

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Meeting No. 3, 2006

Meeting No. 3, 2006 of the University Research Committee was held on Thursday 13 July 2006 at 9.30 am in the Ross Hohnen Room of the Chancelry.

Present: Professor Cram, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair); Mr Atkins; Professor Board; Dr Brown (for Professor Merlan); Professor Cockburn; Professor Glasgow; Mr Heslop; Professor C Hill; Professor D Hill; Professor Huon; Dr McMahon; Professor Morphy; Dr Reynolds (for Professor Morris-Suzuki); Professor Stening; Dr Wheeler; Professor Williams; and Ms Wood.

In attendance: Ms Bruce.

Disclosure of Pecuniary or Material Personal Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary or material personal interest in matters listed on the agenda.

Use of Inside Information or Position

Under sections 24 and 25 of the *Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997*, a member of the University Research Committee must not make improper use of his or her position or of inside information to gain an advantage for himself or herself or to cause detriment to the University or to another person.

MINUTES

PART 1: GENERAL ITEMS

ITEM 1. MINUTES

The minutes of Meeting No. 2, 2006 of the University Research Committee (530/2006 attached) held on 18 May were confirmed. (Published at: http://info.anu.edu.au/OVC/University_Research_Committee/meetings.asp)

ITEM 2. MATTERS ARISING

ITEM 3. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND APOLOGIES

3.1 Apologies were received from Professor Merlan, Professor Morris-Suzuki and Dr Stoljar.

3.2 Announcements

3.3 Confidential Items

There were no confidential items. Dr Bain, Professor Kersten, Dr Nelms, Ms Pandey and Dr Wellard attended as observers.

PART 2: REPORTS AND POLICY MATTERS

ITEM 4. DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH) REPORT

The Committee noted the following report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

- Research Quality Framework (RQF) and Third Stream Funding
The Committee noted:
 - . the Go8 submission *Assessing Research Impact*, and
 - . the Minister's Keynote Address to the Knowledge Transfer and Engagement Forum, 16 June 2006 (at the website)

The Minister had announced that the RQF would come into operation in 2008 with funding to flow from 2009. A Development Advisory Group comprising persons from outside the university sector had been formed to further develop the RQF and was being advised by several working parties.

The Chair commented that ANU was ready to prepare for the RQF. Research Committees should begin to consider groups of researchers as well as individuals when assessing research issues in their disciplines.

- NCRIS: update
ANU processes were working satisfactorily and applications would be drawn together over the next six to eight weeks. Funding recommendations were expected by about October. The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) was gathering information about the cash cost of ANU's engagement with NCRIS. Difficulties with the International Researchers Ocean Drilling Program were being pursued by ANU.
- Productivity Commission Investigation (<http://www.pc.gov.au/>)
A major focus of the Australian Government Productivity Commission research study on public support for science and innovation was an examination of the economic benefits of investing in research and development. Professor Steve Dowrick from ANU is providing specialist advice to the Go8.
- Research Office Matters
As foreshadowed at the May meeting, two new graduate staff members have been recruited to the Office of Sponsored Research (formerly the Grant Support and Development Office) headed by Dr Wellard; two in the Office of Commercialisation; and one to work with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). Each College has a Research Office contact and ARC Discovery projects were now being handled separately from other grants.

Members endorsed the suggestion that Research Office contacts should also attend College Research Committee meetings.

- ANU 2007 ARC Discovery Program Application Round
The Report prepared by Jan Massey, Consultant, had examined a sample of applications to determine eligibility, application quality and grantsmanship, and had identified areas of application checking that needed to be improved. It was a useful document for both researchers and administrators. The Chair encouraged use of the Report in the next few months for the preparation of applications.
- ACT Government Focus on Business
Members noted the *Focus on Business – Master Program as at 1 June 2006*. This program had a small business focus for the local ACT economy and was not generally of direct relevance to much of ANU's activities. Planning for on-campus activities was in progress.
- Commercialisation Training Scheme (CTS)
Members noted the *CTS Guidelines*. About \$250k per year would be allocation on a formula for coursework and the delivery of coursework for training HDR students in commercialisation, and for stipends for six months during the period of training as an add on to the PhD course. About 12 students were expected depending on the budget. A committee would steer the process in all disciplines. Decisions about the allocation of places would be made once more information had come to hand. The Dean of Graduate Studies advised that some other institutions would possibly be interested in participating in ANU training schemes rather than running their own. Larger numbers would make for a better program.
- DEST HERDC Data 2004-05 in Go8
Members noted the table, *Trend in DEST HERDC Data, 2004-05 in Go8*. A comparison of performance in the IGS and to some extent the RTS would be published in due course. The Chair noted that ANU's competitive grants were increasing relatively quickly because of the effect of the buy-in and expansion resulting in an increase in applications. The fluctuations in some areas were to be expected and the pool operation determined by index also affected the share. Views differed about unmitigated growth or whether ANU should take a more selective approach. The issue would be taken up in future discussions with College Convenors and with the Vice-Chancellor.

ITEM 5. REPORTS FROM ANU COLLEGES

The Committee noted a presentation from Professor Nicholas Glasgow, Chair of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences Research Committee, about a review undertaken of research strengths across the College. The survey undertaken by Dr Karen Flegg of the ANU Medical School, was aimed at:

- . identifying currently active research projects funded through grant money
- . forming a meaningful statement of existing commonalities and strengths in the themes of current and proposed research activities of the College
- . identifying collaboration within the College, and within and external to ANU

The brief also included having plain English statements of the research accessible to all members of the College to provide a platform for them to recognise opportunities to work together.

After wide discussion and editing, the report to the College Research Committee had been posted on the College Intranet for all staff for comment. The report had provided a foundation for the 5-year College Plan.

The themes for existing and potential commonality across the College identified through the process were:

- . **Genome Biology and Informatics:** functional genomics; genome structure and expression; comparative and evolutionary genomics; computational genomics
- . **Cellular and Molecular Biology:** protein structure and function; membrane physiology; molecular genetics; proteomics
- . **Immune Systems and Infection:** cancer immunology; autoimmunity; viral immunology; asthma and allergy; vaccines; toxicology
- . **Nervous and Cardiovascular Systems:** neural development; sensory systems; synapses and brain function; cardiovascular function
- . **Clinical Science**
- . **Population Health and Epidemiology:** population health; genetic epidemiology; mental health; Ageing
- . **Health Policy and Primary Health Care:** ageing and health; health economics; health policy; health systems financing; primary health care; e-health
- . **Education and Research Methods:** medical education; systematic literature review

The response from staff to the project had revealed a level of anxiety. Some were still concerned about whether there should be a College; there was some concern about the report being used to define future work; and the report had focussed on commonalities to compete across College strengths, in particular multidisciplinary strengths for funding, rather than identifying every research activity.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) commented on the benefits of the mapping exercise for College planning, outreach and the RQF and for communicating about research to colleagues.

The Committee noted the current focus of other College Research Committees.

College of Arts and Social Sciences

- . transitional issues related to the review of RSSS and the creation of the Research School of Humanities
- . consideration of articulation of postgraduate courses within the College
- . funding to support prospective HDR students

College of Asian and the Pacific

- . the formation and organisation of research groups and groupings that map to the University Asia Pacific panel
- . the establishment of a College ethics committee

College of Business and Economics

- . a review of the College's new initiatives for funding and changes to the rewards and incentives for staff
- . an examination of funding for publications

Engineering and Computer Science

- . efforts to unify research in the College and identify multidisciplinary research themes (five) e.g. for science centre submissions
- . strategic planning with a view also to the RQF and the preparation of a very substantial research plan for the College by the end of 2006
- . questions about optimising HDR capacity

College of Law

- . planning, research groupings and RQF
- . addressing the key challenge of the best use of staff time

College of Science

- . issues associated with dealing adequately with cross-College interests involving one-third of the University's research areas and identifying common ground for metrics
- . College processes for funding applications
- . addressing the increased opportunities issue
- . research infrastructure
- . HDR student recruitment

The Committee agreed that the Chairs of College Research Committees should be invited to submit brief outlines of issues for inclusion in future agendas.

ITEM 6. ANU TO 2010

The Committee noted that the Vice-Chancellor had invited comments by 21 July 2006 on the draft of the University's strategic plan (published at http://info.anu.edu.au/OVC/About_this_Office/Current_Issues.asp). The University Executive had also discussed recently the need to review and revise ANU's Education Plan, which is required by DEST under the funding guidelines, and for a University Research Plan to be prepared once College Plans have become available. One challenge for College and University research plans was to bring together the emphasis on personal performance as a way of evaluating research, motivated by a reward system for individuals and the area they work in, with metrics for teamwork and interdisciplinary work on big problem solving.

The Committee noted that the revised ANU Strategic Plan would be considered by Council on 28 July and launched on ANU's Foundation Day on 1 August. College Plans would be put to Council later in the year.

ITEM 7. HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) introduced the discussion of new approaches to ethical review of research involving human subjects. It was timely, following recent developments within ANU and in light of the forthcoming revised National Statement and models in place at some other universities, to consider further the University's approaches to ethical review.

The meeting noted the papers:

- (Draft – Under Review) *Getting beyond form filling: the role of institutional governance in human research ethics*, by Gary Allen, Griffith University
- Article “Former UVM professor sentenced to jail for fraud”, by Adam Silverman, *Burlington Free Press*, 29 June 2006

The Chair compared the devolved tiered system at Griffith University for the review of low, medium and high-risk protocols with current ANU practices where 80% of applications continue to be considered by the University HREC (about 20% high risk protocols are considered centrally at Griffith University). Discussion and approval of a greater number of applications in a disciplinary context, especially many of those in the social sciences, required confidence in a discipline based review system.

Comments arising in discussion related to:

- . The need for an effective monitoring process between the Head of Department and the Chair of the local area ethics committee for the tiered system to operate well.
- . The role of members of ethics committees. Some judgements about protocols required a level of expertise while the public expects that persons who are not experts in the field should exercise some oversight.
- . A compliance versus integrity approach to ethics. It was suggested that researchers do not always have the required level of judgement about the ethical dimensions of risk in their work. Committees may consider protocols but higher issues of ethics in research should be propagated through routine seminars aimed at greater self-regulation.
- . Researchers are able to consult the designated Advisers on Research Integrity.
- . New areas where approvals are needed arising from the establishment of the Medical School. For many projects, multi-centres are involved, each with their own regulations. Discussions were being held with ACT health officials with a view to simplifying processes and reducing workloads associated with the application procedures.
- . Student applications for ethics committee approval.
- . Possible legal implications relating to supervision of student work.

It was noted that HREC has been concerned about the implications of the lack of engagement by supervisors and has considered recommending to Colleges and the University Education Committee a shift to the position where the primary application is submitted by the supervisor. Discussion was wide-ranging about the responsibilities of students and supervisors and different levels of approval.

An alternative arrangement was argued whereby PhD and Honours applications would be processed differently. PhD students have a central involvement in the planning of their research and they should be closely involved in the preparation of the application. The supervisor should take responsibility and sign-off on the application but could not monitor all work in the field. The application reflected the autonomy the student was expected to have, assisted confidence building and helped to reinforce that students must be aware of their responsibilities.

It was noted that local ethics approval may be appropriate where external regulations are in place (e.g. research involving animal tissue and some human tissue research) whereas projects involving live animals and humans required close individual scrutiny. Areas that routinely engaged in research in these areas have training requirements for researchers (e.g. seminar attendance; protocol theory).

In conclusion, it was noted that:

- . Ethical issues should be discussed by students with their panels and the policy taken up in HDR training processes;
- . Ethical issues could be meshed more effectively than at present in ANU's staff and student induction processes;
- . The matters raised in the Committee's discussion might usefully be taken up at College level.

ITEM 8. ANNUAL REPORTS

The Committee noted the 2005 Annual Reports to Council from the University's research ethics committees:

- Animal Experimentation Ethics Committee Annual Report (74/2006)
- Human Research Ethics Committee Annual Report (529/2006)
- Institutional Biosafety Committee/Recombinant DNA Monitoring Committee (IBC) Annual Report (528/2006)

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) expressed appreciation for the work done by the Committees and Chairs. A good regime of supervision was in place due to the efforts of many colleagues.

ITEM 9. RESEARCH SUPPORT PLANNING DAY

Members received the draft timetable for the Research Support Planning Day to be held on Wednesday, 10 August 2006. About 150 research support staff members and twenty academic staff were expected to attend. Research accountability would be a major topic for the Planning Day.

The Chair undertook to add Higher Degree Research to the workshops and invited members to email any additional comments about the format to his office.

ITEM 10. POLICY REVIEW

The Committee received a report on the review of research policies. It was noted that:

- **Establishment, Management and Closing of Academic Centres**
Minor revisions would be made to the policy. A Working Party has also been formed through the Business Solutions Office Managers to consider the implementation of consistent coding to accurately reflect the University's operational and academic structures across all Enterprise Systems. The adoption of a corporate coding structure would assist in improving data integrity and provide a reliable and consistent platform for reporting. Expansion of the policy and procedures relating to the *Establishment, Management and Closing of Academic Centres* to encompass all academic organisational units may be taken up in these discussions.
- **Research Equipment/Infrastructure**
All aspects of the University's policy on access and availability would be managed by a working party established by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
- **Intellectual Property and Commercialisation of Research**
The current Intellectual Property policy would be divided into a new statute to attend to important legal considerations about ownership (currently being supervised by the Legal Office) and a separate commercialisation policy and procedures.

Members considered the paper, *ANU IP & Commercialisation Review* (533/2006 tabled). Principal comments arising in discussion were:

- . Issues to be pursued had been identified in the table of dissatisfaction.
- . The approach taken in the commercialisation policy and procedures would be to provide a guide on opportunity assessment rather than commercialisation of an idea.
- . IP generated by research students working in group research could not be properly addressed under the current policy. It was essential that a framework for the role of students and student intellectual property be addressed in the new policy. This included issues to do with signing-over of student IP, the timing of the sign-over, and assigning shares.
- . Consultancies would be addressed separately from the commercialisation policy. This important area of opportunity especially in Arts, the Social Sciences and the Humanities, could be taken up usefully in the Researcher Development workshop at the Planning Day.

PART 3. ITEMS OF OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 11. OTHER BUSINESS AND QUESTION TIME

11.1 Next Meeting of the University Research Committee

The next meeting is scheduled to be held on Thursday, 14 September at 9.30 am in the Ross Hohnen Room of the Chancelry.