

School Integer Committee

Minutes of 1st Meeting
11.30-13.00 Thursday 17th January

Venue: Botany Meeting Room

Present were: David Bourke, Natalie Cooper, Elaine Elders, Mary Forde, Shane McGuinness, John Parnell (Chair) & Elaine Treacy.

Apologies were received from XXXXX?

This document summarises for the School Executive (hereafter Executive) the minutes of the first meeting of the Integer Committee and constitutes its first report to the Executive.

1. Following a brief introduction by the Chair to the Integer and Wiser initiatives and a generalised introduction of committee members to each other the committee agreed to meet with the College's Integer Committee over lunchtime as soon as conveniently possible.
2. The committee discussed the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School and the consequent prioritisation of the Actions therein recommended. The report was agreed to be useful but with 57 recommendations, daunting, and perhaps somewhat off-putting. The Integer Committee tried to whittle and condense the recommendations down to a reasonable number. Some of these, it was agreed, require almost no work and can, if agreed by the Executive, be immediately implemented. Others are more intractable; some are outwith the remit of the School, some are outwith the remit of the Integer Committee and some appear to be simply common-sense best practise being reflective of the culture of the School. These, however, may be tricky to monitor or, if necessary, shift. The rest of this document reflects the discussion and groups Actions together under relevant headings. The numerical order of the Actions is preserved, as far as is possible.

3. Requests from the Integer Committee based on its discussion of the recommendations in the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School.

It was agreed that some actions cannot be proceeded with, or even effectively discussed, until relevant data become available to the Integer Committee. In the main these data should, it is believed, be readily extracted from Genesis or may be already held in the School or Faculty Office. So the Integer Committee has three major requests to the School as follows:

- a. Please provide the committee with data (*i.e.* a spreadsheet or table) showing the numbers of staff (all staff), PDocs, PGs and UGs by gender for the School. These data to include attribution to the relevant discipline but not necessarily to be ordered by discipline. This is required for Action 1a and for the project as a whole.
- b. Please provide the committee with anonymised data (*i.e.* a spreadsheet or table) showing the numbers of applications made for appointments - staff, PDocs and PG's over the past 5 years. This is required for Action 12a.
- c. Please provide the committee with anonymised data (*i.e.* a spreadsheet or table) showing the numbers of applications made for promotion made by staff over the past 5 years. This is required for Action 12a.

4. *Suggestions for immediate action to be taken by the Executive and / or School Directors arising from the Integer Committee and based on its discussion of the recommendations in the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School.*

The Executive should be made aware that many of the requested actions in the report require, or would be easiest complied with by, construction of a Staff Handbook for the School. Construction of such a handbook is beyond the scope and competence of the School's Integer Committee and is properly in the domain of the School Executive.

Many of the other actions identified below are minimal in terms of effort and input required and could be regarded as 'low-hanging fruit'. Others require some, but not very much effort. If the executive agrees to the implementation of these initiatives 'Champions' may have to be identified to drive them forward but many appear within the remit of the Head of School or the School's officers.

- a. The Executive is therefore requested to agree to the construction of a School Staff handbook.
- b. If a (above) is agreed then the Executive is requested to outline the framework for the handbook given that it can expect that the School's Integer Committee would have a significant input into some sections. The School's Integer Committee would use College criteria, where available, to contribute to the handbook. This would cover Actions 7a (guidance on behaviour), 9a, 9b (visibly valuing all individual's contributions), Actions 10a & 10b (postdoc appointment procedures and panel interviews), Actions 11a, 17b, 17c, 19b (mentoring and appraisal of fixed-term contract staff), Action 22a (flexible working).
- c. The Executive is requested to consider reconstituting / reconfiguring the School's Social Committee. This committee could be tasked to identify practical steps to build a stronger School community. This would help to

fulfil Actions 8a & 8b aimed at building a stronger School community, though more actions will be required. For example: the executive might explicitly recognise, and actively work towards, effective and realisable resource sharing and reduction of duplication in - *e.g.* equipment, academic staff (teaching), technical staff (teaching support) and administrative support so as to build a stronger community and make maximum use of diminishing resources.

- d. The Executive to consider requesting staff, who have been recently successful in promotion, to make their case-study readily available (Action 13d). The Integer Committee had mixed feelings about the Action and some doubts were expressed that staff would be willing to do become involved, as it would be almost impossible to make such a process fully anonymous. Nevertheless, unless staff are asked whether they are willing to become involved or not, perhaps at discipline level, then all discussion of this issue is speculative. Core issues include - anonymity, the role of the Head of Department, etc. Probably, this request would carry most weight if it were to come from the Head of Departments following a request from the Head of School.
- e. The Executive is requested to consider introducing a staff induction programme (Actions 16a & 16b) to make staff aware of opportunities within the University (Action 20b). If this is agreed then the School Staff handbook could be integrated into the programme for new staff. The programme could cover *e.g.* health and safety, who is responsible for what in the School and in College (the Chair of the Integer Committee wishes the Executive good luck with that last one). If this is agreed then the Executive has to identify an academic to lead a year's pilot of the induction programme (Action 16c). This job should be easy enough given the low levels of staff recruitment and now would seem a good time, therefore, to trial such a scheme - it might even be best done in concert with the other School involved in the College Integer programme (Chemistry).

If the introduction of such a programme is not agreed by the Executive then it was strongly felt that the minimum new staff should receive from the School was a letter outlining such induction issues, or pointing out the answers in the handbook.

- f. The Executive to consider introducing a mentoring (Actions 11a & 19a) and appraisal scheme for Post-docs and Post-graduates, co-ordinated perhaps, by the Postgraduate Director of Teaching and Learning (Actions 17a, 17b & 17d), and perhaps under the remit of the established College Post-doc forum (Action 20a). This scheme to inform the Post-docs and Post-graduates about their development as independent researchers and to indicate to them their next career steps. This appraisal, therefore, goes

beyond their performance in their current job. In house appraisal could link to the College's Careers and Appointments Service who should, in any case, be able to help in terms of career steps. This will require some effort and might be easiest accomplished using the College Post-doc forum.

- g. There was strong support for the proposition that the Postgraduate Director of Teaching and Learning consider extending, from Botany and Zoology, to the whole School, the requirement for all Ph.D. students to give lightning talks and flash presentations in a single integrated forum (Action 17c).
- h. The Executive might clarify, via a simple memo from the Head of School, the expectation that timetabling needs to be scheduled, where possible, within core hours that are sensible (Action 24a).
- i. The Executive to agree to circulate the Oxford Research and Policy Report (despite its daunting size and somewhat confusing layout) along with a request that interested staff who'd wish to lead any action contact the Integer Committee and that any staff who have views on any of the suggested actions send them to the Integer Committee (Action 28a).

5. *Deferral of suggested actions*

The Integer Committee suggests to the Executive that the following actions in the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School be deferred:

- a. Action 5a (checking of visibility of the fairness of resource allocation)
- b. Action 9d (run an opinion survey in 2014)
- c. Action 20d (specifically featuring contributions of female staff on website)
- d. Action 21a (monitoring by gender nominations made to the Faculty, College and external positions). There are very few of these and in some cases, those that exist are devolved to Departments making this a very difficult ask.
- e. Action 21c (consistency of approach across the whole School towards all staff in terms of undertaking activities), requires deferral as most of these sorts of things are still Departmentally based. This also has implications under Action 4a & 4b.
- f. Action 24b depends on the implementation of Action 24a (see above).

The Integer Committee itself has deferred consideration of Action 30b (assessment of necessary budget support for Integer initiative) until more is known about what central resources will be available. This deferral necessarily leads to the deferral of Actions 30c & 30d (respectively, School support and training needs). Action 30a (the introduction of a modified workload model) is also deferred until further information is obtained from the College Integer co-ordinators. The Integer Committee will report back to the Executive in due course on the above deferred Actions.

6. *Suggested actions that are outwith the remit of the Integer Committee but within that of the Executive.*

Some Actions in the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School are properly solely within the remit of the Executive. The Executive, therefore, needs to discuss these matters and decide on them. These are:

- a. Action 13a (introducing a scheme whereby staff are supported and encouraged to apply for promotion via a scheme of assessment by more senior staff across the School) & Action 13b (what would be best practise during such appraisals).
- b. Action 13c (introducing a mentoring scheme for staff close to promotion). This should be unnecessary for Early Career Researchers on the teaching staff as they should be in the College mentoring scheme. It can only apply, therefore, to more established staff. Obviously, such a scheme would have to be voluntary. It would be totally unnecessary to set up such a formal scheme if informal consultations occurred evenly across disciplines, but anecdotal evidence suggests that this is not the case.

7. *Suggested actions that are outwith the remit of the Integer Committee but within that of the College and on which action appears to have been taken.*

Other suggested actions in the Oxford Research and Policy Report to the School are in place at College level. The Integer Committee does not feel that the School should duplicate these, though supplementation may be useful. This supplementation includes:

- a. Action 11a (mentoring and appraisal of fixed-term contract staff). There is, seemingly, a scheme for lecturing staff already in place).
- b. Action 21b (encourage female fellows to recognise their status as role models) and to encourage woman to apply for fellowship) are, respectively, down to the individual and within the remit of the Fellows not the School.
- c. Action 22a (flexible working) is a College-wide issue on which guidelines exist and that need to be promulgated via the School Handbook (see above).

8. *Suggested actions that have already been implemented by the School.*

The School has set-up an Integer Committee, with a diverse membership reporting to the School Executive, whose responsibilities include dissemination of relevant information (Actions 29a, 29b & 29c). Also, the School website does feature contributions from female staff (Action 20d) and we believe that Action 20e (importance of role models) is implicitly acknowledged through the various actions the School is currently taking.

9. *Suggested actions that will be further explored at its next meeting by the Integer Committee.*

- a. The Integer Committee will, at its next meeting, identify potential role models amongst female academics and request that they write -up their case studies for the School web-site (Actions 20c & 20e).
- b. Actions 4a & 4b (greater School integration) & Action 21c (uniform participation) were considered vital but require further discussion to allow for implementable suggestions to be considered.
- c. Actions 25a, 25b, 25c & 25d (career breaks / staff returning after extended leave) is exceptionally important. School policy must conform to College policy but may go further and requires careful consideration.

Signed

Date

J. Parnell
(Chair)