

**The University of Manchester**  
**School of Chemistry**

Minutes of Research Committee Meeting  
held on Thursday 16 June 2011 at 12.00pm in 7.027/7.028

**Research Committee Meeting**

Present: Professor J Micklefield (Chair), Dr D Berrisford, Professor P Budd, Dr S Coote, Dr R Henschman, Dr R Layfield, Dr L Natrajan, Professor S Pimblott, Dr R Pritchard, Professor S Yeates, Mrs K Tarasova (Secretary)

**1. Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor M Anderson, Professor R Goodacre, Professor D Procter, Professor J Thomas.

**2. Minutes from previous meeting**

The minutes of the previous Research Committee meeting held on 7 April 2011 were accepted as a correct record.

**3. Review of studentship funding including update on PhD submission rates (Dr Pritchard)**

Dr Pritchard reported that the School target for PG recruitment in 2011/12 is set at 61 home and 25 overseas students, to register by the 1<sup>st</sup> of December. So far offers have been made to 36 home students, 18 offers are for DTC. 14 home students have accepted offers, 8 home students are already registered and 5 studentships are currently unfilled. 16 overseas students have accepted offers and 2 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.

Dr Pritchard reported that the PhD submission rates for all Schools in FEPS reveal that the School of Chemistry has the best submission rates in the Faculty for the 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08. At a recent meeting concerning the University wide BBSRC DTP application, it was noted by the Associate Dean for Postgraduate Research that Chemistry submission rates were good and well above the 70% average expected by BBSRC. Other Schools in the Faculty may not be able to participate in the BBSRC DTP application competition because of their poor submission rates.

**4. Future Research Themes (Professor Budd)**

**Questions for discussion:**

- 1) Is the current theme structure meeting its aims?
- 2) Do the current themes best reflect our skills, strengths and aspirations?
- 3) Should we consider any alternative ways to organise and present our research?

**Comments:**

### ***Positive***

- 1) New structure has improved the School's image and perception to the outside world.
- 2) New website has more relevant and up-to-date information, it is presented in a better format and acts as a good promotion to the outside world.

### ***Negative***

- 1) New structure does not improve anything internally: it does not offer a cohesive lead in any direction, it does not improve grant income, it does not encourage internal collaborations.
- 2) Updates of the new website take too long and they are difficult to make. Information is not always clearly presented. The website does not adequately reflect and support all external and internal research activities within the School.
- 3) Research theme leaders do not always have enough management power. Research themes meetings lack clear agenda and are poorly attended. There is lack of communication between research themes and research theme leaders.

### **Suggestions:**

- 1) To employ a website manager who will develop, maintain and update web content and structure, working in close consultation with research theme leaders. This has become particularly important with the recent departure of Dr A Fretwell who was coordinating the update of the School website for all research information.
- 2) To find new ways and opportunities to promote excellent and unique research that is done in the School to the outside world.
- 3) To devise a new management system that can address research as well as teaching.

## **5. New format of School Research Committee (Professor Budd)**

Professor P Budd reported that since the introduction of research themes, there has been no direct line of representation on the research committee for specific individuals, other than through their line managers. In order to facilitate two-way information flow, and for internal administrative purposes, it was suggested to have more clearly representative committee, reporting to the management team. It is suggested that the full Research Committee, for operational matters, should include representatives of research constituencies based on laboratory working areas. Line managers would no longer sit on Research Committee.

Professor Budd suggested that the roles of representatives would be as follows: 1) relay the concerns of constituency members to the committee; 2) relay research information to constituency members; 3) monitor research achievements within the constituency; 4) ensure research achievements from the constituency are publicised effectively.

**Action: Professor Budd to report these suggestions to the School Management Team.**

**6. Update on Strategy and Plans for 2011/12 Seminar Series (Dr Berrisford, Dr Natrajan, Dr Henschman)**

Drs Berrisford, Natrajan and Henschman reported on the details of the seminar programme for 2011/12. It was discussed and agreed that the new programme will include one seminar per week during semesters (10 in the first semester and 9 in the second semester). The programme would cover speakers from across the School's research themes. In addition, two slots outside the teaching semester have been reserved for internal UoM speakers. Additional afternoons are also reserved, outside the teaching semesters, for approximately four organic synthesis events. It was commented that so far the response to requests for speakers has been poor. Members of staff are asked to nominate speakers through theme leaders or directly to seminar organisers. It was suggested to carry on with two staff symposia per academic year (one in each semester).

**Action: Professor Micklefield to report this plan to the School Management Team.**

**7. EPSRC Knowledge Mapping Consultation Exercise**

EPSRC have circulated a knowledge map which suggests 'a need for a continuing dialogue that will lead to an ever increasing understanding of the EPSRC research portfolio'. The School has drafted a response to this mapping exercise, which raises a number of questions about EPSRC's perceptions of our research strengths in Chemistry and other sectors. Also, it was agreed that Neil Viner's (EPSRC) comments were a subject for concern. Neil Viner is reported to have said that 'Although the balance of the EPSRC programme is still under discussion, one clear steer is that synthetic chemistry is likely to be cut back significantly'.

**Action: Professor Micklefield to circulate the documents to the School and invite academics to send in their comments.**

**8. Maximising the Impact of Publications**

The EPS Faculty circulated a document describing suggestions for maximising citations and other recognition for publications from the School of Physics and Astronomy. Professor Budd has modified this document for the School of Chemistry (the document is circulated to the Research Committee) and proposed that it is circulated to staff in Chemistry for consideration.

**Action: Professor Budd to circulate the document to the School.**

**9. Date of Next Meeting**

TBC