

The University of Manchester

School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number 32
held on Thursday 25 October 2007 at 3.00 pm in Room 7.27/7.28
Operations Subgroup

Present: Professor GA Morris(Chair), Dr IH Hillier, Professor DB Kell, Dr DJ Procter, Dr AC Regan, Dr ML Turner, Professor JC Whitehead (*vice* Dryfe), Dr A Fretwell (Secretary)

1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor Clayden, Dr Dryfe, Professor O'Brien and Professor N Turner.

2. **Minutes from previous meeting**

No corrections to the previous minutes of the Operations Subgroup meeting on 12 July 2007 were recorded.

3. **Matters arising**

Professor Morris informed the Committee that recent publications for staff are now on the School website; this information has been provided by Dr Liem.

It was also agreed that the School would have a 'research highlights' page, prominent on the School web site.

Action: Professor Morris to remind all Heads of research groupings (HoRGs) to nominate research highlights for their grouping; a short commentary and references for two papers to be highlighted are required, to be updated every 6-12 months.

4. **Matters arising**

Dr Procter informed the Committee that two staff research symposia are scheduled, for Wednesday 28 November in Semester 1, and Wednesday 7 May in Semester 2. The Committee discussed the arrangements for these sessions. It was decided that the Biological, Materials, and Theoretical research groupings would nominate a speaker each for Semester 1, and the Organic, Inorganic, and Physical groupings would nominate speakers for Semester 2. Dr Popelier requested that the talks be of general interest, emphasising plans for outreach and collaboration.

Action: Dr Procter to ask HoRGs to nominate a speaker each, with an emphasis on selecting staff new to the School.

Dr Procter reported on the new seminar program, which now incorporates talks in the MIB building. A problem had occurred at the planning stage with colloquium organisers not communicating effectively between themselves, with the result that in some instances there were too many talks scheduled for the same day. Professor Morris requested that organisers use the School calendar facility. Professor Morris thanked Dr Procter for taking overall charge of the seminar programme.

Professor Whitehead expressed his concern at the often untidy state of G53 and G54 and the unfavourable impression that it may give outside visitors.

Action: Professor Morris to ask Dr Armstrong to request that the cleaners give attention to lecture theatres used by external visitors.

[subsequent note: Dr Armstrong has agreed to take this up with the appropriate authorities]

5. Review of School website for RAE compatibility

Professor Morris summarised the report commissioned by the Faculty to look at the compatibility of School web-sites and their associated RAE submissions. The document was felt to be unnecessarily detailed, however Professor Morris wished the Committee to take note of the following points:

- Replace 'Vacancies' section with 'Opportunities'
- There is lack of information in the 'News and events' section
- Links to the Institutes (MIB, DNI, PSI) are not prominent
- New staff photographs are not made available quickly enough
- Examples of international collaborations should feature more prominently
- Industrial collaborations should be promoted and showcased e.g. case studies, CASE studentships, School interactions etc.
- RAE figures for average numbers of PDRAs and studentships should feature on the home page

In all cases, Dr Liem is the first point of contact for anyone wishing to update the School web-site.

Action: Professor M Turner to ask Dr Liem to publish an example of an existing industrial case study from OMIC on the School web-site

Dr Procter informed the Committee that there are still some links from staff profile pages to very old personal and group pages. It was decided that these links should be removed.

It was noted that there is an urgent need for a web page listing who does what, in both academic and administrative spheres, and for more specifics (e.g. postgraduate numbers) to be added to the front page and postgraduate pages.

Action: Professor Morris to request information to added to the School web site

6. Peer advice on grant applications (GAM)

Professor Morris tabled a draft list of members of staff who might be called upon to provide peer advice to colleagues applying to specific funding bodies. Professor Morris suggested panel memberships for eleven of the School's most common funders; all those present who were included in the draft panel memberships agreed to serve. It was agreed that Dr Fretwell would direct anyone who requested advice to an appropriate person from this list.

Action: Professor Morris to contact anyone on the list who was not already present, to ask if they would agree to join a panel to assist in providing peer advice on funding bodies to other members of staff.

7. DTA allocation plans (AF)

Dr Fretwell reported that this year's EPSRC DTA allocation amounts to £957,705, which is equivalent to sixteen 42 month studentships. If the School adopts the same model as used in previous years, this will amount to six studentships, distributed one to each research grouping, and ten distributed according to a ranked list of individual contributions to the DTA allocation. Dr Fretwell proposed that she split any shared grants according to known credit splits; otherwise the split would be equal to all collaborators.

Action: Dr Fretwell agreed to draft a studentship allocation according to the proposed model and distribute the results to HoRGs for comment.

Professor Hillier queried the School policy for DTA funded students who leave after their first year. Professor Morris proposed that since the School DTA accounts are in a healthy financial state, the School should provide another year's funding for a replacement student to take up the studentship. The Committee felt that it was better for students who found themselves not suited to PhD studies to exit gracefully at the one year stage with the possibility of an MPhil, rather than for them to continue further and fail at a later stage.

Action: Professor Morris to recommend this policy to the Head of School

[subsequent note: Professor O'Brien agrees that this should be default procedure.]

8. Any other business

It was noted that any major equipment bids should be reported to the School as early as possible in the planning process, to avoid the possibility of duplicate bids being submitted to the same funding body and also so that any building requirements can be identified.

Action: Professor Morris to circulate staff.

Professor Morris noted that Professor O'Brien is keen for staff to submit applications to the Royal Society Summer Science Exhibition.

Professor Morris and Dr Procter will shortly be nominating members of staff for awards and prizes; cases in support will be required.

Dr Fretwell tabled a list of fellowships submitted, or about to be submitted, by the School; nine full and thirteen outline applications have been submitted so far this year.

Professor Morris informed the Committee that he will shortly be circulating the RAE RA5 and final output listing to all staff; staff will be asked to check their DOIs.

10. Date of next meeting

Strategy Group: Thursday 6 December, 2.00pm in room 7.27/7.28

Ann Fretwell
22 November 2007