MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 12 FEBRUARY 2009

PRESENT

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) - Chair
Nominee of the Chair of the Academic Board (Professor S Anderson)
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Research Training) (Professor R Owens)
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Initiatives) (Professor A Robertson)
President of the Postgraduate Students' Association (Mr R Oehmen)
Professor H Barrett
Professor M Gillooly
Professor D Haskell
Associate Professor I McLean
Mr M Thomas
Associate Professor L Vidovich

By invitation in an Observing Capacity:
D E Chapman
Professor K Croft
Dr K Guelfi
Dr J Berman

Ms L Robertson (for item 8)

Dr C Thomson (Executive Officer)

Apologies
Associate Professor S Broomhall
Dr D Jorgensen
Professor K Millar
Professor D Pannell
Associate Professor J Pillow
Professor K Siddique

1. MINUTES – REF F14660

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 1

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 13 November 2008.

2. PRINCIPLES AND RULES OF OPERATION OF UNIVERSITY COMMITTEES, AND MEMBERS’ CODE OF CONDUCT

Members noted the Principles and Rules of Operations of University Committees, and the Members’ Code of Conduct which can be found at http://www.secretariat.uwa.edu.au/home/uwas_committee_system/other_committees_and_general_information.

3. RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP IN 2009 – REF F14662

The attached (Attachment RC1) 2009 membership of the Research Committee was tabled at the meeting for information.
4. **UWA SUPPLEMENTARY TRAVEL GRANTS FOR NEW ACADEMIC STAFF – REF F896**

Members noted the final reports of Dr Flavie Waters, Psychiatry & Clinical Neurosciences, Dr Martin Kocan, Electrical, Electronic & Computer Engineering, Dr Mark Cruickshank, Biomedical, Biomolecular, & Chemical Sciences, Dr Nicole Jones, Environmental Systems Engineering, Dr Igor Shufrin, Mechanical Engineering, Dr Kimberley Strong, Pathology & Laboratory Medicine, Dr Gavin Pinniger, Biomedical, Biomolecular, & Chemical Sciences, Dr William Macdonald, Biomedical, Biomolecular, & Chemical Sciences, Dr Jasmin Drome, Centre for Medical Research, Dr Graeme Polglase, Women’s & Infant’s Health, Dr Melissa Lutter, Biomedical, Biomolecular, & Chemical Sciences, and Dr Matt Dalrymple, Centre for Medical Research, for their UWA Supplementary Travel Grants for New Academic Staff.

5. **STATISTICS CLINIC QUARTERLY REPORT – REF F19621**

Members noted the attached *(Attachment RC2)* report by the Directors of the UWA Statistical Consulting Group on activities of the Statistics Clinic for Postgraduate Research Students for the period January to June 2008.

The Statistics Clinic is funded as part of the Central Research Allocation (CRA), which is approved each year by the Research Committee.

6. **NHMRC EQUIPMENT GRANTS – REF RA/1/466/1**

Members noted the attached *(Attachment RC3)* report of the Assessment Committee for the award of NHMRC Equipment Grants in the 2008 round.

7. **DEFINITION OF RESEARCH ACTIVE STAFF – REF F18982**

Members recalled that in 2008 a Working Party was convened to look at the conjunction of the different elements of research active, including research publications, research income and HDR student load and completions, and how this might be impacted by academic level and discipline. The purpose was to propose a framework in which faculties can review their definition of research active within the context of some generally accepted principles.

In reviewing the definition of research active the Working Party recommended a change in the weightings of the Socratic Index which was agreed by the Research Committee and is reflected in the final document which is attached *(Attachment RC4)*. These changes have now been implemented in the new version of Socrates (Socrates II).

8. **UWA RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT AWARDS – REF RA/1/989/1**

Members noted the attached *(Attachment RC5)* report of the Assessment Committee for the 2009 Research Development Awards which recommended changes to the guidelines of these awards including: removing the provision for resubmission of applications but instead provide detailed feedback to all unsuccessful applicants; deeming ineligible adjunct researchers employed by other tertiary institutions; and bringing forward the closing date for the scheme to allow for early decisions to be made.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor undertook to provide further clarity about the impact of these recommendations on changes to the guidelines before the guidelines are brought back to the Research Committee for approval.
9. EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH AUSTRALIA (ERA) – REF F24715

In February 2008 the Government announced plans for a new research quality and evaluation system to replace the Research Quality Framework (RQF). The Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) initiative was to be developed by the Australian Research Council (ARC) to assess research quality using a combination of metrics and expert review.

In late December 2008 two ERA Indicator Principles documents were released for comment, as well as the ERA Submission Guidelines and Technical Specifications. These apply to the first round of the ERA, which involves assessment of discipline clusters 1 and 2: Physical, Chemical and Earth Sciences (PCE); and the Humanities and Creative Arts (HCA). The documents are not the final specifications, but are a good indication of what data is required and the ERA submission process.

Members were provided with a summary (Attachment RC6) of the information provided so far and the likely tasks that UWA needs to perform to meet the ERA deadline on 8 May 2009.

In subsequent discussion of the ERA process the following comments were made:

- New items of note in the recent ERA guidelines are the requirement for background statements at the two-digit FOR code level outlining the research capabilities, foci and environments of each discipline in both clusters, and 250 word statements supporting the inclusion of HCA outputs.

- The deadline for final submission of the PCE and HCA clusters is 8 May 2009, with an earlier date of 20 April to allow for upload of the UWA submission into the ERA IT system.

- Institutions are required to nominate the top 20% of HCA publications for peer review, and a UWA internal process has begun to progress this.

- The Go8 Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Research) are holding discussions with the ARC and the Minister's office in an attempt to push back the timeline for submission of the PCA and HCA clusters.

- It is difficult to prepare for the ERA submission because without the final guidelines for the ERA Evaluation Committees it is hard to predict the impact of submitted more or less academic staff.

- Concern was expressed about the recent request by UWA Planning Services for academic staff to nominate FOR codes, given that this is a particularly busy grant writing period. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) stressed the critical importance of this task for the UWA ERA submission.

The Chair concluded discussion by advising that the Research Committee and the Associate Deans (Research) would be kept informed of ERA developments over the coming weeks.

[Secretaries note: In response to feedback from the sector, the ARC has recently issued a statement that the 2009 ERA exercise will now be a trial with a revised submission date of June 2009 for the PCE cluster and September 2009 for the HCA cluster. In addition, there will be no requirement for collection of esteem factors in this first round.]

Confirmed

CHAIR