MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 22 NOVEMBER 2005

PRESENT

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) – Chair
President of the Postgraduate Students’ Association (Ms N Mast)
Mr Simon Anderson
Professor R Bartlett
Professor S Berners-Price
Professor J Finley-Jones
Dr J Henry
Professor S Houghton
Associate Professor A Lynch
Professor S Powles
Associate Professor K Singer
Professor S Smith
Associate Professor I Watson

By Invitation

Associate Professor L Baldassar
Professor J Cordery
Dr S Hopkins
Mr F Morgan
Professor D Sampson
Professor B Waddell
Professor G Yeoh
Professor C Raston
Dr E Chapman
Ms K Peck
Ms M Davies
Dr J Berman
Ms S Lewis (as Executive Officer)

Apologies

Vice-Chancellor (Professor AD Robson)
Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor M Seares)
Chair of the Academic Board (Professor G Martin)
Dean of the Graduate Research School (Professor R Owens)
Professor S Dunlop
Professor S Morgan
Professor A Robertson

1. MINUTES

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 20

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 8 September 2005.
2. SUPPLEMENTARY TRAVEL GRANTS FOR NEW ACADEMIC STAFF – REF F110

Members noted the reports of Dr Ainsley Robinson, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science, Mr Graeme Poiglase, School of Women's and Children's Health, Dr Jane Mulcock, School of Social and Cultural Studies, for their Supplementary Travel Grants for New Academic Staff.


Members noted the report summarising the 2004 UWA publications.

4. OUTPUT IN THE PERFORMING AND VISUAL ARTS – REF 02/14/049/004

Members noted that in 2005 the Planning and Budget Committee allocated $116,000 to reward Output in the Performing and Visual Arts.

5. UNIVERSITY POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP – REF RA/2/803/2

Members noted that the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) had received two progress/final reports. One report from Zhong Qiang Chen, School of Earth and Geographical Sciences, and the second report from Joshua Hazelwood, School of Biomedical, Biomolecular and Chemical Sciences.

6. RESEARCH COMMITTEE MEETING DATES IN 2006 – REF 06/04/010/052

Members noted the scheduled Research Committee Meeting dates for 2006.

PART 2

Part 2 of the agenda was reordered with items 12(a) Review of UWA Centres Guidelines and 12(b) Establishment of UWA Centres being addressed as the first item in Part 2.

7. REPORT OF THE PRO-VICE CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH AND INNOVATION)

(a) 2006 ARC and NHMRC Results – Refs RA1/31/1 & RA1/54/1

ARC – The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) was generally pleased with the number of new awards and level of funding, and noted that 2006 awards were the best to date for UWA.

NHMRC – The Pro-Vice Chancellor acknowledged the success rate for NHMRC as being the most successful to date, but noted a future need to focus on improving the success rate for program grants.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor also advised on the reorganisation of the NHMRC grants program into streams with new expert review panels and an emphasis on disease states and outcomes for health. Early in 2006, the Pro-Vice Chancellor will convene a forum of medical researchers to examine the implications of these changes to fundamental focus and assessment within the restructure of the schemes.
(b) GO8 Deputy/Pro-Vice Chancellor’s Meeting

Members noted the GO8 meeting held in Canberra on 16 November 2005. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) reported on the recent meeting in Canberra, of which matters raised included:

- discussions of CRC programs in future rounds, and the implications of incorporation which is a matter of concern to all GO8 members.

The Chair advised that he will be providing guidelines on future CRC involvement to the research community and that he strongly encourages discussions of potential new CRC applications at the earliest planning phase.

(c) Research Quality and Impact

The Expert Advisory Committee (EAG) for the Research Quality Framework released its preferred model paper in September, and a process to address the resolution of the remaining major issues of concern is under way. These issues include:

- eligibility of categories of staff and number of items for assessment.
- requirements of evidence, portfolios and issues of impact.
- financial issues and proposed interactions with DEST.

EAG will reconvene in December to finalise a report to DEST and to the Minister by 23/12/2005.

The Chair noted that a final outcome on RQF requirements would be known in the New Year. A number of requests and concerns were raised by members, including:

- problem of specific definition of “impact”.
- likelihood of “poaching” of high profile research personnel.
- a member noted that assessment within the humanities would have an additional reading component.
- a member noted the potential impact of the RQF on early career researchers.

(d) Media Statements for Notable Awards to UWA Staff Research Community

The Chair noted with praise the many achievements of 2005, in particular the wonderful news of the awarding of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2005 to Professor Barry Marshall and Dr Robin Warren and also the Science Minister’s Prize for Life Scientist of the Year to Dr Harvey Millar. Other notables include: Ben Corry who won the 2005 Young Australian Biophysicist Award from the Australian Society of Biophysicists and Gavin Flemetti who has recently been awarded the 2005 Cornforth Medal by the Royal Australian Chemical Institute for his PhD Thesis.

(e) Thank You from the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) sincerely thanked all members of the Research Committee for their contributions throughout the year, and in particular those members who are finishing their terms on 31 December 2005. The Chair also welcomed the new President of the Post Graduate Students Association, Mr Benjamin Jardine, who will be replacing Ms Natalie Mast on the Research Committee.

8. REPORT OF FACULTY NOMINEES OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Faculty nominees provided verbal reports to the Research Committee.
9. UWA RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME – REF RA/1/485/1

Members noted the Research Grants Scheme Recipients 2006 report. The Chair advised that there would be minor changes to the guidelines for consideration by the Research Committee during 2006.

10. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING MANAGEMENT REPORT – REF F4816

The chair suggested this item be held over to the February meeting to enable the Faculties to adequately address their minimum requirements for the definition of research active. Faculty nominees should ensure this information is provided in readiness for inclusion in the February agenda.

11. PUBLICATIONS AUDIT GUIDELINES FOR COMPUTER SOFTWARE

Members noted the publications audit guidelines for computer software.

12. UWA CENTRE GUIDELINES

(a) Review of UWA Centre Guidelines – Ref F1257

Members noted that all Centres are established by the process detailed within the guidelines, Guidelines for the Establishment and Review of UWA Research and Training Centres (RC12), except a small group of Centres who have the automatic right to establishment as a UWA Centre upon winning major national competitive external funding. The members advised the Chair that these guidelines should be changed in order to allow successful WA Centres of Excellence to be automatically granted the right to establishment as UWA Centres under these guidelines due to the increased rigour of assessment that WA Centres of Excellence now undergo.

RESOLVED – 21

The Research Committee advised the Chair to add the WA Centres of Excellence to the small group of Centres to be exempt from the Guidelines for the Establishment and review of UWA Research and Training Centres, and to forward the revised Guidelines to Academic Council for noting.

(b) Establishment of UWA Centres

Members noted that the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) had received two proposals for the establishment of two new Centres.

(i) Establishment of WASP – Ref F13762

Members recommended to the Chair that the Western Australian Supercomputing Program be established as a UWA Centre and that the proposal be forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.

RESOLVED – 22

The Research Committee advised the Chair to forward the proposal of the WASP Centre to Academic Council for approval.

(ii) Establishment of the Ear Sciences Centre – Ref F13761

Members recommended to the Chair that the Ear Sciences Centre be established as a UWA Centre and that the proposal is forwarded to the Academic Council for approval.
RESOLVED – 23

The Research Committee advised the Chair to forward the proposal of the Ear Sciences Centre to Academic Council for approval.

The Chair closed the meeting at 4.10pm by wishing all members and attendee's a restful festive season and he concluded that 2005 had been one of great success for UWA. In particular he noted the achievements of all prize winners, the Federation Fellows and their State Centres of Excellence, the successful ARC Centres of Excellences, Premier's Fellows and joint UWA/CSIRO appointments. The Chair emphasised that these successes placed UWA in a position to reap major benefits in 2006, 2007 and 2008. UWA researchers have responded to the challenge and this can be partly attributed to the professional guidance and support provided by Research Services, the Research Development Officers, the Graduate Research School, the Office of Industry and Innovation and Legal Services. This view was strongly endorsed by all members with one member stating that the level of support and sophistication provided by Research Services staff “is second to none”.

CHAIR

Confirmed

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