps it updated
- Academics could reduce time spent travelling between Brunswick St and MIB through sensible timetabling of teaching sessions into blocks
- Use of telephone and email should be suited to purpose
- School meetings and teaching commitments should be scheduled well in advance
- Assignment of personal tutors and project students could be more efficiently handled by the School, as could the process of exam setting and marking
- All internal documents should have the author, contact details, date and version details included

Action: Dr Schroeder to produce a one page summary of his proposal for consideration at the next Management Team meeting

7. Proposed review of technical services

The proposed review of technical services using a questionnaire had not taken place. It was decided that in its place Professor Turner would chair a 'focus group' of interested parties to look at the provision of technical services within the School.

Action: Professor M Turner to take the proposed review of technical services forward through a focus group

8. External presentation (ACR)

Professor Morris advised the committee that Dr Regan's future role would be as a consultant on web-site provision rather than hands-on editor of the web-site. The Committee noted with gratitude the considerable debt owed by the School to Dr Regan for his work on the site.

Dr Regan informed the committee that templates for the School web-site were nearly ready for use, but were being delayed while a fix to enable them to work on Macs was worked on. The new templates will enable the main research pages to look and feel like the undergraduate pages. In the meantime heads of research groupings and academics are encouraged to write content and submit it to Steve Liem.

9. Any other business

Professor M Turner raised the issue of items bought through stores and assigned to incorrect grants. He had not been able to track down who had ordered items through stores on one of his grants. The committee expressed the view that this was unacceptable.

Action (AF/GAM): Dr Morris to be requested to investigate why stores items are not recorded against the name of the person who requests them

[subsequent note: requests have already been made for the new Finance system to be modified to record such information]

A discussion followed on the internal delivery of post between the Brunswick Building and MIB. It was agreed that the School should look at either School or MIB staff making postal deliveries between these buildings to stop internal mail from going missing or being unnecessarily delayed.

Action: Dr Morris to be requested to investigate whether it is possible for School and/or MIB staff to deliver internal mail between Brunswick and MIB as a specialised service, as is done with the Faraday building

10. Date of next meeting

RAE subgroup: **RAE inclusion meeting** Thursday 23 November, 9.00am in room 7.27

Ann Fretwell
16 November 2006