MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 15 FEBRUARY 2007

PRESENT

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

By Invitation:
Dr E Chapman
Professor K Croft
Professor P Handford
Dr J Lee
Associate Professor I McArthur
Associate Professor I McLean
Professor D Sampson

For Item 6:
Dr K Haq
Dr M Azariadis

Dr J Berman
Dr C Thomson (as Executive Officer)

Apologies
Mr S Anderson
Professor S Dunlop
Professor C Raston
Professor G Yech

1. MINUTES – F14660

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 1

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 23 November 2006, with one amendment to record the apology of Professor K Singer.
2. **PRINCIPLES AND RULES OF OPERATION OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES, AND MEMBERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT – F12202**

Members were asked to refresh their knowledge of the Principles and Rules of Operation of University Committees, and the Members’ Code of Conduct which is attached *(Attachment RC1).* The Chair invited comment on these Principles and Rules at the meeting.

3. **RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP IN 2007 – F14662**

Members noted the attached *(Attachment RC2)* 2007 membership of the Research Committee.

4. **UWA RE-ENTRY POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIPS – REF RA/2/831/1**

The attached *(Attachment RC3)* notes of the Assessment Committee of the UWA Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowship recommend the offer of one award and a reserve candidate, and also recommend two policy changes for the next round to be considered by the Research Committee.

**RESOLVED – 2**

(i) To endorse the introduction of a four-year 75% research, 25% teaching UWA Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowship as is currently available for the UWA Postdoctoral Fellowships, with the 25% teaching appointment funded by the host school.

(ii) To endorse an increase in the frequency of UWA Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowship rounds to one per year resulting in three three-year fellowships supported at any one time. This will result in an increase in the annual budget request for Re-Entry Fellowships from $172,000 to $258,000.

5. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION) – F18981**

**Research Agenda 2007**

Despite several years of strong growth, UWA’s research performance has not improved sufficiently to guarantee that by 2011 it will be ranked as one of the top three universities in Australia. The challenge to move to the top three universities or even the top five universities in Australia is considerable and will require a renewed emphasis on research at UWA.

A 2007 Research Agenda is in the process of being developed and will be circulated to the broader university community for comment in the near future. Essentially the agenda identifies the need to increase HDR enrolments at UWA but also identifies the need to grow substantially the proportion of academic staff that are research-only appointments, as well as to improve the conditions under which these staff are employed. There was some discussion by members about how this growth might be funded and this is currently being costed, but it is likely to be a combination of internal initiatives coupled with significant external investment.

6. **REPORT OF THE GRADUATE EDUCATION OFFICERS – F74**

Members noted the attached *(Attachment RC4)* report on work undertaken by the Graduate Education Officers in 2008. The Graduate Education Officers are located in the Graduate Research School and are broadly responsible for the delivery of generic skills training to HDR students at UWA to improve the student experience.
Dr Haq and Dr Azariadis were in attendance and spoke to this item. The nominee of the President of the Postgraduate Students’ Association commended the Graduate Education Officers on their work and the role they play in enriching the postgraduate student experience.

7. RESEARCH QUALITY FRAMEWORK – F13785

In December 2006 the Minister for Education, Science and Training announced an allocation of $87 million to support the implementation of the first cycle of the Research Quality Framework (RQF). A total of $41.9 million will be provided to universities over three years, commencing in 2007-08, for the following:

- $16.4 million for the Implementation Assistance Programme to assist universities in meeting the costs of implementing the new requirements for data gathering;
- $25.5 million for the Australian Science for Higher Education Repositories Programme to assist with the establishment of university digital data storage systems that will allow research outputs to be submitted for RQF assessment.

The remainder of the funding will be utilised for the preparatory work for the RQF in 2007 and for implementation in 2008, including: pre-implementation trials; discipline specific workshops; preparation and distribution of RQF guidelines and panel specific guidelines; continuing consultation with the sector; and remuneration of reference committee members and assessment panel chairs and assessors.

Following a call late last year for members of the academic community to nominate for discipline specific RQF workshops, DEST has recently advised that the following UWA staff have been selected for attending these workshops:

Professor Leon Flicker  
Professor Peter Cawood  
Professor Laurie Faraone  
A/Professor Helen Milroy  
Professor Margaret Seares  
Professor David Triggle  

Clinical sciences and clinical physiology  
Physical, chemical and earth sciences  
Engineering and technology  
Public health and health services  
Creative arts, design and built environment  
Social sciences and politics

In the workshops participants will be asked to provide input on:

- the appropriate research outputs for the disciplines within the relevant panel;
- appropriate indicators to aid the assessment of research quality and research impact; and
- the type of supplementary information that can be included in a research group’s context statement.

The outcomes of these workshops will be published and will be used to draft the panel-specific sections of the RQF guidelines.

In the meantime, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) gave an undertaking to visit faculties and schools to raise the awareness of the RQF and to inform the academic community about policy developments in this area.

8. DEFINITION OF RESEARCH ACTIVE STAFF – F18982

At the November 2006 meeting of the Research Committee there was a wide ranging discussion about the definition of research active at UWA. At this meeting it was resolved (resolution 12/06) to use a performance-based definition of research activeness for reporting to DEST, and that there is a need for a University-wide minimum definition of research activeness. It was also suggested that this performance-based model of defining research activeness could be interpreted and applied locally in the faculties to manage the expectations of staff.
Since the November 2006 meeting the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) has prepared the attached (Attachment RC5) discussion paper on the elements of a performance-based model of research activeness and this was circulated to members before the meeting. The paper defines research publications and research income as the key elements of measuring research activity, but does not include supervision of higher degree students in the definition because this will be considered separately.

The following summarises the major comments and questions proposed by members in response to the paper:

- Is the minimum definition of research activeness of one DEST/UWA publication point over 3 years, either as a sole of joint author, or $30,000 of external funding over this period too low? Setting a very low base may damage UWA's reputation as a research-intensive University.

- It might be better to weight the publication count by author number so that areas of individual scholarship are not disadvantaged.

- Some scholarly outputs do not have a research component and would not be counted in the definition of research activeness, so how do we measure this activity?

- In defining a minimum level of research activeness, how does this relate to the promotional criteria of the University given that there is a renewed emphasis on teaching and service?

- There is still some confusion over the intent of setting a minimum definition of research active. Whilst it is understood that this information is reported to DEST and is better than the previously used definition of Level B lecturer and above, it might still be used to drive academic behaviours. Perhaps the aspirational/expected performance targets would more appropriately drive behaviour and therefore there needs to be a more rigorous debate about these targets rather than the minimum definition.

- Should the aspirational/performance targets be graded by academic level or by discipline? Perhaps the aspirational or performance targets should be tailored to individuals and developed at the faculty level.

- A suggestion was made to use the ‘median’ rather than the ‘average’ publication and research income figures as the targets for expected performance, and that these targets might be developed over a longer period than 3 years since in many instances there is career interruption due to administrative and other university responsibilities.

- One member who was unable to attend for the meeting provided comments in writing to the Chair and the additional point was made that the minimum definition of research active should not apply uniformly across all academic levels but should be applied incrementally the higher the academic level.

Following the discussion the Chair drew members’ attention to the specific recommendations of the discussion paper and members were asked to vote on each recommendation with the following being resolved.

RESOLVED – 3

(i) To endorse the minimum level of activity to be recognised as a research active academic staff member at UWA, over a three year period, as having published the equivalent of one DEST or UWA research publication point weighted by the number of authors, or having won external research funding totalling $30,000 weighted by the number of investigators.
(ii) That this minimal institutional definition of research activeness be referred to the faculties for local adoption, with the proviso that the definition can only be revised upwards if this is appropriate for a particular faculty.

(iii) That this minimal institutional definition of research activeness be referred to the Promotions and Tenure Committee for noting.

(iv) That the Board of the Graduate Research School consider the implications of adopting a minimal institutional definition of research active staff for determining who should be eligible to supervise higher degree by research students.

Members were asked to provide further feedback to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) on appropriate university-wide expectations on research performance.

9. UWA RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME – REF RA/1/485/1

Members noted the attached (Attachment RC6) report of the meeting of the 2006 Convenors of the UWA Research Grants Scheme subcommittees held on 17 November 2006. At this meeting there were several recommendations for changes to the guidelines for the 2008 round, many of which relate to the circumstances surrounding early career researchers (ECRs).

This raises the need for a broader discussion about the intent of the scheme and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) agreed to convene a Working Party to look at this issue.

Confirmed

CHAIR

/ /