MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 17 MAY 2007

PRESENT

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) – Chair
President of the Postgraduate Students' Association (Ms B Crowe)
Professor H Barrett
Professor J Cordery
Professor B Giles-Corti
Professor J Finlay-Jones
Professor S Houghton
Associate Professor A Lynch
Professor S Powles
Professor G Yeoh

By Invitation:
Professor K Croft
Associate Professor J Gregory
Professor P Handford
Dr J Lee

Dr J Berman
Dr C Thomson (as Executive Officer)

Apologies
Associate Professor I McArthur
Associate Professor I McLean
Professor R Owens
Dr G Parish

1. MINUTES

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 4

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 15 February 2007.

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

(a) 2007 Federal Budget

The 2007 Federal Budget was handed down on 8 May 2007, in which a number of significant measures for higher education were announced under the theme Realising Our Potential. Full details of these measures can be found on the DEST website at http://www.dest.gov.au/portfolio_department/dest_information/publications_resources/resources/budget_information/budget_2007_2008/default.htm. The most significant of these is the establishment of a Higher Education Endowment Fund of $5 billion to be invested with the annual dividends made available to the university sector.
Notably, the Budget did not provide any significant increases for research through increased block funding or competitive funding through the NHMRC of the ARC, but grants totalling $435.8 million were announced in relation to the Medical Research Institutes within the Health portfolio (including $100 million to Western Australian Institutes of Health), with an additional allocation of $50 million to the Australian Synchrotron in the Education portfolio. Significant new investment was also earmarked for CSIRO through new Flagship initiatives ($174 million), as well as ANSTO ($61 million), AIMS ($5 million) and the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) project ($57 million).

(b) Research Quality Framework – Ref F13785

UWA is one of 12 universities selected to participate in a DEST trial of the Research Quality Framework (RQF). The nominated Research Group for this trial is the Western Australian Telecommunications Research Institute (WATRI), which is a cross-institutional Research Group involving Curtin University. The benefit to UWA of being involved in the trial is to obtain an early draft of the RQF specifications and the opportunity to provide comment on these. In addition, we have the opportunity to test our own procedures and systems.

Preparations for the upcoming RQF include an early assessment of likely Research Groupings at UWA and these will be refined with the faculties and schools in the coming months.

3. GRADUATE RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS AND A NEW COMPETITIVE SMALL GRANTS SCHEME FOR HIGHER DEGREE BY RESEARCH STUDENTS – REF F12806

Members noted the attached (Attachment RC1) extract from a meeting of the Board of the Graduate Research School for the attention of the Research Committee.

In considering the proposal to introduce a Competitive Small Grants Scheme for Higher Degree by Research (HDR) Students it was suggested that support for travel under this scheme should only be considered if it related to the student’s research, with conference travel continuing to be supported under the separate Graduate Research Travel Awards scheme.

RESOLVED – 5

(i) To increase the amount of each Graduate Research Travel Award in 2008 from $1,500 to $1,750.

(ii) To allocate $100,000 per annum from the Central Research Allocation (CRA) towards a new Competitive Small Grants Scheme for HDR Students. This Small Grants Scheme will provide students with up to $5,000 for research-related travel expenses as well as other research and development expenses. The Scheme’s intent is to both add value to the research candidature as well as provide experience in grant writing for the applicant.
4. CENTRAL RESEARCH ALLOCATION – REF F6553

Members considered a draft 2008 Central Research Allocation (CRA) budget request, which includes allocations for the University’s research and research training support schemes.

In considering this request members noted the detailed explanation of the rationale of the 2008 CRA budget.

RESOLVED – 6

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC2) budget and rationale for the 2008 Central Research Allocation and to forward it to the Planning and Budget Committee for their consideration and approval.

Confirmed

CHAIR