

# The University of Manchester

## School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number 35  
held on Thursday 6 March 2008 at 3.00 pm in Room 7.28  
**Operations Subgroup**

Present: Professor GA Morris(Chair), Dr RAW Dryfe, Professor JP Clayden, Prof EJL McInnes (*vice Winpenny*), Prof JR Helliwell (*vice Kell*) Prof IH Hillier, Dr PLA Popelier, Dr DJ Procter, Dr AC Regan, Mr J Robinson, Ms N Snook, Prof ML Turner, Dr A Fretwell (Secretary)

### 1. **Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor Kell, Prof Pimblott, Professor N Turner, and Professor Winpenny.

### 2. **Minutes from previous meeting**

It was noted that the titles of IH Hillier and ML Turner should be correctly recorded as Professor.

### 3. **Matters arising**

The updating of research profiles using the Faculty MIS RIP system is ongoing; currently 33 profiles are available to be released to the University external web-site. The setting up of permissions is difficult to complete correctly and has caused problems for nearly everyone. Dr Fretwell has been providing one to one support to get around some of these problems. Professor Morris is also available to help in creating automatic publication lists from Web of Science.

### 4. **Research review of administrative and IT support for research in the School**

Ms Snook discussed an organisation chart of administration structures in the School, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

**UG/PG administration:** Karen Chartres has been recruited to the post of Senior Education Officer for the School, and started in post on 3 March. A junior post is due to be filled by the end of this month, which will complete the team of four.

**Finance:** a junior finance person, Denise Farnworth, has been recruited, she starts at the end of March and will complete this team of five.

**UG/PG admissions and recruitment:** Christine Martyniuk will be taking over the admission duties of Mary Lea in May; a junior post will be advertised shortly to support Christine and Lorraine Onabanjo.

**Research Administration:** the position of research administrator will be shortly advertised, as a support person for Dr Fretwell.

A general discuss on administration in the School followed, the following points were raised:

- Administrative support for the January exams was very good; this was thanks to the effort of two part-time staff: Helen Kreissl and Angela Dermody.
- The RAE exercise last year required the School to devote a lot of resource to ensuring its postgraduate records were correct. The final record of the number of students appeared to be correct, but the data relating to funding source was still not an accurate record.

**Action: Ms Snook will meet with Denise Faulkner and Lorraine Onabanjo to discuss how the School keeps its postgraduate records, and report back at the next meeting.**

- The details of PDRAs in the School were logged for the RAE exercise, this list now needs updating. Concern was expressed by the Committee that the procedures for employing PDRAs have changed in the past twelve months, and it is not now clear who does what in the School, and particularly who signs the HR1.

**Action: Ms Snook will clarify the mechanism for employing PDRAs in the School and who signs the HR1 form.**

- Lorraine Onabanjo's summary of postgraduate applicants is very useful, but it is not frequent enough. A request was made for the list to be sorted for easy assimilation. Independently funded students should also be flagged and fast tracked through to an offer letter as soon as a suitable match with a project and supervisor is achieved.
- The induction procedure in the School was thought to be credible.
- A request was made for a staff handbook section on the School intranet that informs new academics whom to see, or where to go, for general administrative functions.
- General IT support is now provided by a Faculty team based in Sackville St. We are currently in an interim period for web support and Steve Liem will be continuing to work on current chemistry projects. Research IT support (i.e. support for PCs that have analytical instrumentation attached) will be provided by Chemistry's electronics section, who will also support IT in the seminar rooms.
- The pre-award research administration service was thought to be working well in the School.
- The post-award finance service was thought to be working well in the School.
- Concern was expressed over Oracle Financials. Expenditure reports are difficult to interpret, and there are significant problems both of expenditure being coded to incorrect codes and of grants being underspent for lack of accurate information. The research 'R' codes have no School signifier and it is very easy to mistype codes.

**Action: Ms Snook to keep up pressure for improvements to Oracle Financials.**

## 5. Research technical support for research in the School

Mr Robinson discussed an organisation chart of administration structures in the School, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The number of technical staff employed in the School follows from the structure set up by Dr Morris. Mr Robinson felt this was the right number in the right areas, though he acknowledged that the NMR service was still problematic.

Another potential problem is the age of existing equipment. A new Mass Spectrometry facility is planned, as is a bid to replace X-ray equipment. The full economic costing funding system means it is difficult to request direct funding from Research Councils for new items of large equipment. Maintenance and replacement of research infrastructure should be built into the estates and indirect rates. In theory this means the School's sustainability account should be utilised for capital investment.

The number of people in stores has decreased, due to the University early retirement and voluntary redundancy scheme. It is proving difficult to get approval for another post in stores to bring the number of staff up to a satisfactory level.

IPROC allows internet based procurement through Oracle, with direct inputting of purchase item details into the system.

**Action: Mr Robinson to roll out IPROC without further consultation, and to arrange for accounts and training for staff.**

Mr Robinson suggested the installation of a webcam to cover the stores reception area, to avoid staff having to wait in long queues at certain times.

There is a Faculty review planned to look at sharing workshop services in the Faculty. The Committee felt that the experience and expertise of the current workshop team were a significant strength of the School, and that having the service physically present in the Chemistry building was of huge benefit for the School. The strong message was to retain the current service, though it was noted that the age profile may be difficult to manage.

## 6. Any other business

The School submitted three bids to the European Research Council for Starting Independent Researcher fellowships, none were successful. Only one fellowship was awarded for the University. Should the University provide training for applicants?

**Action: Professor Morris to contact Prof Richard Clegg regarding low success rates on ERC fellowships and possible training events.**

**Action: Professor Helliwell to circulate minutes from a recent meeting on NIH open access rules.**

Professor Morris discussed the current EPSRC Science and Innovation Awards 2008. Bids in graphene are specifically encouraged, it is expected that the School will contribute to a graphene bid led by the School of Physics.

**Action: Committee members to contact Professor Morris with suggestions of areas that fit the Science and Innovation remit.**

EPSRC have recently published outline details of funding for Doctoral Training Centres, full details will follow soon. Professor Morris asked for suggestions of areas of national need, where we could mount a bid. Suggestions included: materials, energy, and radiochemistry.

**Action: Professor Morris to write to Professor Richard Clegg with details of specific bids that Chemistry could contribute to.**

Professor M Turner noted, and the Committee deprecated, the failure of the central University to consult Schools on its response to the invitation from EPSRC to submit a bid for an Integrated Knowledge Centre.

**Action: Professor Morris to write to Professor Richard Clegg requesting views on how best to handle such initiatives.**

**7. Date of next meeting**

Operations sub-group: Thursday 17 April, 3.00pm in room 7.28.

As requested by the Head of School, the next operations meetings will include reviews of Centres in the School. The first review will look at CoEBio3.

Ann Fretwell  
4 April 2008