

The University of Manchester
School of Chemistry

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting Number
held on Wednesday 28 July 2010 at 10.00am in 7.27/7.28

Research Committee Meeting

Present: Professor J Micklefield (Chair), Professor M Anderson, Dr P Budd, , Dr C Eyers, Professor F Livens, Professor G Morris, Professor S Pimblott, Dr R Pritchard, Professor P Popelier, Professor J Thomas, Professor M Turner, Mrs K Tarasova (Secretary)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Dr A Fretwell, Professor R Goodacre, Dr R Layfield, Dr M-B Madec, Professor E McInnes, Professor N Turner, Professor S Yeates.

2. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes of the previous Research Committee meeting held on 7 May 2010 were accepted as a correct record.

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

Professor J Micklefield reported that at the last management team meeting it was agreed that the School needs to develop a strategy in addressing a significant decrease in the number of research funding applications in the School. The following was suggested:

- A review of all funding applications, recently awarded, pending and planned, is to be undertaken as part of PDR.
- Grantsmanship sessions are to be introduced by research themes - staff will be encouraged to share with colleagues their plans for future grant applications. These sessions may be joint with other themes: invitations can be sent out to all members and/or target specific individuals who may benefit the most. Staff will be encouraged to present their programme of work outlining key objectives, deliverables, collaborators, pathways to impact, etc. Staff with strong track record will be expected to provide feedback.
- More rigorous peer-review of grant proposals is to be encouraged within the School. Theme leaders and members will be asked to consider how draft proposals can be best reviewed by colleagues in the School.
- A guide on how to prepare grant applications is to be made available for staff. This will include access to a pool of applications from current and previous successful proposals, regular update on current and upcoming funding activities and initiatives, training sessions and briefings, mock interview panels, etc.

Professor J Micklefield congratulated Peter Budd on his promotion to Professor and Simon Webb and Martin Attfield on their promotion to Senior Lecturer. Professor J Micklefield reported that the School had a few recent grant successes including projects submitted by Professor R Dryfe and Dr J Gardiner.

Professor J Micklefield reported that following the announcement of a year delay to the REF, the chairs of the four main panels have been appointed. The deadline for applications for sub panel chairs is 17 September and the Faculty asked Schools to provide a list of potential candidates to serve on sub-panels by 12 August. Professor J Micklefield emphasized the importance for the University and for the School to maximize its representation in the REF and asked members of the Research Committee to make their nominations. He pointed out that interdisciplinary submissions are encouraged and the staff should not restrict themselves to nominations to the Chemistry sub-panel but include individuals with interdisciplinary expertise. Those academics who were on previous RAE panels would still be eligible.

Professor J Micklefield announced that Professor John McCarthy, MIB Director since 2004 will be leaving the university at the end of September. Professor Nigel Scrutton from the Faculty of Life Sciences was nominated as the acting Director during the interim period but the search for a replacement has already started.

It was reported that the visit to the Wolfson Molecular Imaging Centre (WMIC) on 20 July was a success. Interesting presentations were made from different sections of the School: Dr A Brisdon spoke about synthesis and fluorine chemistry, Dr N Bryan made a presentation on radiochemistry and Prof R Goodacre on bioanalytical science. It was agreed that events like this should be encouraged and promoted within the School.

Professor J Micklefield reminded the Research Committee that a list of all currently available EC FP7 calls was recently circulated to staff by Dr A Fretwell, and encouraged to give it a serious consideration.

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

Dr R Pritchard reported that the School target for PG recruitment in 2010/11 is set at 65 home and 23 overseas students. So far offers have been made to 55 home students (in addition to 8 already registered in January), 16 offers are for DTC. 55 home students have accepted offers, 8 home students are registered and 3 studentships are currently unfilled. 28 overseas students have accepted offers and 3 already registered. However, it is important to mention that overseas students will be considering other universities and acceptances do not always convert to registrations but at the same time other offers are being made. For comparison, the School target for 2009/10 was set up at 62 home and 30 overseas, with 58 home and 21 overseas registered.

The School submitted 25 research outlines for the Mexican PhD scheme, 3 offers were made, 1 acceptance received and the student will start in October 2010. It is expected that this scheme will be open again next year and the members of staff will be strongly encouraged to apply.

It was pointed out that the university does not always encourage fostering links with other universities across the world. Good collaboration opportunities can be lost because of the bureaucracy and inflexibility of the system. Professors M Anderson and M Turner described the situations when their collaboration attempts were turned down by the university. It was suggested that the full report on these two cases is sent to the Director of Research who will take it forward to the Vice-President and Dean, Professor Colin Bailey.

Action: Professors M Anderson and M Turner to send their cases to Professor J Micklefield. Professor J Micklefield to take this forward to the Dean.

Dr R Pritchard reported that only 13 (out of over 60) members of staff have so far responded to the PG graduate destination questionnaire which was sent out by Mrs L Onabanjo earlier this year. Dr R Pritchard emphasized the importance of this information for the School and for the university and encouraged staff to submit it.

5. Reports from Research Theme leaders or their Deputies

All research theme leaders were invited to the RC meeting to present a brief overview of the organisation and activities of each theme over the last six months. Their reports included a summary of the outcomes from theme meetings and any other initiatives or plans that have evolved from the theme. The objective is to share good practices and to ensure the School derives maximum benefit from the new themes.

Analytical Science (Theme Leader, Professor R Goodacre sent his apologies. Presentation was made by nominated deputy, Dr C Eyers):

- Potential grant sponsors have been identified: EPSRC-NPL, BBSRC TRDF, Diamond (Phase III), NERC (Rutherford-Appleton), RSC-NERC (studentships).
- Summary for the website, including graphics, will be redrafted. Action: Professor R Goodacre to collect input from all members of the theme.
- A half-day meeting is being arranged. This is to present the research work of the theme to other members of staff in Chemistry and to other schools including CEAS, SEAES and Pharmacy.
- First MS symposium in Manchester is scheduled for October 2010. Financial support is offered from some of the instrument vendors.
- Ongoing discussions with Waters to sponsor a Chair in Michael Barber Centre are looking promising. Decision is expected by the end of summer.

Chemical Biology (Theme Leader, Professor N Turner sent his apologies. There was no report presented).

Energy and Environment (presentation made by Theme Leader, Professor F Livens)

- Theme strengths have been identified: radiation and nuclear; hydrogen; photovoltaics; carbon capture & storage; biofuels. Materials is a crosscutting strength which can underpin activity in all above areas.

- Two potential areas and leads have been identified for longer, larger grants: 'Porous solid materials for energy' (Peter Budd is a lead), 'Carbon materials for energy and environment' (Steven Yeates is a lead).
- Important links are being established with Manchester Energy Initiative, Advanced Manufacturing Centre, School of Materials and School of Earth, Atmospheric and Environmental Sciences.
- Once fully established, the theme will operate as a number of sub-groups with periodic (every 6 months) meetings of the whole theme and an annual away-day.
- First theme away-day took place on 30 June. Short presentations were made by 13 members of staff. Presentation was made by Richard Livings on Manchester Energy Initiative. Ian Cotton will be invited to the next meeting to make a presentation on an academic view of MEI. There was a further development of proposals: 'Carbon materials for energy and environment' may be subsumed into 'Porous solid materials for energy'; another possible area was identified – 'Controlling chemical reactivity for sustainable, non-hydrogen fuel production' (Neil Burton is a lead).
- In January 2011 the theme will meet again to review outline proposals. Research Director from School of Materials will be invited to make a presentation.

Health and Chemical Intervention (Theme Leader, Professor D Procter sent his apologies. Presentation on his behalf was made by Professor J Micklefield)

- New members, Professors S Flitsch and N Turner, were recruited to the theme. Dr Alan Jordan (Paterson Institute) and Professor Ian Stratford (Pharmacy) agreed to be on the steering group of the theme. Their names are to be added to theme webpage.
- New introductory text, including images, and representative publications from all members of the theme will be added to the theme website.
- Trip to Paterson Institute took place on 19 July. It included discussions with Dr Alan Jordan (Paterson Institute) regarding joint Final Year Research Projects & Industrial Placements starting in 2011/12.
- Funding was secured for a 24 month KT Fellow from the EPSRC KTA – position is advertised. It is planned that the Fellow will be available to work with any member of the theme who has funding to cover running costs. Steering group will have the final say on which projects are accepted.
- Discussions are going on with several companies/organisations including AZ, Pfizer and Novartis regarding short collaborative projects. There is additional interest from D2M.
- Future plans include establishment of a Centre for Chemical Intervention in Biology and Medicine (CCIBM), preparation of a large grant application using track record of collaboration established by KT Fellow, establishment of a Manchester Compound Library (MCL).

Materials Chemistry (presentation was made by Theme Leader, Professor M Turner)

- Theme members had a few recent successes: funding was secured from two major EC FP7 grants, £300K worth of equipment funded by NWDA was ordered and installed in 2010, KCMC received over £200K in industry cash (with total cash income from industry in past 18 months is over £625K), funding was secured for a new KT Fellow for Materials Chemistry who will start in September 2010.

- There is a significant overlap with many other research themes (e.g. energy, nanoscience, synthesis) so a good dialogue between themes is needed to avoid duplication of effort.
- Theme members have good links with other schools but connections with Institutes (particularly PSI) need to be improved.
- Consortium approach should be developed in putting together programme/large grants applications.
- Development of a database that will include all available in the School equipment/services/points of contact would be particularly beneficial for new members of staff and early career staff.
- Future plans include preparation of a major grant application (Nanotech Grant Challenge Second stage for October 2010 through TSB, approximate value of £3.75M), a one-day theme meeting (planned for October to coincide with new PhD start), to develop a stronger dialogue between themes, schools, faculties and institutes, website upgrade with a new front page and drill down pages for staff and techniques.

Nanoscience (presentation was made by Theme Leader, Professor M Anderson)

- Interesting and motivating ideas are currently coming in from members of the theme. They include ideas on the further development and upgrade of the School website. It would be attractive and helpful to have a website layout that is consistent for all themes within the School.
- The theme is setting up cross-disciplinary links and looking for various funding opportunities, including putting together programme and large grants.
- It is important that all investigators, not just PIs, are recognised on each grant application, and that their contributions are properly recorded.

Simulation and Modelling (presentation was made by Theme Leader, Professor P Popelier)

- At the theme meeting it was agreed that the word 'modelling' in the title of the theme is to be replaced by the word 'theory'.
- Concern was raised over preparation and submission of large and programme grants by members of the theme. Theme members need to get more involved in large grant preparations via collaborations with other research themes and other computational groups across the university.

Spectroscopy, Structure and Dynamics (presentation was made by Theme Leader, Professor G Morris)

- Theme members had a few recent grant successes.
- A very large tender – over £6M - for an EPR facility and service was put together and submitted by theme members in July. Decision is expected in September.
- At the theme meeting in March it was agreed that further development of a theme website is currently one of theme's top priorities. Individual members are strongly encouraged to update their personal web pages, the front page needs further work.
- There are ongoing discussions with individual members of the theme regarding potential funding applications.

- It was suggested that School research colloquia could be used to promote research awareness within the School, e.g. 'exploratory' presentations could be given by School members of staff and post-graduate students. It was agreed that the School need to review its present arrangements for colloquia and final year PhD presentations and decide how to rationalize these in light of the new school research themes.

Action: Professor J Micklefield to discuss this with the School colloquia organizers and present their suggestions to the management team.

Synthesis (Theme Leader, Dr R Layfield sent his apologies. There was no report presented).

6. School Impact Case Study

The School was asked by the University to draft impact case studies following SEAES who have generated case studies for their school as part of a REF impact pilot exercise. The impact case studies are a good opportunity for the School to demonstrate to the University how Chemistry has had major social and economic impact in specific areas. It is also envisaged that these case studies can be used to publicise the School through the website, etc. This exercise may also be very helpful in encouraging staff to think about impact in preparation for the next REF exercise (2013 submission date). It is suggested that one case study for approximately every 10 members of staff is submitted so the School needs to prepare at least 6 or 7 case studies. There should be a good balance across the School's different activities.

Professor J Micklefield requested that the Committee discuss potential areas and coordinators. Following the discussion, these were suggested:

- (1) CoEBio3 – Professor N Turner
- (2) Plasma Clean – Professor C Whitehead
- (3) Radiochemistry & Nuclear Chemistry – Professors F Livens & S Pimblott
- (4) Nanoco – Professor P O'Brien
- (5) OMIC/KCMC – Professor M Turner
- (6) Microporous & nanoporous materials – Professor M Anderson
- (7) NMR (The DOSY & INEPT stuff) – Professor G Morris
- (8) Theoretical/computational software packages (e.g. MORPHY) – Professor P Popelier
- (9) Synthesis and its impact on the pharmaceutical industry – Professors D Procter & J Clayden
- (10) Outreach & public engagement (to also include notable impact from the press coverage of work in the school e.g. JDS prebiotic chemistry) – Dr F Mair

Action: Professor J Micklefield to coordinate the preparation of the case studies.

7. Date of next meeting

To be confirmed.