

Research Committee

Minutes of 24th January 2002

Present: Michael Gibney (Dean of Research), Doris Alexander, Deirdre Savage, Hilary Tovey, John Saeed, Elizabeth Drew (GSU), Clive Williams, David Dickson, John Dillon, John Fitzpatrick, Jim Sexton, Margaret O'Mahony, Sheila Greene

Apologies: Dermot Kelleher

1. Apologies

Apology noted.

2. Minutes of meeting 14th December 2001

Minutes approved and signed by Chairperson.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 Research Support Database

DCU would like TCD to join a common database. Initially it seemed that the system would not interface with other IT systems in College but now InfoEd, who designed the system, have produced modification and the system will now interface with College systems. ISS are looking again at the system to see if it is adequate for College's needs. Should it be given the go-ahead or indeed even if an inhouse solution were to be developed, the next step is to see where the funding needed for the database development and implementation would come from.

3.2 Research Committee Finances

A letter from Julian Reynolds, Zoology, was circulated to the Committee.

The aim of the Research Committee should be to safeguard the Maintenance Grant. If there was a way of knowing in advance the level of Start-ups in a given year, the Committee could then make a decision to fund a certain number of Berkeley Fellowships knowing that the funding would be available in its budget. The Research Office will ask Staff Office if there is a way of predicting numbers for a given year.

A set of more developed criteria are to be used next year which will indicate categories of costs which are or are not eligible, and applicants will be asked to go by this when developing the proposal. The aim would be to have a list of what will and will not be funded, and a better system for scoring. The point was made that although the Research Committee money was meant to be considered as an extra, since this money was not available normally through other means, it is the only way researchers in College can get access to such funds. However, the Start-up fund should not be seen to replace funders such as the Health Research Board. An accountability section

should be included in the revised set of guidelines. The Chairman proposed that a small group be set up to consider what revisions to guidelines are necessary in advance of next year's call for start-up applications.

3.3 Good research practice

Good progress has been made towards the development of a code of good research practice. It is envisaged that two more meetings may be needed to consolidate the work and produce a good research practice document. Once accepted by College, this document will be put on the web.

3.4 PRTLTI

The Committee thanked all the administrative staff, Jane Grimson and all Principal Investigators on the recent PRTLTI Cycle 3 results.

4. Start-up Funds

The Committee accepted the methodology used this year to allocate the funding available to successful Start-up applicants and agreed the proposed allocations. The Chairman will put a notice together and applicants will hear the outcome of their applications by the end of the month.

5. Berkeley Fellowships

The Berkeley Fellowships are to be discussed at a special meeting. Many applicants get a score of 30 out of 30 but there are not enough Berkeley Fellowships for all of them. With Freedom of Information a system is needed that the Committee can stand over. The process needs to be increasingly more transparent.

Some of the holders of Year One Berkeley Fellowships will give presentations on their work during Trinity week 2002.

6. College Strategic Plan

At present a new College Strategic Plan is being put together, and an element of this will be concerned with research. The Current Research Implementation Plan was developed in 1998 but since then there have been substantial changes in the research funding arena. The Board of College is fully committed to the full Research Implementation Plan but aside from that, a way of choosing strategic areas for development is needed.

A long discussion followed considering how the Strategic areas might be chosen. A document circulated by the Chairman detailing a 'stream'-based approach was discussed. This stream-based approach is meant to aid groups in seeing what sort of development they would need in order to become world class in terms of their research reputation. The point was made that this might be seen to exclude individuals. However, it was also noted that groups are generally headed by individuals. A theme-based approach was put forward but it was also noted that the College cannot impose themes, and that it might be problematic unless there is a leader willing to develop the area and bring people together.

Given the time constraints, it is not possible to actually develop either themes or strategic areas for the College Strategy but rather to concentrate on the procedures that would then be implemented.

In relation to the stream-based approach, it was stressed that this was a dynamic approach and that groups would move up through the system as they developed their research activities. The concept would be that the groups themselves might be asked to assign themselves to the stream they think they belong to and would have to demonstrate why.

It was pointed out that looking at the criteria used for the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in different discipline areas in the UK might be useful in developing a self determined stream-based system. It might be useful to invite Gerry McKenna, University of Ulster, to talk to the Committee about the RAE.

7. Research Centres

An external review of the Children's Centre has been received by College. This will be examined to see what implications the recommendations and outcomes have, and which are for Centres generally in College.

8. External Representative to the Research Committee

The decision to have an external representative to the Research Committee will depend on what sort of person is wanted and what function they should have. Possible names put forward include Jim Ryan (ex Bioresearch Ireland), someone from SFI, Gordon Duff, Conor O'Carroll, Marc Cabill (Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences) and Damien Hannon. A discussion followed, and it was felt that someone who could help in the development of research in the College and someone knowledgeable about research would certainly be useful. It was proposed that each member of the Research Committee put forward a name and reason why to the Chairman. It was also suggested that the external person need not be invited to every single Research Committee meeting but only to those which related to the College's strategy development.

9. Communications

The Website for Research and Innovation Services is being revamped at present and it is intended that it will be easier to use and provide more support to the research community in College.

10. Dates of Meetings for 2002

Dates for meetings for 2002 were agreed by the Committee.
The next meeting will be held in the Board Room, 1 College Green at 2 p.m. on Friday 1st March 2002.

Signed: _____

Date: _____