

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number 30
held on Thursday 12 July 2007 at 3.00 pm in Room 7.28
Operations Subgroup

Present: Professor GA Morris(Chair), Dr RAW Dryfe, Dr IH Hillier, Dr DJ Procter, Dr AC Regan, Dr SLM Schroeder, Dr ML Turner, Dr A Fretwell (Secretary)

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor Kell, Professor O'Brien, Dr Popelier and Professor N Turner.

2. **Minutes from previous meeting**

No corrections to the previous minutes of the operations subgroup meeting on 8 March 2007 were recorded.

3. **Matters arising**

Professor Morris reminded the committee that important School documents are on the School intranet, but that they are not always in obvious places.

Action: Dr Fretwell to ask Dr Liem to alert all staff to the presence of documents on the School intranet, and to inform staff of significant additions to the intranet in future.

The personal and group research pages on the School website are much improved thanks to the efforts of Drs Procter and Liem. As yet, no links to out-of-date pages have been removed.

Responsibility for maintaining personal and group research pages should be flagged as part of the induction process organised by Dr Morris and Mr Robinson.

Action: Dr Morris to inform Dr Liem of new academic staff in the School, and to ask him to ensure that they create personal and group research pages on the School website.

Information requested from academic staff for the research brochure will be used to provide summary RAE esteem for the School research environment. After the RAE submission is completed, Dr Fretwell will turn her attention to the research brochure.

4. **RAE2008 update (GAM)**

Professor Morris updated the committee on the progress of the School's RAE submission. The main points were:

- The Chemistry submission is on track; we have complete drafts for RA5a (research environment and esteem), RA5b (special circumstances) and RA5c (category C staff circumstances).

- The final RA5 draft needs to be ready for the second week in September – reliable figures for income and students will be needed but may have to be left blank at this stage.
- The review of 50 word commentaries for each output, by Professor Morris and Dr Procter, is nearing completion. The original commentaries have been removed and new commentaries for about 20% of outputs have been drafted, to highlight significant points for some, and clarify the contribution of submitting authors on others. A number of outputs, where the submitting academic is not unambiguously the principal author, have been changed. We are still awaiting responses from about ten people.

Action: Dr Fretwell to send out a summary document with the final commentaries to heads of research groupings

Professor Hillier asked if there was a formal University procedure to let staff know if they will not be submitted in the final RAE submission. Professor Morris explained that the original letters on inclusion status were issued in January 2007, and that there was as yet no formal University policy regarding informing staff of any subsequent changes to this status. Professor Morris stated he was, however, happy to speak on an individual basis to any staff concerned about their inclusion.

5. Review of proposals submitted and grants awarded in the past two years (AF)

Dr Fretwell had previously circulated a list to Committee members, of all proposals submitted by the School from 1 July 2005 to 30 June 2007, with a corresponding list of all the successful awards resulting from these proposals.

Professor Morris gave the figures for success rates for EPSRC and BBSRC proposals, calculated by Dr Fretwell:

EPSRC:

Responsive mode

Success by number = $15/40 = 38\%$

Success by value = $£4,796k/£10,895k = 44\%$

All modes (includes transferred grants, fellowships, CTA, calls etc.)

Success by number = $33/79 = 42\%$

Success by value = $£13,171k/£25,520k = 52\%$

BBSRC:

Responsive mode

Success by number = $3/11 = 27\%$

Success by value = $£2,333k/£4,973k = 47\%$

All modes (includes transferred grants, fellowships, calls etc.)

Success by number = $10/20 = 50\%$

Success by value = $£3,647k/£6,833k = 53\%$

Action: Professor Morris to email this lists of proposals and awards to all academic staff and convey a positive message regarding our success rates for research council grants.

6. Research colloquia 2007-08 (DJP)

Dr Procter initiated a discussion on research colloquia (arising from comments made at the Research Away-day) and asked whether the School could improve the way it organises these. A suggestion was made to designate one of the seminar slots per semester for presentations by internal staff (approximately five presenters per session). This suggestion received a positive response from the Committee.

The issue of logging attendance at colloquia for PDRAs was discussed. It was recommended that this log should form part of the personal log for PhD students – perhaps even be part of their thesis.

Action: Professor Morris to remind heads of teaching sections to review the programme with colloquium organisers in August, to check on progress.

A request was made by Dr Schroeder to improve cross-School communication of seminar information; this could be achieved by having links to other Schools from our seminar web-page.

Action: Dr Fretwell to ask Dr Liem to arrange suitable links.

It was noted that forthcoming events in the School should be logged with Christine Taylor as early as possible to avoid clashes.

7. Reviews of research centres (GAM)

Professor O'Brien has recently completed a review of the Centre for Radiochemistry Research. This was useful exercise and could be beneficial for all Centres. It was agreed that the Research Committee should play a part in a future programme of rolling review of Centres.

8. Peer advice on funding bodies/grant applications (GAM)

The Committee discussed mechanisms to improve proposal success rates. It was suggested that the School have a designated panel of experienced people from the School who are willing to advise others on submitting proposals to different funding bodies, e.g. EU proposals. The composition of the panel would be reviewed regularly. Early career staff are currently requested to have all their proposals peer reviewed by their head of research grouping. Other staff are also recommended to seek advice from, and have their proposals read by, colleagues.

Action: Professor Morris to approach people to make up a panel of advisors for proposals to different funders.

Dr Schroeder suggested that a list of current contacts with industry would be beneficial for new members of staff.

It was noted that the School is willing to subsidise flight costs, where appropriate, for academics to attend network meetings to initiate EU collaborations.

9. Any other business

It was noted that Dr Schroeder will be leaving the Research Committee; his current split appointment between the School of Chemistry and the School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Sciences (CEAS) is changing to be 100% with the School of CEAS from 1 August 2007. Professor Morris thanked Dr Schroeder for his many contributions to the Committee, and expressed the hope that he will maintain his close links with the School.

Dr Procter informed the Committee that he had only received three responses for his request for feedback on the Research Away-Day held in May. Heads of research groupings are encouraged to act on the findings already circulated.

Professor Morris alerted the committee to the changes in EPSRC fellowship funding from June 2007. The current EPSRC Advanced Research fellowships and Senior Research fellowships are to be replaced by:

Career acceleration fellowships

Up to five years of funding for talented researchers who have 3-10 years of postdoctoral experience.

Leadership fellowships

Up to five years of funding for researchers with the most potential to develop into the UK's future research leaders. Applicants must have a permanent academic post at a UK higher education institution.

Heads of research groupings are requested to encourage PDRAs to apply for the career acceleration fellowships.

10. Date of next meeting

Professor Morris suggested that the Committee continue with twice yearly strategy meetings in December and June/July, with operations meetings every six weeks in the intervening months. Professor Morris requested one more RAE meeting for the second week of September, after which it is hoped that no further formal meetings of the RAE team will be needed.

Action: Dr Fretwell to organise a new timetable for the forthcoming academic year and circulate to all members.

Ann Fretwell
22 August 2007