

The University of Manchester
School of Chemistry

Minutes of the Research Committee Meeting
held on Wednesday 29 February 2012 at 10.00am in GE.005

Research Committee Meeting

Present: Prof P. Budd (Chair), Dr M Attfield, Dr A Horn, Dr R Layfield, Dr C Evers, Dr R Pritchard, Dr C Casiraghi, Dr S Koehler, Dr N Burton, Dr A Horn, Dr J McDouall, Dr L S Wong, Dr A Valota (postdoctoral representative) Dr D Rozentals, Mrs E Tarasova.

1. Welcome

Dr Anna Valota replaced Dr Susanna Coote as a postdoctoral representative.

2. Apologies

Noted: Drs L Natrajan, R Whitehead, S Webb

3. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising

Confirmed: Minutes of the meeting held on 13th of December 2011.

Noted: **Update on distinguished achievements awards:** In response to the President's request for nominations, Professor Jonathan Clayden was nominated on behalf of the School.

4. Seminar Update

Noted: The full School Seminar Programme can be found on the School Intranet on the official school calendar. It is regularly updated and email reminders are sent out to all School staff and students. It is suggested that the similar format is sustained for the next academic year with one important correction: the 4.00pm start time changes to 2.00pm. This change will ensure that the seminars are held at more family-friendly hours in line with the Athena-Swan obligations. Requests for nominations for next year's speakers were sent out to each research theme leader. Dr Layfield asked that the request for nominations is to be sent out to all staff directly. It was agreed that the current level of attendance is low and it requires improvement. Making attendance compulsory is difficult and currently there is no mechanism to record and monitor it officially. The expectation of the research committee is that every student attends approximately one research seminar per week during term-time. One of the suggestions was to introduce a monitoring mechanism via eProg. However, the practicalities are not clear and some further discussion is required. This issue will be discussed with Ms K Charters and will be followed up at the next Research Committee meeting.

The issue of schedule clashes between seminars and staff research symposia was discussed. This arose due to the use of two separate diaries for the school events and seminars. Dr L S Wong pointed out that the issue can be resolved by ensuring that all seminars are entered into the main School calendar since this is the official record of all School events. Dr L S Wong will discuss this with Mrs C Taylor and other members of the seminar committee to ensure that it is done. Issues of potential speaker overlap with the MIB and PSI were also discussed. Members of the seminar committee will liaise with the respective relevant persons in those institutes to co-ordinate speakers.

The organisation of the PhD final year talks was discussed. Due to different postgraduate programmes (3, 3.5, 4 years) and some non-September starters it was difficult to identify which students were required to speak. It was suggested that the requirement for a final talk is entered into eProg to ensure that all students were to present at least once during the course of their PhD. This possibility will be discussed with Ms K Charters and will be followed up at the next Research Committee meeting.

Agreed: To discuss these issues with Ms K Charters and to follow them up at the next Research Committee meeting.

Drs L S Wong, R Henschman and L Natrajan will add Dr D Rozentals and Mrs K Tarasova to the seminar organisers distribution list and will keep them informed of all changes in the seminar programme to avoid clashes with other School events such as Staff Symposia.

Dr L S Wong will talk to Mrs C Taylor and other seminar organisers regarding the clashes in the School diary.

4. Changes to Supervision Policy for PhD Students

Noted: The University has introduced a change to PhD supervision as of 21 December 2011, which came out of a quality assurance survey. The expectation is that all PhD students will have a co-supervisor (even if only at a nominal 10% level), unless a special case has been made. The co-supervisor will need to be entered into Campus Solutions. It was agreed that at the student's annual review meeting there should be at least one member of staff independent of the supervisory team, so a co-supervisor could not act in that role. The Research Committee discussed the best way to implement the new policy within the school. It was agreed that the recommendations of the Research Committee will be discussed at the next School Management Team meeting.

Agreed: The recommendation of the Research Committee is that the new policy is to be fully implemented for all PhD students first registering from January 2012. This implies that co-supervisors will have to be

appointed for those students who registered this January. In addition to a main supervisor, a co-supervisor, and an independent member of staff, all PhD students should have an advisor who will provide pastoral support. The current Chemistry Postgraduate Research Students Handbook allocates advisors based on the old research group structure. When the handbook is next updated, this information should be reviewed.

5. Funding Update

Noted: Dr D Rozentals reported that there is a significant increase in a number of applications submitted by the School this finance year: 74 applications in six months since August 2011 as against 78 applications in full twelve months in 2010/11 year. In monetary value, last year the School secured £14M worth of research funding; this year (in six months) the School has received £4.5M research funding so far. Dr D Rozentals pointed out that EPSRC have research money available this year so it is important that staff are encouraged to apply. It was discussed and agreed that it would be beneficial if the School website is updated with current deadlines of research calls as far as possible.

Agreed: Dr D Rozentals will update the website.

6. Website Update

Noted: The faculty of EPS are reviewing the requirements necessary for refreshing the EPS school web sites during 2012 and their aspiration is to complete this by October 2012. Before technical work commences they are asking schools to proceed with reviewing and fixing existing site content so that migration to the new designs is simplified and enhanced. The School of Chemistry has a team of the key administrative staff who are responsible for updating the contents of the website. It was noted that Chemistry does not have a dedicated website person while other Schools in EPS do.

The academic staff page of the School website includes a new search function to "search for staff within research areas". This is linked to staff research pages and is much better targeted than the previous search function. In order to maximize its usefulness, all staff are asked to ensure their academic profile (accessed via the staff portal) is kept up to date and includes relevant keywords.

7. Themes and Micro-Cluster Capability Mapping Exercise

Noted: The University prepares to carry out a research capability mapping exercise with the aim to identify 50-100 clusters (20 clusters in EPS) of cognate research activity in which we have world-class/leading capability. The members of academic staff associated with each

cluster will be identified, however individuals will not be limited to membership of a single cluster. Schools are invited to provide information on micro-clusters of internationally recognised research activity involving 5-15 members of academic staff with a purpose to maximise the cross-school/faculty synergies. In the light of this activity, the Research Committee agreed that the School needs to review the existing research themes (which were established two years ago) and decide if they are working with regards to maximising the research funding and enhancing the quality of research, or if major changes are required. It was agreed that the research theme structure would be kept separate from the management structure.

Agreed: The research theme structure will be reviewed at the special Research Committee meeting. All research theme leaders will be invited to attend it.

- 8. Date of the next meeting**
TBC