MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE SENATE ROOM ON 12 MAY 2005

PRESENT

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor D McEachern) – Chair
Chair of the Academic Board (Professor G Martin)
Dean of the Graduate Research School (Professor R Owens)
President of the Postgraduate Students' Association (Ms N Mast)
Professor R Bartlett
Associate Professor S Dunlop
Professor J Finley-Jones
Dr J Henry
Associate Professor A Lynch
Dr I Mclean
Professor M V Sargent

Mr S Anderson
Associate Professor L Baldassar
Associate Professor J Sweeney
Dr S Hopkins
Mr F Morgan
Professor A Robertson
Professor D Sampson
Professor B Waddell
Professor G Yeoh

Dr C Thomson
Dr J Berman
Ms M Emmett

1. MINUTES

Confirmation

RESOLVED – 12

To confirm the minutes of the Research Committee meeting held on 10 February 2005.

2. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE AUSTRALIAN CODE OF PRACTICE FOR THE CARE AND USE OF ANIMALS FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES – F11369

Members noted the UWA Statement of Compliance with the Australian Code of Practice for the Care and Use of Animals for Scientific Purposes.

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

Members recalled that several recommendations for amendments to the UWA Research Grants Scheme were approved (resolution 3/05) at the February 2005 meeting of the Research Committee. The changes include a clearer definition of pilot project and early career researcher (ECR), as well as it being made clear that subcommittees assessing the applications have the
option of not providing feedback to ECR applicants which are not of sufficient quality and therefore are deemed unworthy of resubmission. It was also approved at the February meeting that the maximum grant size should be increased and that there should be a split of funds to support ECR and established researchers.

RESOLVED - 13

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC1) revised guidelines for the UWA Research Grants Scheme which provide for an increase in the maximum grant size from $20,000 to $30,000 and a split of the funds 70% for ECRs and 30% for established researchers to support pilot projects.

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

Members recalled that at the February 2005 meeting of the Research Committee it was agreed that there needed to be clearer selection criteria for the UWA Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowships scheme and that the guidelines should, where possible, be the same as for the UWA Postdoctoral Research Fellowships scheme.

RESOLVED - 14

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC2) revised guidelines and application form for the UWA Re-Entry Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, which includes section 6 that outlines three criteria against which the applications are assessed, including a criterion to assess the extent of career interruption which counts for 20% of the total assessment.

5. GRADUATE RESEARCH TRAVEL AWARDS – REF 10/01/027/001

At a meeting of the Board of the Graduate Research School held on 8 March 2005 changes to the Regulations Governing the Graduate Research Travel Awards Scheme were discussed. Under the current Regulations candidates are eligible for only one University Travel Award during enrolment in one or more research higher degree programmes at UWA. The Board has asked that the Research Committee approve a change to the Regulations to allow a candidate who has received an award and who subsequently completes their degree programme to be eligible for another award if they later enrol in a further research higher degree programme at UWA. This will have implications to the budget request for this Scheme via the Central Research Allocation.

RESOLVED – 15

To approve the attached (Attachment RC3) changes to the Regulations Governing the Graduate Research Travel Awards Scheme, which now allow a candidate who has received an award and who subsequently completes their degree programme to be eligible for another award if they later enrol in a further research higher degree programme at UWA.

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

Research Quality Framework

The development of a Research Quality Framework (RQF) is a major priority of the Australian Government as the basis of a more consistent and comprehensive approach to assessing the quality and impact of publicly funded research. National consultations on a model of an RQF have divided the research community with much debate about the quality of research versus its impact, as well as other issues such as the unit of assessment and the unit of reporting.

A National Stakeholder Forum will be held in Canberra on 2 June 2005 where all issues will be debated and these are expected to be detailed in an Advanced Approaches paper. To date there has been no firm indication that the RQF will impact on DEST block funding models.
It was suggested that once the RQF is finalised that a University-wide forum be held to discuss the likely impact on the UWA research community.

7. 2006-2008 OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES PLAN – REF F12186

The next iteration of the University’s Operational Priorities Plan (OPP) covering the 2006 to 2008 triennium is being progressed with four working groups to facilitate its development:

- OPP Coordinating Group
- OPP Teaching and Learning Group
- OPP Research Group
- OPP Management Group

The OPP is the component of the University’s Cycle of Planning and Accountability that provides the link between broad strategic and detailed operational planning by specifying the particular objectives that are to have the highest priority during a specified three-year period. For members’ information the 2003-2005 OPP is available for download at http://www.registrar.uwa.edu.au/page/65558 and includes clearly defined priorities in research and research training.

The OPP Coordinating Group, whose membership included the Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Registrar and the Director of Planning Services, met on 27 April 2005 and established the following principles which will underpin the development of the 2006-2008 OPP:

- The OPP should have fewer, broader objectives than the previous two OPPs, and that the structure of the document should be modified to reflect this, including providing, where appropriate, sub-targets relating to aspects of each overall priority objective. It is expected that approximately 10 priorities will be identified.
- Internationalisation is not explicitly identified as a separate priority area and has now been mainstreamed under the themes of teaching and learning, research and research training, and management. International priorities and strategies would be listed under these themes, and international excellence would continue to be measure of the University's performance.

The OPP Coordinating Group identified the following preliminary priority objectives for research and research training, recognising that these would inevitably change as a result of deliberations of the Working Groups and consultations with key stakeholder groups, such as the Research Committee:

- Improve the quality, productivity and impact of research, including:
  - Improving the number of UWA staff publishing in quality journals
  - Improving the citation impact of UWA publications
  - Increasing the number of higher degree by research students and their completion rates, and
  - Increasing total research income from all sources as a share of the national total and on a per capita basis

In their consideration of the preliminary objectives members had the following comments:

- Improving the student experience should be a priority and this extends to higher degree students.
- A priority should be to capture the strength of research collaborations.
- There appears to be a conflict between improving the quality and impact of research, and the notion of increasing productivity. Perhaps these two priorities should be separated.
• In an attempt to increase total research income from diverse sources the University should not lose sight of the need to also increase Australian Competitive Grant income.
• The University OPP should impact on faculty and school OPPs, and so a wide-spread discussion of priorities is important.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) invited members to provide further comment to him directly.

8. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING MANAGEMENT REPORT – REF F4816

As part of the DEST Institutional Assessment Framework (IAF) Information Collection submission (formerly the Educational Profiles Data Collection) the University is required to submit a Research and Research Training Management Report (RRTMR). The RRTMRs have been collected from the sector each year except 2004, and the latest version of the UWA’s Report can be downloaded at http://intranet.uwa.edu.au/planning/PlanServ/EdProf03.

Part B of the RRTMR requests quantitative information on the University’s research and research training performance in a standardised format. This includes:

• Data on research and research training
• Performance in all research, and
• Performance in areas of research strength.

In the latter category DEST advises that areas of research strength should be guided by, but not necessarily limited to, the ‘discipline’ and ‘division’ categories as provided in the Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines Classification of the Australian Standard Research Classification framework. Areas of strength will generally have attracted a core of researchers and research students.

Members were provided with Part B of the UWA’s RRTMR for 2003, which lists the top ranked schools and centres as areas of research strength based on their 2003 budget allocation using the research and research training component of UWA budget model. The research and research training component is derived from research income, higher degree research completions, research publications, staff distinction and higher degree research teaching.

Members were asked to consider whether areas of research strength at UWA should again be guided by the research and research training component of the budget model for the 2005 RRTMR, or whether some other measure of identifying areas of research strength should be used.

General agreement was reached that UWA’s identified areas of research strength in the 2005 RRTMR should again be guided by the research and research training component of the budget model, but with the flexibility to increase or decrease the size of this list if this is warranted.

9. REPORT OF FACULTY NOMINEES OF RESEARCH COMMITTEE

To help with a two-way interaction between the Faculties and the Office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), the Chair asked that each Faculty nominee of the Research Committee elected by the Academic Board provide a brief verbal report at the meeting on recent research related issues in their faculty.

During this open discussion the following key points were made:

• The role of the Research Development Officer is becoming better known and there are efforts to include these Officers in local strategies to increase competitive grant income.
• The UWA research quality assessment exercise was raised and some discussion centred on publishing practice in areas such as design where the impact is not in quality
journals. The non-inclusion of publications by Honorary Research Fellows was also raised as a concern.

- The Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences wrote a submission in response to the DEST Research Quality Framework issues paper.
- A survey of staff in the faculties identified a major need for assistance with preparing budgets as part of the grant application process.
ITEM FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE PLANNING AND BUDGET COMMITTEE
FROM A MEETING OF THE RESEARCH COMMITTEE HELD ON 12 MAY 2005

10. CENTRAL RESEARCH ALLOCATION – REF 06/04/010/060

Members had before them a draft budget submission for the 2006 Central Research Allocation (CRA), which includes research support schemes, the Graduate Research School and the Institute of Advanced Studies.

This draft submission includes a detailed explanation of the rationale of the 2006 CRA budget request.

RESOLVED – 16

To endorse the attached (Attachment RC4) budget and rationale for the 2006 Central Research Allocation and to forward it to the Planning and Budget Committee for their consideration and approval.

Confirmed

CHAIR

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