

THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Meeting No. 4, 2006

Meeting No. 4, 2006 of the University Research Committee was held on Thursday 14 September 2006 at 9.30 am in the Ross Hohnen Room of the Chancelry.

Present: Professor Cram, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (Chair); Dr Brown; Professor Cockburn; Mr Heslop; Professor C Hill; Professor D Hill; Dr McMahon; Professor Merlan; Ms Pabian (for Professor Morris-Suzuki); Dr Stoljar; Dr Strange (for Professor Morphy); 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. 3, 2006 of the University Research Committee (536/2006) held on 13 July 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 Mr Atkins; Dr Ganguly; Professor Glasgow; Professor Huon; Dr Jones; Professor Morphy; and Professor Stening;

3.2 Announcements

3.3 Confidential Items

There were no confidential Items. Dr Bain, Dr Brown, Dr Nelms, Ms Pandey, and Dr Wellard attended as observers.

PART 2: REPORTS AND POLICY MATTERS

ITEM 5. REPORT FROM THE DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR (RESEARCH)

The Committee received a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). It was noted that:

- **University Executive**
 - . Professor Gillies would take up his appointment as Vice-President (Development) in the USA in October.
 - . The revised structure would comprise a Deputy Vice-Chancellor and two new Pro Vice-Chancellors. The division of responsibilities was still to be determined. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor would probably chair the research and education committees and have oversight of undergraduate education and research commercialisation.
 - . The office of Registrar would replace the Director, SAS and SRIE
 - . Discussions were in progress about the Graduate Research School and the configuration of the central management of HDR matters.

- **IARU**
 - . The Global Alliance was possibly the most powerful group of the emerging networks in view of the standing of its member universities.
 - . ANU's Vice-Chancellor was the inaugural President for a term of two years from the beginning of 2006. The Secretariat was located on campus under the supervision of Mr Iain Watt, Director, International Development and Cooperation.
 - . The Alliance was engaged in planning and the establishment of sustainable mechanisms for its operation.
 - . Research Platforms and themes that are being developed are:
 - Global Change
 - . Energy, Resources & Environment
 - . Movement of People
 - . Longevity & Health
 - . Security
 - Education
 - . Women in university senior management
 - . Excellence in graduate education
 - . Transforming power of undergraduate education
 - . Institutionalising sustainability in higher education
 - . Meetings of Research Deputies and Executive Officers would be held in Zurich in the coming week. ANU would host the meeting of Presidents in March 2007.

Members noted that potentially, the network offered opportunities for areas to pursue global scale funding for research projects in complementary areas. Collaboration, and tapping into funding that was inaccessible to individual institutions were the directions research institutions needed to take.

- **RQF update**

The Development Advisory Group's (DAG) advice to the Minister on the final model was expected by October. Some issues had now been clarified:

- . Eligibility: Tenured staff at and above Level B, with at least 40% FTE teaching and research responsibilities who are on the institutions payroll would be eligible, and emeritus appointments and ARC fellows. The status of Adjunct appointments was still to be clarified
 - . Groupings would consist of a minimum of five researchers with no upper limit on the size. Members would likely be from the same institution because of the complexities of engaging in cross-institutional arrangements.
 - . RFCD codes would form the basis for groupings. These were similar to codes used in Europe and met ABS needs for classification of research and long time series. Queries had been raised by institutions about the codes, especially in relation to cross disciplinary research. ANU may decide to form a separate mock panel for Asia and the Pacific because of the special cross-disciplinary nature of the work.
 - . Attribution, or where a person's output was to be counted, would likely be based wholly on the place of employment at the census date. On the issue of poaching, the Chair commented that the best strategy for an institution may be to maintain a balanced cohort of researchers rather than trying to form an elite group because of the longer-term implications.
 - . Impact: DAG has not accepted arguments that impact is hard to measure. The assessment of quality was likely to be separated from the impact assessment. The treatment of the impact of research continued to be an area of uncertainty for institutions and a key component for funding under the RQF. The Go8 were keen to secure a rational approach.
 - . Outcomes: No actions were being taken at present on the reporting process or modelling of funding formulas. The RQF would possibly commence before this information has been released.
 - . Timetable: An in principle commitment from the Minister was expected in November with the full announcement to coincide with the May 2007 budget. Portfolios would need to be submitted in about April 2007; panels would meet in the first quarter of 2008 and funding for 2009 announced in late 2008. ANU's internal plans would be launched within the next six weeks.
- **ANU Rodent Facilities**
The announcement that Phenomics Australia would cease operations had released the top floor for use as a central rodent facility. Significant savings on the estimated \$25m in capital works had resulted and better conditions for technicians and high quality research.
 - **Appointment of Executive Officer to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)**
Ms Kus Pandey has been appointed as Executive Officer on a part-time basis.

ITEM 5. NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY (NCRIS)

The Committee noted that Investment Plans for each prioritised research capability had been submitted the previous week to the NCRIS Committee for assessment in the coming weeks. A period of intense negotiations would follow for 2-3 months with approval of the first set of Investment Plans expected by late 2006.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) advised that the ANU would attract approximately \$25m in NCRIS cash in accordance with capabilities descriptions in the paper tabled at the meeting. He outlined the review, decision-making and coordinating processes for the coming months and advised that a document was in preparation for circulation to areas. Some capabilities were progressing better than others. Each included specific IT needs which explained why 5.16 'Platforms for Collaboration', a national level initiative was the last to be completed. ANU was well engaged with NCRIS on this platform.

ITEM 6. REPORT ON RESEARCH SUPPORT PLANNING DAY

The Committee noted the Summary of the Breakout Sessions (960/2006) conducted at the Research Support Planning Day held at Old Parliament House on 10 August 2006. The Planning Day organised by the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) had been attended by about 100 research support and academic staff members.

The Chair commented that it was intended that several of the issues identified in the Summary might be addressed by local areas.

The Committee focussed on important aspects of grant application in its discussion:

- . The devolved application process has highlighted a lack of expertise and time for this work in a number of local areas.
- . Decentralisation of the processes must be accompanied by good channels for communication between the Research Office and local areas, timely responses to local area enquiries and up to date contact details. Some areas reported that their ability to get grant applications up had been affected by the shift to the new processes over the past two years.
- . Where delays were experienced, local areas are making direct contact with the funding agency rather than working through the central office. The funding agencies preferred to have one central contact at an institution and would be concerned about excessive numbers of direct calls.
- . A greater investment in facilitation and advice would need to be resourced by the Colleges themselves from their funding allocations or from top-s for any additional support for the central administration of grants. If grant success increased, this could be an intelligent redirection of funds. A more centralised process was not a workable solution based on experience and the heavy workload for the small number of staff.
- . The Colleges vary greatly in size and complexity and in determining grant administration processes, thought should be given to economies of scale. A number of different models were raised in the discussion and members noted the efforts of some Colleges to put in place training programs and forums in cooperation with the Research Office.
- . Areas should be able make the best use of expertise available on campus, e.g. from a list of experts with NHMRC experience.

The Committee:

- (i) noted the Chair's suggestion for the business process of grant administration to be examined further and that a document from JCSMR of the issues encountered by the Research School be forwarded to assist the review;

- (ii) noted points made in discussion about ways to optimise research administration in the University and that any further comments may be forwarded to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research);
- (iii) noted that the document, “Operational Improvements at the ANU” (June 2005), provided the background to administrative restructuring in the University.

ITEM 7. REPORTS FROM ANU COLLEGES

The Committee received reports from ANU College Research Committees.

- **ANU College of Arts and Social Sciences**
An early career researcher network is being established.
- **ANU College of Asia and the Pacific**
 - . The Committee had discussed and commented on the Report – ANU 2007 ARC Discovery Program Applications. A wide net had been cast in previous rounds and this was unlikely for the future because of the resources involved and because it does not further the College’s status with ARC.
 - . There were ongoing concerns about the RQF.
 - . The establishment of a College-wide Grants and Research Office was moving forward and would be in place by November for the next round of applications.

The Chair commented about selecting the ARC success rate as a Performance Indicator.

- **ANU College of Business and Economics**
The major current issue was research funding initiatives in the College. An interesting range of projects had been submitted for the larger funding category. There were divergent ideas about funding for publications, i.e. about funding tiers; eligibility.

The Chair commented that Ms Linda Butler should be consulted for information about the external stature of journals. How the stature of journals would be used in the RQF was not yet known.

- **ANU College of Engineering and Computer Science:**
 - . The previously mentioned high level themes debate for planning was continuing. Some staff saw research development as more about the recruitment of good researchers; others saw themes as providing a direction for research planning. The exact use of themes between the two viewpoints would evolve.
 - . A performance table of research outputs in the last six years (RFQ window) for staff in the College was being prepared. The College was using material from the 2004 Review as a starting point, and data submitted by the University each year.
 - . Development towards increased grant earnings and HDR numbers was ongoing. Attracting quality students was a continuing issue for the College.

- . the College Research Office, with a dedicated group of staff, was in operation and has developed good communication channels with the University Research Office.
- **ANU College of Science**
A meeting of the Research Committee would be held later in the week. Discussions were continuing about how to establish a research office for the largest College and avoid layers of administration. Working in with other Colleges that are the primary contact with a particular funding agency was also an issue for sub-areas of the College that apply for grants from these same agencies.

ITEM 8. GRANTS ROUNDS

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) gave an update on the grants rounds:

- . The ARC Discovery - Federation Fellowships round was open and Linkage applications would open soon.
- . Funding of all “old” ARC Centres of Excellence has been reviewed.
- . The ARC Discovery grants round was on track with recommendations expected to be forwarded to the Minister by the end of October and announced in about mid November.
- . NHMRC processes were not expected to be faster in the first year of the new structure with announcements expected in late October.
- . ANU major equipment allocations would be processed after the outcome of LIEF submissions was known. Funds would be released in January 2007.
- . The MEC would have in 2007 the same funding and processes as in 2006.

ITEM 9. ANU BY 2010

The Committee noted:

- *ANU by 2010 (extracts)* (published at http://info.anu.edu.au/OVC/About_this_Office/Current_Issues.asp)
- (Draft) Research and Research Training Management Plan to 2005 (955/2006)
- Summary of ANU College draft research plans (957/2006)

It was noted that the University Executive had recently discussed the need to review ANU’s Education Plan, which is required by DEST under funding guidelines, and to proceed with a Research Plan once ANU College Plans become available. The Research and Research Training Plan would provide a light weight planning process from the centre, be in a new format and drafted by Quality Enhancement and Statistical Services in consultation with the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research). The seven primary aims would be to:

- . “articulate” the position at University level
- . “harmonise” the content of College plans
- . “summarise” intentions and directions
- . “integrate” performance measures and data sources
- . “identify” cross-College opportunities and needs
- . “implement” management and administration

- . “report” progress and problems. An annual report against the plan would be made to the Vice-Chancellor

The timeframe for the submission of (revised) College research plans was a matter for the Vice-Chancellor and College Convenors. The summary of research issues in the current drafts suggested that more work was required to present cohesive and well-articulated plans. The Research and Research Training Plan would be circulated to Colleges for input at different stages of its development.

ITEM 10. RESEACH POLICIES

The Committee noted the following research policy work in progress

- **Centres policy**
The major changes to the policy in the current review related to:
 - . the management of inter-institutional bodies
 - . the introduction of College centres
 - . simplified processes for appropriate reporting of activity in financial, membership and output terms.
- **Sedition Laws**
A Summary of Changes to Legislation (954a/2006 – revised version tabled) which analysed the implications of the *Anti-Terrorism Act (No.2) 2005* had been prepared by the Legal Office for the information of staff and students following the July meeting of Council.

Discussions were also in progress between the University Counsel and the Pro Vice-Chancellor leading to a University policy dealing with central notification of requests for the production of information and documents and the internal processes to respond to these requests.

The Committee agreed to refer the draft document 954a/2006 to College Research Committees for feedback about how the legislation might affect staff, students and research in any areas not covered by the draft.

PART 3. ITEMS OF OTHER BUSINESS

ITEM 11. INFORMATION PAPERS

The Committee noted information and an update on reviews as follows:

- **NHMRC: Statutory agency**
The NHMRC was established as an independent agency with financial and operational autonomy effective from 1 July 2006. The new *National Health and Medical Research Council Act* has been published at www.comlaw.gov.au/comlaw Information about the NHMRC Council and Principal Committees was available at www.nhmrc.gov.au
- **Update on Reviews**
 - . *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans*
 - . *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice (1997)*

- **National Competitive Grants Program Dataset (See http://www.arc.gov.au/funded_grants/default.htm#dataset):** The data set contained information, as at the time of Ministerial approval, on projects, Centres, Fellowships and other awards approved for funding under the NCGP since its inception in 2001. Data on proposals first funded prior to 2002, which was the first year of funding under the NCGP were not included.
 - **Forum for European-Australian Science and Technology Cooperation (FEAST) (See <http://www.feast.org/>)**
 - . Appointment of ERC Secretary General
 - . Conference 28-29 November “Research without Borders”
 - **Focus on Business (See: <http://www.focusonbusiness.com.au/default.aspx>)**
Focus on Business 2006 was an ACT Government activity that offered some opportunities for ANU to form relationships with people from the region and beyond. It would be held in Canberra between 13 – 15 September. ANU has been involved in the planning from an early stage, with the intention of positioning our participation to produce maximum benefit to ANU without excessive involvement in the “small business” programs that would involve few research and education opportunities.
- The ANU Exchange had sponsored a lunch at the Hyatt for selected (“VIP”) national and international business men and women on 13 September. The lunch was followed by a VIP visit to the ANU organised by the DVC(Research)’s Office with groups formed according to interests that align with various activities at ANU: ICT (CECS – host: Prof John Richards), Physical Science & Bio-technology (COS – host: Prof Jim Williams) and Service Sector Research (CBE – host: Dr Rod Tyers).
- **Grants and Consultancies** awarded between 1 May and 30 June 2006 had been detailed in paper 956/2006).

ITEM 12. OTHER BUSINESS AND QUESTION TIME

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25 September 2006