

Minutes of the meeting of the School Research Committee

Tuesday 16th June 2015

The Conference Room at Chiswell St from 10am-12pm

Summary

Routine circulation of minutes

Recommended Action

For noting, for discussion and for action as appropriate

School Research Committee

Tuesday 16th June 2015, 10am-12pm

MINUTES

PRESENT

Jane Alder
Clare Avery
Bobby Banerjee
Max Bruche
Giovanni Cespa
Igor Filatotchev
Santi Furnari
Jacqui Gaul
Steve Haberman (Chair)
Feng Li
Ian Marsh
John Montgomery (Secretary)
Jens Perch Nielsen
Ben Rickayzen
Enrique Schroth
Vangelis Souitaris
Paolo Volpin
Hugh Willmott

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE FROM

Giovanni Cespa
Lilian de Menezes
Cliff Oswick
Paul Palmer
Vangelis Souitaris

IN ATTENDANCE

Karen Shaw
John Fothergill
Andrew Jones

AGENDA – A

Part one: Preliminary Items

1. Apologies for absence, welcome to new members and leavers.

Apologies for absence were noted, as above.

Welcome to new members: We have co-opted Professor Hugh Willmott from the Faculty of Management onto the Committee because of his experience of the REF and its predecessor, the RAE. Hugh was a member of the Business and Management Studies Panel on the 2008 RAE and the 2014 REF. We hope his experience will be useful to the Committee.

Welcome to Dr Karen Shaw the new Director of Research and Enterprise at City; to Professor John Fothergill, Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise; and to Professor Andrew Jones, Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Arts who will give an update on the University's efforts to bid for an ESRC Doctoral Training Centre.

Leavers: Jane Alder, Research Support Officer is leaving Cass to take up a similar role at Cranfield University next month. Jane has been with us for three years and in that time many of us have benefited from her assistance on research grant applications. The Committee wishes her well in her next post.

2. Approval of minutes from the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting held February 2015 were approved. The action points from that meeting have been carried out, are being carried out or appear on this meeting's agenda. The most important updates since the last meeting are given below.

3. Tracking the action points:

Item 5 (i) PhD Programme – The Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise and PhD and Exec PhD Directors to consider what principles, process and criteria should be used to help the School decide which PhD partnership opportunities are worth pursuing.

The number of requests for partnerships has dropped away since we discussed this in February, although having a policy would still be of considerable assistance when it comes to future partnership offers. Issues the policy should consider include reputation of partnering institution, researcher/student space, and assessing the benefits to Cass.

Action Point: The Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise and PhD and Exec PhD Directors to meet over the summer and to bring a draft policy on PhD Partnerships to the next meeting of this committee.

Item 5 (ii) PhD Programme – Although the one year MRes degree has been replaced with an integrated training year, could we award an MRes to students upon completion of their PhD?

This has been investigated and the answer is 'No'. If the MRes Degree is no longer offered then students cannot be enrolled on it and a degree cannot be awarded.

Item 5 (iv) PhD Programme – Teaching assistance and research support project requests and student availability to entered into the workload allocation system, so that the 'market' works more efficiently.

Cass PhD students on bursaries are expected to repay the school with 60 hours of TA or RA support per year, as stated in their bursary terms and conditions. In the Faculty of Finance and in Actuarial Science and Insurance student projects and being managed in the staff workload allocation system. In Management, the process is a little bit more ad hoc or informal.

The committee was reminded that the formalisation of the TA and RA support was important to increase the efficiency of supply and demand and to increase transparency of the process which might lead to higher quality projects and more suitable use of student time, leading to higher skill development.

Item 6: Strengthening the university's research and enterprise culture: Action point: To feed the Committee's views back to Ken Gratten and the 'Research Culture' project team.

This action point has been completed

Item 7: Revisions to the School's research ethics policy: Action point: JM to send policy to Senate Research Ethics Committee

This action point has been carried out

Item 8: Changes to the Research and KE performance exercise for 2015

- JM to implement this this year's research and KE performance exercise on the basis of the decisions taken above.
- To review the Cass Business School's own list of journals in light of any changes that may have occurred in the new ABS Journal Quality List or changes to impact factors.

These two action points have been carried out.

NEW ACTION POINT: The new ABS Journal Quality List makes a distinction between journals graded 4 and those graded 4* with the 4* journals closely approximating the 45 elite journals used for the *Financial Times* annual ranking of business schools. The committee thought it would be a worthwhile exercise to experiment with the 2015 Research and KT data to see what effect using the 4* elite category would have on the numbers of staff meeting various future REF inclusion criteria: 4333 vs 4*333 vs 4*444, and to bring the results to the next meeting.

Item 9: Incentivising University consultancy and commissioned research activity at Cass by revising the distribution of income – New policy with overheads of 10% of uncommitted funds.

This action point has now been carried out and the policy is being put into practice.

Item 10: Review of REF 2014: Professor Hugh Willmott to be co-opted to the Research Committee to share his experiences of how the REF panel went about its work.

This action point has been carried out.

Action point from an earlier meeting: Item 10 from Research Committee meetings February 2015: Research impact agenda beyond REF 2014 working group to be led by Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise with nominations by Heads of Faculty or members of this Committee:

After having discussions with Feng, Igor and John it has been agreed that forming an impact group may not be the best way to prepare for the impact agenda and the next REF and therefore we are not going to press ahead with its formation. Instead we would like to roll out a series of impact workshops across the School's various subject groups. These workshops have been trialled by the Strategic Management group and comprise talks on REF criteria, experience of working on the REF Panel and analysing impact cases in subject areas closely aligned to expertise of the workshop attendees. The Strategy workshop was a great success.

Complementing the impact workshops, the School's Research and Enterprise Office will begin to document a long list of potential research impact case studies and corroborating evidence. This list will be reviewed periodically with each case being tracked for any new additional impact activity, for supporting evidence or to see if the case or researcher needs support and resource.

This action point is being carried out.

4. Chair's Action taken since the last meeting

None

Part two: Items for discussion

5. ESRC Doctoral Training Partnerships (DTP) – Progress and plans.

Bids to host a Doctoral Training Partnerships/Centres (DTP or DTC) accredited by the Economic and Social research Council (ESRC) are institutional bids or multi-institutional bids, not single school bids so Cass cannot bid on its own. A bid could come from City University as a whole or a consortium of universities including City. Professor Andrew Jones, Dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences gave the Committee a progress report on his early discussions with number of potential consortium partners including Birkbeck College, SOAS, UCL, and Queen Mary. At this stage, potential partners are sizing each other up and no commitments are being made.

Talks with Birkbeck College ended after it became apparent that the future of the Bloomsbury Group DTC of which it is a part would in future become part of a UCL Doctoral Centre application. Talks with Queen Mary, University of London are ongoing, but is non-exclusive. So far there is significant interest on both sides. This is currently the relationship of most interest.

Some initial information about what is likely to be in the ESRC DTC Call for Proposals was given at an ESRC Town Meeting in February 2015. Another meeting and the Call Guidance itself will be given in September. We know that the ESRC is facing budget pressure and consequently it would prefer to fund fewer proposals than last time, which was five years ago. This also means that we shouldn't expect large numbers of studentships to flow from accreditation. However, it is important for our reputation that we get ESRC status for our doctoral programmes.

The ESRC has received many protests over the last five years about the current lock-in and lock-out mechanism of DTC holders versus non-DTC holders. Which have led to disadvantages for non-DTC HEIs far and beyond the DTC accreditation and associated studentships. For example, Non-DTCs are barred from applying for some ESRC and cross-research council research grant schemes or have been severely disadvantaged when doing so. The ESRC have indicated that they are keen to see this problem reduced in the next DTC Call as it does not want to see good institutions locked out/excluded from its various funding schemes.

6. (i) Report from the PhD Programme Director

The PhD Programme recruited 17 students this year. Four in the Faculty of Finance (all on Cass bursaries); Four for Actuarial Science and Insurance, although there may be a fifth (currently two are on Cass bursaries), and nine students in Management (6 of which are on Cass bursaries).

There have been eleven graduates this year and an increased proportion of these passed with no amendments or with minor amendments. This is beneficial because pass with major amendments means that students stay in the system for another 12 months and this is a bad signal to employers, both about the student and about our programme. Only one student received major amendments.

There has also been an improvement in our graduate placements with more students going to academic or policy making organizations. This year placements include: University of Pennsylvania, Cambridge (PostDoc); LSE (PostDoc), Cass; Bank of England, Goldsmith, Surrey, and Cranfield.

Finally, following the changes to UK Border Agency rules affecting international students, we have replaced the MRes programme and with an MPhil training year. We hope this change gives us increased flexibility – e.g. gear the course content a bit towards the nature of the intake. We also hope to put some training courses in the second year.

Issues arising: First, there appears to be a push towards centralising the PhD programme admissions including having a university-wide online application process at the University Graduate School. This might suit other schools but the application process in operation at Cass works very well and should be kept. Any move to a new applications system needs to be like for like, or better and the School has received assurances from IT that this promise will be honoured.

Secondly, RAP (Research and Progress) system for monitoring PhD student progress and recording meetings between students and their supervisors is not working well. Staff are not embracing RAP while other staff are incorrectly registered making use difficult. To increase the uptake all we can do is keep chasing people and asking them to participate. Ideally, these problems should be addressed to the University Graduate School which procured RAP and manage staff registrations.

Thirdly, the decision to finance Cass bursaries next year should ideally be taken a little earlier so that we can advertise at the same time as our competitors. This year we left it a little late.

(ii) Report from the Executive PhD Programme Director

This year the Exec PhD Programme recruited eight students having made twelve offers. For comparison, last year we had five students. All new students have been allocated supervisors and this week they are here attending their second training module.

We are still having issues with our partner organization TIAS and its parent, the University of Tilburg. Although they are delivering half the teaching and supervision, Cass is carrying the vast majority of administration, marketing and recruitment.

We are looking to get additional institutional partners and we have recently signed an agreement with LUISS Business School, Italy. This won't be a full partner, like TIAS, but rather a feeder programme. Top graduates from their executive programmes could be offered a place on our programme extending their studies through to doctorate level. We are exploring opportunities for collaborations with Mannheim and ESCP in France. The nature and the extent of these collaborations need some consideration or we could find ourselves in breach of our agreement with Tilburg. We could also cannibalise our own existing programme by creating too many different programmes.

7. Review of Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014

Paper 3 reviews the results achieved by City University and its Units of Assessment in the REF 2014. It provides a detailed analysis of the relationship between research metrics, such as income, and the REF quality profile achieved by each unit. It also compares the performance of City with other comparable universities. The paper provides detailed recommendations for research strategy and preparation for the next REF. The paper was originally intended for ExCo to consider the recommendations but it may also be useful as a strategy and planning document for the recommended REF Strategy Group to consider, and to inform planning for the new Strategic Plan.

In future the University will; probably want to emphasise 4* work as opposed to the last strategy where the University by and large entered staff with at least four 3* outputs but no reference to 4* work. Future REFs may citation measures might be more widely used in the next REF, probably to support the decisions of the panel rather than to replace a peer reviewed panel. HEFCE are currently reviewing the role of research metrics in the next REF.

For the Impact part of the REF, the University is working on an institutional impact strategy and John Montgomery is helping with that.

For the Research Environment part of the REF, the two main considerations are research income and doctoral programmes. P.29 of paper 3 shows the scatter plot of the relationships of income against REF performance for all the Units of Assessment. Cass does well but you might want to think about what could be done for next time. We can also plot PhD graduates per year per FTE member of staff (page 14). High ranking business schools show 1 student graduate per 0.3 FTE member of staff although there is considerable variation. At Cass our key performance indicator of the PhD Programme is placements not numbers of graduates, and we made this point the REF research environment statement. It is correct however that the figure for PhD graduates per FTE staff is given to panel members for them to consider alongside the Research Environment statement.

Hugh Willmott reported that if graduate numbers were out of line with what was expected of an institution then you would want to reassure the Panel in the Research Environment statement of your strategy for PGR students and how the data fits with that. In addition, completion times were viewed by the panel as an indicator of a good programme, and of course were graduate destinations.

The Committee wondered how REF Panels viewed the short-term part-time overseas based REF superstar who joins an institution shortly before the REF census date. Hugh Willmott reported that REF Panels have to assess research outputs of all eligible staff submitted on an equal basis, even those short-staff REF superstars described above. However, if there was an over dependence on these staff or their contribution to the submitting department was of concern then they got hammered in the research environment component of the REF. That was the only way the panel could exercise its power in this regard, and they did. It was also noted that there is a limit on the contribution that part-time overseas staff can make to the REF. They cannot bring impact case studies and they can play only a limited role research environment. It is useful that the REF panel have their metrics pulling in opposite directions as it limits the amount of game playing.

One of the main problems for Cass in REF2014 was the over-estimation of 4* papers in the last REF. A quick analysis of the research publications submitted to the REF reveals that we overestimated the quality of the publications submitted: We predicted that 198/326 research publications would be rated 4* but only 118 actually were by the Panel. If as some suspect the new version of the ABS Journal Quality List has inflated the grading of some journals then we need to take extra care in the next REF when estimating the proportion of 4* papers being submitted. It is recommended the School use a range of external experts, other bibliometrics as well as the ABS List when selecting staff for inclusion.

8. Annual Research and KT Score: Request to include Editorial positions

The School Research Committee has been asked to consider giving credit or recognition (possibly through the workload model) to colleagues who are involved in editorial boards. In doing so it may also want to consider other forms of participation in academic bodies and in the wider community, not just editorial position. In the Research Assessment Exercise in 2008, for example, business schools were asked to report on editorial positions along with other 'Indicators of Esteem' [See paper 4].

The choice for the Committee is whether to formalise credits for editorial positions or to keep the current situation as is, which allows staff with significant journal responsibilities to negotiate teaching reduction individually.

The work involved in an editorial position is variable and depends on the role played. Also credit for an editorship of a highly-ranked journal is more important for the school (has greater esteem) than a position on a low-ranked journal, and this means the school would want to invest in the former but perhaps not the later. Having a rule would not allow Heads to make this judgement. The committee reached a consensus that the credit for editorial positions should remain at the discretion of Heads of Faculty, and should not be formalised in a rule within the annual research and KT score.

ACTION Point: JM to reply to the enquirer with the Committee's decision

9. Personal Balance Accounts – Current uses and pooling resources

In some schools money in personal balance accounts is being pooled together to make key investments in research. At Cass we have approx. £800k in total across 100-150 personal research accounts and the question is should Cass do something similar to the other schools – pool together some of the money in personal balance accounts into a central fund to invest in research activities. After some thought and discussion, and given that on average the personal balance for a member of staff at Cass is £7k, it was decided not to tax these accounts but to keep things as they are. We should however, encourage staff to use the money on their research during this REF period as there is no guarantee the university will allow these funds to stay where they are in perpetuity.

There was a suggestion that Heads of Faculty may want to discuss personal balance accounts when carrying out annual appraisals.

10. Introducing the new University Director of Research and Enterprise

Dr Karen Shaw, the new University Director of Research and Enterprise, was introduced to the Committee. Karen has been in this post for less than a month, although has been in an interim Research Director post since January 2015.

City University's Research and Enterprise Offices are merging and there will be a new University-wide structure for research and enterprise support with improved streamlined processes. It is hoped that the new structure and accompanying processes will take effect in the new academic session.

Part two: Items for information

11. Research grant and contracts: Recent applications and awards

None

12. Other business

Some staff have asked that the minutes from this committee be circulated or made available on the intranet. Until a couple of years ago, the minutes were put on the intranet along with Board of Studies papers and terms of reference. A change of practice means that Board of Studies papers are no longer put on the web so we need to look for another solution.

Action Point: JM to circulate minutes or summary of minutes, or to look for another way to communicate Research Committee minutes to academic staff.

13. Date, time and venue of next meeting

Meeting dates for 2015-16 will be circulated over the Summer months.

AGENDA – B

14. PhD Programme - Criteria for doctoral supervisors – a new policy from Senate

Senate approved the revised Policy on the Approval of Doctoral Supervisors at its meeting on 6th May 2015.

The key features of the new policy are:

- Only Category A supervisors can be the first supervisor
- Category A supervisors will be research excellent and have an ARQM GPA equal to or greater than 3*
- Category B and External Supervisors **can not** first supervisors
- *Boards of Studies (BoS) would continue to be responsible for implementing and monitoring the Policy.*
- *Tthe “first supervisor” with overall responsibility for a research student must now have a contract with the University for at least 20% FTE and be research excellent (as measured by having an ARQM [Annual Research Quality Management score] of 3*. This new policy would only apply to new students.*
- *The Policy allowed some flexibility for a BoS to make a case to the VC to approve a member of staff as a “first supervisor” who was not research excellent. Senate should receive an annual report on such exceptional approvals and review the Policy at the end of the first year. It was important that BoS fulfilled their responsibilities under the new Policy.*
- *The Graduate School will work with Schools to identify which current PhD students without a research excellent “first supervisor” would benefit from the addition of a research excellent academic within their supervisory team”*

Cass representatives on the Board of Studies argued against the new policy and in favour of the school’s current policy on the criteria for doctoral supervisors which has been in practice for a number of years. The old School policy says that:

- Category A supervisors: are all internally appointed research-strong members of staff with FTE equivalent of 20% or more who have actively supervised at least one PhD student to a timely completion. Does the supervisor have at least two 3* publications over the past five full calendar years plus the current year, AND have they had past experience of supervising at least one student through to successful completion, either solely or as part of a supervisory team.
- Category B supervisors: are research-active members of staff, including visiting researchers who have completed required PhD supervision training. Does the supervisor have at least two 3* publications over the past five full calendar years plus the current year, OR have they had past experience of supervising at least one student through to successful completion, either solely or as part of a supervisory team.

The issue for this committee is to find a way to implement the new University policy in the best way. The new policy sets a stricter criteria for Category A supervisors but a weaker criteria for category B supervisors.

Action Point: PhD Directors to implement the new policy

Action Point: JM to consult Heads of Faculty on whether any staff excluded under the new policy need to have their case considered as an exception