

The University of Manchester
School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number
held on Thursday 7 October 2010 at 12.00pm in 7.27/7.28

Research Committee Meeting

Present: Professor J Micklefield (Chair), Professor P Budd, Dr S Coote, Dr D Berrisford, Dr A Fretwell, Professor R Goodacre, Dr R Henschman, Professor E McInnes, Dr L Natrajan, Professor S Pimblott, Dr R Pritchard, Professor D Procter, Professor J Thomas, Mrs K Tarasova (Secretary)

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Professor M Anderson, Dr R Layfield, Professor S Yeates.

2. Minutes from Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Professor J Micklefield reported that following the discussion about grantsmanship sessions to be introduced by research themes it was agreed that a summary of research applications and awards would be circulated to theme leaders to help them encourage applications. Please refer to item 8 (summary of research applications and awards for the School).

Professor J Micklefield reported that the chairs of the four main REF panels have been appointed. Professors P O'Brien, G Morris and R Winpenny agreed to seek nominations for membership of the Chemistry sub-panel and their names were put forward to the University.

It was agreed at the School management team to review the School's present arrangements for colloquia and final year PhD presentations and to decide how to rationalize these in light of the new research themes. Please refer to the report from Dr D Berrisford, School seminar programme organiser (item 5).

3. Report from the Director of Research (Prof J Micklefield)

- 1) **Research Profiling Exercise (RPE) 2010:** Professor J Micklefield reported that all academic profiles will become available for updating on the portal from 15 November 2010. The deadline for online updating is 31 January 2011, the deadline for returning a list of eligible School staff is 21 October 2010. The profiling exercise will include 1) financial data (including PI/Co-I status and the academic credit share), 2) outputs (published between 1 January 2006 and 31 October 2010), four outputs will be selected as highlights for the panel, co-authored papers will require a text statement describing the extent of the individual contribution, 3) bibliometric data (including citations data), 4) student supervision data (including total of supervised postgraduate research students and data on successful completions for 2007,2008 and 2009). It was agreed that the exercise is time-consuming and burdensome since each academic is responsible for the accuracy of submitted information. Professor J Micklefield suggested that all

concerns and questions regarding this exercise should be sent either directly to him or to supervisors who will forward them to the relevant people.

- 2) **Shanghai Jiao Tong Rankings:** The School remained ranked 51-75 in the SJT rankings. Professor C Bailey, the Dean of EPS suggested that the main concern for Chemistry is that the School currently has no highly cited researchers. With two or three highly cited researchers the School could climb significantly in the tables. Improvements are also needed in the total number of research papers.
- 3) **TSB:** Professor J Micklefield reminded that competition is open in the following core technology areas: Advanced Materials, Biosciences, Electronics, Photonics and Electrical Systems, High Value Manufacturing, Information and Communications, Technology, Nanotechnology. Expressions of interest must be submitted by noon on 18 November 2010. The second stage for invited applications will open on 13 December 2010. Professor J Micklefield asked the Research Committee to encourage staff to put forward their applications.

4. Report from the Director of PG Studies (Dr R Pritchard)

Dr R Pritchard updated the Committee on the current PG registration figures: nine international students are fully registered in September; other three registered earlier in the year; two more have been granted visas and currently making travel arrangements; one Mexican student is expected to start before the end of October; one student is awaiting visa and one already in the UK is expected to register in November. Total number of international students expected to be registered by 1 December is seventeen. For MSc Taught, the target is ten; offers were made to twenty; sixteen accepted; the actual number registered to date is eleven.

Dr R Pritchard distributed to the RC a policy on student representation for PGR students and informed the Committee that the policy is being introduced this academic year. All Schools will be asked to comply no later than November 2010. It is suggested that all PGR students are invited to nominate peers to act as student representatives, two representatives from each research theme. Student reps will sit on PGR Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings which will take place twice a year and gather comments regarding University/Faculty/School policies which affect PGR students. Dr R Pritchard asked the Committee for their approval of the introduction of a new policy within the School. The Research Committee gave their approval.

5. Review of Organisation of School Seminar Programme (Dr D Berrisford)

Dr D Berrisford reported that the three members of staff (Dr R Henschman, Dr L Natrajan and Dr D Berrisford) are currently responsible for organising the School's seminar programme. The overall budget for seminars is limited to around £4,500 per year, which is sufficient to invite approximately 6 mainland European speakers but majority of speakers are drawn from the UK. Speakers from further afield are invited only as part of additional one day meetings, or if the organisers hear that particular scientists are already in the UK. Seminars are normally limited to the teaching semesters. Some special meetings are held at other times. The programme is often supplemented by RSC awardees, with the RSC paying for expenses in those cases.

Dr D Berrisford raised a concern that although the organisers always seek suggestions for speakers from all academic staff, the response is often very limited, and there are problems with attendance. It was noted that PhD students also often have a poor record of attendance. After the ongoing discussion it was agreed that PG attendance is an important part of students' research degree and training so all PhD students should be strongly encouraged to attend seminars. Attendance should be officially recorded on a PhD viva form which will include an additional box for a total figure of attended seminars and will be accompanied by a detailed record of attendance. It was agreed that the total number of seminars that students are expected to attend each academic year is 20.

Action: Professor J Micklefield to inform the School Management Team of this discussion and the decision to revise a PhD viva form.

It was agreed that inviting speakers from other Schools and Faculties is a good idea as it encourages collaboration. The Research Committee thanked the seminar organisers for doing an excellent job.

6. Discussion of School DTA allocation for 2011/2012

The Research Committee discussed possible mechanisms for the allocation of the available 6.2 DTAs. The first suggestion was to allocate three studentships by the algorithm and three through an open competition, in a similar way to that which was implemented last year. However, in light of small number of studentships available this year, the majority of the RC felt that the allocation should be made through a single competition open to all members of staff.

It was suggested that we agree the format of the competition ASAP and send out a call for proposals to all staff by 18 October, with guidelines and a proforma, for a submission deadline of 19 November. This would leave almost three weeks for the RC to review proposals, before deciding a rank order at the next RC meeting on Thursday 9 December.

The following criteria for selection were suggested:

- Scientific quality of the project, novelty, and how well proposals fit with the strategic priorities of the School. (Weighting 33%).
- Benefit to the School, which should include the potential of each project to deliver high quality publications and other research outputs (and impact), as well as other benefit to the School *e.g.* collaborations, CASE contributions *etc.* (Weighting 33%)
- Previous EPSRC funding track record index as measured by the Morris algorithm, taking into account those that received studentships by the algorithm or competition last year. (Weighting 33%)

[The third element of including the EPSRC funding track record index takes into account those who have contributed directly to the School DTA by their EPSRC grants, but it also means they need to satisfy the scientific and strategic criteria. In addition, those who were awarded studentships last year will be taken into account, since their track record index

would be reduced by one studentship.]

Staff are not expected to nominate a student at this stage, but instead use the earlier award of a studentship to attract the very best students.

Quality of supervision could be considered, but would not normally be a major factor unless it was clear a supervisor would not be able to provide the level of supervision required.

Action: Professor J Micklefield to summarize the RC's recommendations and present them to Professor C Whitehead.

7. Review of School Impact Case Studies

The School was asked by the University to draft impact case studies following the case studies prepared by the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences as part of a REF impact pilot exercise. At the previous RC meeting (held on 28th of July) the RC discussed potential areas and coordinators and nominated ten possible cases and their leaders. Dr A Fretwell, who has been coordinating the preparation of the case studies within the School, reported that six drafts have been returned so far (paper copies were circulated to all members of the RC at the meeting). The RC agreed that the drafts are interesting and Professor J Micklefield encouraged all members of the RC to send their feedback. It was pointed out that some security issues (e.g. clearance level) may need to be taken into consideration.

Action: Dr A Fretwell to contact all coordinators and encourage them to submit their draft cases.

8. Summary of Research Applications and Awards for the School (Fr A Fretwell)

Dr A Fretwell compiled and distributed to the Research Committee a list of grant applications submitted by members of the School within the period between September 2009 and August 2010, and a list of grant awards received by members of the School within the same period. It was agreed that the information was useful and revealing, and it was suggested that updated lists are circulated to the Research Committee prior to every RC meeting.

Action: Dr A Fretwell to prepare and to circulate a summary of School research applications and awards for every Research Committee meeting.

9. Date of next meeting

9th of December at 12.00pm in Room 7.27/7.28.