**Minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 1 May 2014**

**9am, Boardroom, Poole House**

Present: Prof J Fletcher (**Chair**); G Beards; Dr M Cash; E Crowley; J Garrad; Prof M Hadfield; Prof V Hundley; Dr F Knight; Prof I MacRury; Prof A Mullineux; J Northam; Prof S Page

In Attendance: Prof A Blake; R Clarke; Dr R Edwards; Dr G Esteban; Prof B Gabrys; Dr H Hartwell; J Hastings Taylor; Prof A Innes; D Kilburn

Not in Attendance: Prof S Allan; Dr R Britton; J Gusman; Dr H Hassani; S Jukes; Z Lovaszy; Dr C Ncube; J Piesse; Prof B Richards; Prof J Jun Zhang

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| **AGENDA** | | |
| **1** | **WELCOME & APOLOGIES** |  |
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|  | The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.  Apologies were received from: S Gates; Dr P Long; Prof S McDougall; D McQueen; Prof A Newton; Prof S Noroozi; Dr J Oliver; Prof D Patton; Prof K Phalp; Prof J Roach; Prof H Schutkowski; Dr C Shiel; Prof R Stillman; Prof E van Teijlingen; Dr K Welham; Dr K Wilkes; Prof T Zhang | |
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| **1** | **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (9 January 2014)** | |
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| **1.1** | The minutes were approved as an accurate record. Prof J Fletcher addressed the outstanding action to explore if the quarterly research income meetings could be rolled into the quarterly finance meetings. | |
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|  | **ACTION:** Investigate whether the quarterly research income meetings and the quarterly finance meetings could be merged.  **ACTION BY:** J Northam | |
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| **2** | **GRADUATE SCHOOL ACTIVITIES UPDATE** | |
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| **2.1** | Dr F Knight presented the Graduate School Annual Report, informing the Committee that Postgraduate Research (PGR) student numbers were around 450 and heading to 500. She also commented that ResearchPAD is live and the Graduate School are in the process of training administrators and academics on the tool. Dr F Knight also updated the Committee on the completion rate of PGRs students, stating this seems to be going up but progress is slow. | |
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| **2.2** | Dr F Knight also presented a document regarding PGRs undertaking external research visits. This was requested by Prof T McIntyre-Bhatty and ensures a duty of care over students who go on external research visits. | |
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| **2.3** | Prof I MacRury queried ResearchPAD and requested that this is accessible on the Staff Intranet. J Northam also requested it to be accessible from the Research Blog. | |
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|  | **ACTION:** Ensure Research PAD is accessible on the Staff Intranet and the Research Blog.  **ACTION BY:** Dr F Knight | |
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| **3** | **INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR FUSION – RKE/BU ENTITIES (THEMES, INSTITUTES, CENTRES AND CLUSTERS)** | |
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| **3.1** | Prof J Fletcher presented the Institutional Development Plan stating it had been approved by UET. The essence of the strategy is to move trust and empowerment back to Schools/Faculty through a variety of ways including the fast-track status and an RKE incentive scheme. | |
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| **3.2** | School/Faculty targets for Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) income going forward will be based on the trend of annual RKE income over the previous three years. At the end of each year, Schools/Faculty will be able to retain for investment a proportion of the amount of RKE income achieved in excess of the target. The amount of excess RKE income retained will be based on the proportion of staff meeting the University’s Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Prof J Fletcher wants a broader scope of KPIs, as activity is undertaken that isn’t included in current KPIs and would like to include KPIs that help support the concept of fusion. Another aspect of the strategic plan includes encouraging cross-working of Schools/Faculty. Additionally, UET are planning to create academic and post-doctorate appointments that are cross-School/Faculty. | |
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| **3.3** | Prof J Fletcher asked for comments on the Institutional Development Plan. Prof A Mullineux suggested the role of Unit Of Assessment (UOA) leaders needs to be further defined in the document. Prof J Fletcher confirmed QR money will go to Schools/Faculty but will need to be allocated to UOAs. The Committee then discussed clusters, centres and institutes and their relationship to Schools/Faculty. | |
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| **4** | **URKEC MEMBERSHIP, FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS, ROLE OF UOAS** | |
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| **4.1** | Prof I MacRury presented a paper on URKEC membership, frequency of meetings and the role of UOAs. He stated the Committee has over 50 members and recommended it to be scaled down as the quality of debate, discussion and decision making has arguably decreased since the membership increased. The proposal is for URKEC to be reduced to c.20 people and meet less frequently (3 times per year). These meetings would be interspersed with meetings of UOA leaders, Theme Leaders and HEIF leaders and other working groups as required, with some groups meeting more frequently than others. | |
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| **4.2** | Prof J Fletcher noted that research theme language is currently obscure and doesn’t resonate to the community, business or academics. He noted that this needs works to ensure people are engaged and confirmed the research themes will be subject to review in June 2014. | |
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| **5** | **HIGHER EDUCATION INNOVATION FUND (HEIF)** | |
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| **5.1** | Prof A Innes reported that BUDI is achieving the milestones set out in the business plan and has so far exceeded income targets. Their main concern is that BUDI has staff on temporary contracts about to end in September, though they are addressing this. | |
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| **5.2** | Prof I MacRury reported that the apps project is suffering a failure to launch due to person power in the School. They are about to appoint a graduate and a Project Manager to work on this project. They have 3 app projects lined up to be developed; one with external partner, one unsuccessful fusion bid and another with Silicon South. The School hopes to have adverts out and to have interviewed and appointed by the next meeting. | |
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| **5.3** | Prof A Blake reported ‘no comment’ on the Destination Development Programme on behalf of Dr P Long. | |
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| **5.4** | Prof M Hadfield reported ‘no comment’ on the Aquatic Consultancy project on behalf of Dr R Britton. Prof M Hadfield reported on the Cyber Security Unity on behalf of Dr C Richardson stating the unit is going forward with KTPs. | |
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| **5.5** | Prof J Fletcher queried whether HEIF spending is more or less of concern. J Northam stated that forecasting is aligned to themes and currently a large amount (c. £150k) is unallocated. It is possible there will be underspends on some of the projects and therefore this amount may increase. HEIF funds must be spent by July 2015. | |
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|  | **ACTION:** Review HEIF budget  **ACTION BY:** Prof J Fletcher and J Northam | |
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| **6** | **RKEO RESTRUCTURE** | |
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| **6.1** | J Northam presented the RKEO restructure which has re-evaluated the aims and structure of the service, ensuring it is aligned to supporting the achievement of BU2018 and changes in the external RKE environment. RKEO has been effective up to now, but are not always giving the best service and there exists general confusion regarding the service. The restructure proposes a dedicated Pre-Award team, Post-Award team and a Knowledge Exchange & Impact team. The Pre- and Post-Award teams would be aligned to Schools/Faculty. J Northam welcomed feedback from all staff and encouraged the Committee to review the consultation document, which is available on the staff intranet. | |
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| **6.2** | Prof A Innes queried that if all the support structures are all based in Schools/Faculty, then how will this encourage cross-School activity. J Northam stated the restructure will include staff working on 2/3 Schools/Faculty in teams that will work closely to ensure cross-School activity is supported. Additionally, the new Research Facilitator roles will be available to foster cross-disciplinary research. | |
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| **6.3** | Prof J Fletcher noted that current internal approval procedures for RKE bids are cumbersome with low delegated authority for sign-off. UET are reviewing the sign-off thresholds at the moment. He hopes the new procedures will ensure gaps are filled at the School/Faculty-level in such a way as to ensure Deans and DDREs aren’t blindsided by bids, in addition to giving more autonomy back to the Schools/Faculty. | |
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| **6.4** | Discussion ensued regarding Research Administrator roles in the Schools/Faculty. Prof I MacRury suggested that RKEO support is great and cost efficient though a general and practical solution is needed in the form of dedicated Research Centre Administrators, based in the Schools/Faculty, to administer the School/Faculty research budget, help with events, help with visiting research fellow, school research days, etc. Prof J Fletcher recounted the Research Administrator roles were moved into the Graduate School as part of the Student Journey Project, and the Research Administrator’s focus changed to PGR student administration only. It was assumed that the remainder of their roles would have been taken over by the Schools/Faculty; however this does not seem to have been the case. | |
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| **6.5** | Prof B Gabrys stated that BU needs to look at the restructure from a holistic angle as currently it’s just reacting to something that has happened as opposed to future planning. Prof J Fletcher argued reformulation of this committee will help this further as future URKEC will look at the scope of research activity in Schools/Faculty. Dr F Knight stated that there isn’t enough space on campus for PGR students and this is hindering completion rates as there isn’t anything to motivate these students to finishing their research. Prof V Hundley stated we are missing a research culture and the students have highlighted this. Prof J Fletcher confirmed there is an estates issue but we are pushing this forward as fast as we can. | |
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| **6.6** | Prof I MacRury asked if there is anything in the RKEO consultation regarding estates and where the team will sit. J Northam advised that RKEO were moved by Melbury House two years ago by UET as they were not seen as student facing and thus were not needed at Talbot Campus, though she has proposed that the pre- and post-award teams who are aligned to the Schools/Faculty will be embedded and spend at least 50% of their time in the Schools/Faculty. This will be proactive work; attending school meetings, meeting Centre Directors, etc. Prof V Hundley stated she will welcome 50% officers time in the Schools/Faculty. A discussion was held on whether RKEO could move into the Fusion 1 building, to provide a ‘one-stop-shop’ for RKE support on Talbot. J Northam and Prof M Hadfield noted that this has been trialled in the past in Dorset House but that academics had not visited the office as anticipated. | |
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| **6.7** | J Northam concluded by stating the consultation is open until 26th May and welcomes all feedback, positive, negative, solutions and suggestions. | |
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| **7** | **eBU** | |
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| **7.1** | J Northam presented a brief paper on eBU and encouraged the Committee to use the service, stating the system is locked down to BU staff and students only. The user can login, upload draft papers and receive feedback on their papers and also give feedback to other papers. She noted this is a great opportunity to provide feedback to students and staff on their papers and requested colleagues promote this as a useful tool. Prof I MacRury stated that a group in MS are keen to do something similar; Prof Fletcher would like them to engage with eBU. | |
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| **8** | **GRANTS ACADEMY REVIEW** | |
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| **8.1** | Dr R Edwards presented a review document on the Grants Academy, sharing background on the scheme which commenced two years ago. Since then 102 members have joined. The scheme requires that three proposals are submitted during their 18 month tenure on the scheme. The scheme includes intense training for academics regarding proposals and there are other resources available. Overall, feedback is positive about the Grants Academy. However, there is a trend that expectation of members is not as high as it was hoped for and a large core of members have still not submitted a proposal as part of the scheme. This is attributed to a lack of strategic recruitment and waning enthusiasm by members, potentially due to expectation and commitment issues. The scheme has developed in isolation from other BU processes which can hinder academic proposals if they are unaware of the processes. | |
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| **8.2** | Dr R Edwards presented several recommendations to improve the Grants Academy:   1. Selection needs to be more strategic and in conjunction with DDREs and academics. 2. There needs to be a clearer expectation of bidding and what’s expected from the academics. 3. RKEO needs to be more supportive and provide more support to academics and in turn a more supportive cohort working together in a cross-School/Faculty capacity. 4. More support for language skills is needed, in terms of proof-reading and interventions for non-native speakers. | |
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| **8.3** | Dr R Edwards welcomed feedback from the Committee on how to improve the Grants Academy. The scheme needs to remove reliance on one external Bid Advisor and as such they have put together a college of external peer reviewers. They also need to find out more about why proposals haven’t been funded and unpick this to re-work proposals and re-submit. Prof V Hundley suggested the Grants Academy should be in the Schools’ plans and Schools/Faculty should work with RKEO to improve engagement. | |
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| **8.4** | Dr M Cash noted that research staff are often on very short contracts and thus are unable to apply for some funding as their contact doesn’t allow it. Prof A Innes suggested the ratio is currently 1 in 30 awarded grants, so academics would need to put in a lot of bids to become successful and this takes time. Prof I MacRury stated we have a lot of researchers who are doing a lot of research into areas that aren’t going to be funded. Some bids don’t have academic quality and we have a bare minimum quality check on academic research work and it was asked if we could have some kind of fund allowance to assess the quality of academic work. Prof M Hadfield stated that as some projects include external networks with HEIs and industry, it’s difficult to re-write a bid as it’s got the external industry contact on it as well. Prof M Hadfield will email Dr R Edwards his comments on this. | |
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| **9** | **APF QUALITY APPROVAL REVIEW** | |
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| **9.1** | J Garrad presented a paper reviewing the APF quality approval process. As part of the review, she analysed statistical data and sought feedback from the quality approvers and from applicants whose proposals have been through the quality review process. The review found that the majority of Quality Approver’s and applicants can see the value in the quality approval process and recognise that it benefits BU to submit good, sound applications to funders, which in turn builds our reputation and thereby improves our chances of funding. | |
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| **9.2** | Six recommendations emerged from the review that will in turn strengthen the quality of applications being submitted:   1. Quality approvals with insufficient justification of the decision will be returned to the QA to provide sufficient comments to ensure that a clear and robust decision has been made. This will be addressed within RKEO. 2. Consideration of whether the research mentor role should be adopted within each School or whether greater development of applications could be offered by initiatives through R&KEO. R&KEO are currently recruiting an external peer review college and will work with DDREs to see whether the external members could provide a similar service. 3. Greater support for early career researchers (ECRs), potentially through a mentoring system. There is potential for R&KEO in the future to facilitate applications for ECRs. 4. Consideration of refresher training for QA’s and whether they would benefit from holding meetings once or twice a year to discuss key issues. 5. Consideration should be given to changing the threshold for research applications, and what that threshold would be. 6. More applicants should be encouraged to submit their applications through the internal peer review (known as RPRS) route at an earlier stage of developing their application. | |
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| **9.3** | J Garrad asked the committee to note the findings and recommendations of the review and discuss its potential impact. | |
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| **9.4** | Prof A Innes commented that BUDI has an external reviewer and it has helped improve the quality of the proposals and the feedback is great and has been timely. Prof V Hundley stated there should be a distinction over Activity Proposal Form (APF) checking institutional reputation when really the peer review should be picking up on this. Prof I MacRury stated that getting external feedback is good but getting someone dedicated to work on it is better, ideally it would be better if academics could get access to timely feedback. Additionally, some academics can’t address the quality of a proposal if the research is not in their subject area. | |
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| **10** | **ANY OTHER BUSINESS** | |
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| **10.1** | J Northam shared that HEFCE have now announced that for the next REF exercise, all journals and conferences will need to be publically available via an institutional repository upon acceptance in order to be eligible for submission. | |
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| **10.2** | HEFCE are visiting BU to talk about open access and the post-2014 REF next week, email Shelley Maskell to see if there are any spaces left. | |
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|  | **Date of next meeting:** TBC | |
|  | Rachel Clarke  Committee Clerk  RKE-1314-05 Minutes 1 May 2014 | |