MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 23 NOVEMBER 2006

PRESENT

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) – Chair
Chair of the Academic Board (Professor G Martin)
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) (Professor R Owens)
President of the Postgraduate Students' Association (Mr B Jardine)
Mr S Anderson
Professor H Barrett
Professor J Cordery
Professor B Giles-Corti
Professor J Finlay-Jones
Associate Professor A Lynch
Professor N Morgan
Dr G Parish

By Invitation:
Associate Professor L Baldassar
Dr E Chapman
Professor S Dunlop
Associate Professor M Martin-Iverson
Associate Professor I McArthur
Dr S Pettigrew

Dr J Berman
Ms S Lewis
Dr C Thomson (as Executive Officer)

Apologies
Professor S Houghton
Professor S Morgan
Professor S Powles
Professor C Raston
Professor D Sampson

1. MINUTES – F14660

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 11

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 17 August 2006.

2. RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING DATES IN 2007 – REF F14661

Members noted the meeting dates of the Research Committee in 2007 as follows:

Thursday 15 February
Thursday 17 May
Thursday 9 August
Thursday 8 November
3. RESEARCH LEADERS’ FORUM – REF F15763

Members noted the attached (Attachment RC1) notes of a meeting of the UWA Research Leader’s Forum held on 30 August 2006, which provides views on how the research community might better demonstrate the economic and non-economic benefits of its research.

4. REPORT OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)

Research Quality Framework (RQF) – Ref F13785

The Minister for Education, Science and Training (DEST) has progressed the next phase of the Research Quality Framework (RQF) by establishing a Development Advisory Group (DAG) in March 2006 to provide final advice on the model for implementation. The RQF DAG has now released a set of Guiding Principles that set some broad directions for the proposed RQF assessment of research quality and impact, and this can be found at http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/policies_issues_reviews/key_issues/research_q
uality_framework/rqf_development_2006.htm#.

In summary, the assessment period for the first cycle of the RQF is 1 January 2001 to 31 December 2005, with the census date at 31 March 2007. The submission deadline for institutional portfolios is 30 April 2008. Institutions will have the discretion to nominate research groups (defined by 4-digit RFCD codes) and eligible staff included in those groups will be asked to nominate their four best research outputs. There will be a separate assessment and reporting for research quality and research impact against a five-point rating scale for each, with research submitted for an impact rating having to achieve a threshold quality rating of 2, which means that the research has to be methodologically sound. 13 Assessment Panels will rate the research output of nominated research groups and these Panels will be convened as a matter of urgency to further develop panel-specific guidelines and RQF assessment processes.

UWA’s preparation for the RQF has been good and a summary is provided in the attached (Attachment RC2) document, which includes a description of committees and working parties and most importantly a preliminary timeline of events. Also identified are issues and priorities that need to be addressed as part of this exercise, such as how to deal with researchers in the key medical research institutes affiliated with UWA, and the nature of the appointment contracts of teaching and research staff. UWA’s approach to the RQF collection is likely to include more rather than fewer staff in the collection to maximise funding flows to the University.

5. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH ACTIVE STAFF – F13785

In framing a discussion on the implementation of the national Research Quality Framework (RQF), the RQF Development Advisory Group proposed a definition of ‘research active staff’ as those staff publishing research findings and/or those who are actively involved in training HDR students. In the absence of an appropriate definition of research activeness at UWA, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) prepared the attached (Attachment RC3) paper to promote discussion.

The following points summarise the discussion that followed:

- Defining research activeness at UWA should influence behaviours but this should be independent of the RQF. It is important to define the consequences of not being research active at the outset.
- An analysis of the profile of staff and their research performance across the institution would help define a minimum level of research activity.
- There should be enabling factors which allow those staff who are research inactive to become research active over time.
- How do you cater for areas where commercial-in-confidence prevents publication and thereby limits research output. Perhaps there should be a wider definition of research activeness at UWA which might include for example, requests to referee journal articles and HDR student theses.
- The threshold level of research activity will differ between disciplines.

Members were then directed to the recommendations of the Research Active Staff Discussion Paper and

RESOLVED – 12

(i) to endorse the use of a performance-based definition of research activeness
(ii) to endorse the need for a University-wide minimum definition of research activeness based on a performance based model, which would then be interpreted and applied locally in the faculties to manage the expectations of staff

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) concluded discussion by suggesting that the elements of the performance-based model of research activeness would be brought back to a future meeting of the Research Committee for discussion.

9. REVIEW OF PERFORMANCE AND OPERATION OF ACADEMIC BOARD AND COUNCIL COMMITTEES – F7040

As part of the Principles for the Operation of Committee the performance and operation of the University Research Committee was reviewed in the early part of 2006. This involved a questionnaire being developed and distributed to members with the results being summarised in the attached (Attachment RC4) report, which was noted by members.
8. ESTABLISHMENT AND REVIEW OF UWA CENTRES

a. Guidelines for the Establishment and Review of UWA Research and Training Centres – Ref F1257

The *Guidelines for the Establishment and Review of UWA Research and Training Centres* were recently revised to incorporate a new application form which was forwarded to Academic Council for approval at its September 2006 meeting.

In consideration of the revised Guidelines, Academic Council requested clarification on a number of points in the introductory section of the Guidelines and referred the Guidelines back to the Research Committee for consideration. The concerns of Academic Council have led to a minor rewording of the Guidelines for clarification.

RESOLVED – 13

To endorse the attached *(Attachment RC5)* revised *Guidelines for the Establishment and Review of UWA Research and Training Centres* which highlight the changes made to meet the points raised by Academic Council at its September 2006 meeting.

b. Proposal to Re-establish the Australian Centre for Geomechanics (ACG) – Ref F7394

Members considered a proposal to re-establish the Australian Centre for Geomechanics as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, together with a report on past years’ activities. The director of the centre will report to the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics and the ACG Board of Management.

The ACG is the main interface between UWA and the mining industry, providing multi-disciplinary research which endeavours to bridge the gaps between a variety of engineering fields, such as mining engineering, rock mechanics and environmental engineering.

ACG staff also have an active role in supervising postgraduate students in the School of Civil and Resource Engineering.

The ACG is a joint venture comprising the UWA Department of Civil & Resource Engineering, the CSIRO Division of Exploration and Mining, and Curtin University’s School of Mines. It is entirely self-funded via a Memorandum of Understanding. In addition to its collaboration with its joint venture partners, and local as well as internationally based industry, the ACG engages with universities and consulting firms within Australia and throughout the world.

RESOLVED – 14

To endorse the attached *(Attachment RC6)* proposal to re-establish the Australian Centre for Geomechanics as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics, for a five-year period.

c. Proposal to Establish the Centre for Strategic Nano-Fabrication – F18210

Members considered a proposal to establish the Centre for Strategic Nano-Fabrication as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences in the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences.
The proposed centre involves a number of UWA faculties and schools, including the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry and the Faculty of Engineering, Computing and Mathematics. The centre director will report to the Head of the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences.

The focus of the proposed centre will be to use new techniques in process identification to prepare nano-particles in a controlled way – size, shape and morphology, agglomeration, phases and defects. The centre will also concentrate on the impact of nanotechnology upon the environment, enhancing the attractiveness of nanotechnology to industry and consumers generally.

A number of collaborations have already been initiated and the centre will work with scientists based both interstate and overseas.

The Centre will also provide a focus for postgraduate training, as well as assist in the teaching of the new BSc (nanotechnology) degree being offered to undergraduates.

RESOLVED – 15

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC7) proposal to establish the Centre for Strategic Nano-Fabrication as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences in the Faculty of Life and Physical Sciences, for a five-year period.

d. Proposal to Establish the Centre for Advanced Consumer Research – Ref F16950

Members considered a proposal to establish the Centre for Advanced Consumer Research as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Law. The proposed centre will also involve the UWA Graduate School of Management, the UWA School of Psychology, the Department of Consumer and Employment Protection (DOCEP), the Western Australian Council of Social Service, the Consumers’ Association of Western Australia, and the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The directors will report to the Dean of the Law School.

The focus of the centre will be the creation of and operation of consumer markets, and the development of appropriate consumer protection frameworks. The centre will create a new partnership between UWA and DOCEP to investigate consumer issues and raise the profile of consumer rights.

Collaboration is planned with the above listed entities as well as REIWA, and the Centre for Credit and Consumer Law in Queensland. The centre’s collaborations are expected to lead to interstate and international exchange visits for research and for teaching purposes, bringing new ideas and experiences into UWA teaching programmes.

The proposed centre has received funding from DOCEP and UWA seed funding until 2010.

RESOLVED – 16

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC8) proposal to establish the Centre for Advanced Consumer Research as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Law, until 31 December 2010.

e. Proposal to Establish the Australian Global Studies Research Centre – Ref F18209

Members considered a proposal to establish the Australian Global Studies Research Centre as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Law. The proposed centre involves a number of UWA faculties. The directors will report to the Dean of the Law School and also work closely with the heads of other participating schools (Economics and Commerce; Social and Cultural Studies; Humanities; Earth and Geographical Sciences).
The centre will utilise an interdisciplinary approach to focus on a wide variety of issues arising from globalisation. The overarching objective of the centre is to promote interdisciplinary studies and to facilitate the formation of appropriate collaborations and coalitions. A major aim of the proposed centre is to explore the possibility of developing new inter-disciplinary units with a global focus.

It is anticipated that the centre will collaborate with scholars from Curtin, Murdoch, UNSW, Monash, and the University of Melbourne.

The major sources of funding for the proposed centre are the UWA Law School and the UWA School of Economics and Commerce. Funding is secured for a three-year period.

RESOLVED – 17

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC9) proposal to establish the Australian Global Studies Research Centre as a UWA Research and Training Centre within the Faculty of Law, until 31 December 2009.

Confirmed

CHAIR

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