UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG
FACULTY OF INFORMATICS RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting 1/05 held at 1:30pm on Thursday, 17th February 2005 in the Faculty Meeting Room, Building 39, room 150A.

PRESENT: Prof D Steel (Chair), Prof S Bouzerdoum, Prof E Dutkiewicz, Prof J Fulcher, A/Prof T Marchant and Prof P Ogunbona.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms K Sheridan.

1. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies/Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from the following members: Mr A Krishna, Dr M Nelson, Prof R Safavi-Naini.

1.2 Confirmation of Minutes for the Meeting of 11 November 2004

The minutes of the meeting held 11 November 2004 were confirmed.

1.3 Business Arising from Previous Meeting

There was no business arising.

2. REPORT FROM CHAIR – VERBAL REPORT

2.1 URC Near Miss Grants

Dr David Bomba, A/Prof Ian Burnett and A/Prof Xiaojing Huang were successful with URC Near Miss Grants. This equates to approximately $35,000 awarded to Faculty staff through this scheme.

2.2 ARC Discovery Project Applications

Expressions of Interest have been received from 25 applicants within the Faculty. This should result in 20-25 applications, which is consistent with 2004 applications.

The Chair met with some of the potential applicants on 10 February to provide feedback on and assistance with applications. As part of this process, most applicants were given the opportunity to receive feedback from experienced researchers located in another discipline within the Faculty.

2.3 Professor Joe Chicharo

The Chair asked members to join him in congratulating Professor Chicharo on his appointment as a member of the ARC College of Experts for Mathematics & ICT.
2.4 HDR Research Scholarships Results

Eight domestic Informatics scholarship applicants were fast-tracked, while another 4 were successful in the University central pool. One applicant was placed on the reserve list.

One international Informatics applicant was offered one of the 6 IPRS scholarships available and 1 applicant was placed on the reserve list.

The Chair displayed a table showing the number of scholarship offers made and acceptances received across all Faculties. In discussing these numbers it was noted:

- The Faculty of Informatics was second to the Faculty of Science in number of offers made.
- However, the acceptance rate – 8 out of 14 – for Informatics was quite low compared to other Faculties.

The Chair reiterated previous feedback regarding the process:

- Each School must provide as much information as possible about each applicant. This is essential so that the Chair can competently argue the case for each applicant being considered at the University Research Standing Committee (URSC).
- In particular, the following is required:
  - two strong supervisors need to be listed;
  - two rather than just 1 referee report;
  - strong justification for Hons 1 equivalences; and
  - any other relevant information that would distinguish the applicant to the URSC.

2.5 Other Research Scholarship Opportunities

The following discussion took place in response to a question regarding whether the Faculty would consider funding scholarships for research students. It was noted that, although expensive, this was possible, and that if such a scheme were established, it should focus on scholarships for international students. However, there are other funding opportunities which should be explored first.

The following schemes were suggested and discussed:

- Fee waivers: Professors Sheil and Chicharo may support a fee waiver if the applicant is a high quality student being supervised by a highly regarded researcher on a very strategic project. Fee waivers are rarely offered and only on an ad-hoc basis. However, a strong argument coupled with the above factors and support from the Faculty may result in a fee waiver being granted.

- Partnership scheme: It was suggested that the Faculty produce a ‘package’ including a stipend, for up to two international students each year. The Faculty could approach Professor Sheil for a fee waiver for these two students. To ensure top quality students, the Faculty could target 6 or 8 highly regarded international universities to promote the package to their top students. This could be part of the Faculty’s strategy for the internationalisation of research.
3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

The Chair noted that the main research-related issues that came out of the Faculty Planning conference were:

- How to make a research impact within the University
- Research Centre structure
- Attraction of excellent domestic students.

The Chair led discussion on the following matters.

3.1 Terms of Reference and Composition

The Committee discussed the proposed variation of the composition of the committee, which was tabled at the meeting. It was noted that the revised structure formally lists the Associate Dean (Research) as the Chair of the Committee and ensures representation from significant Faculty research groupings as well as from university-recognised research strengths.

In particular, it was agreed that:

- The Faculty Postgraduate Research Co-ordinator role no longer exists. Consequently, it should be removed from the membership list.
- The Deputy Chair will be appointed from existing Committee members.

The Chair asked for members interested in the role of Deputy Chair to contact him to discuss the role.

Resolved (FRC05/01)

That FRC:

a) adopts the revised membership structure, as tabled at the meeting, subject to the removal of the Faculty Research Co-ordinator as a member, and

b) forwards the revised membership structure to Faculty Executive Committee for endorsement.

3.2 Methods of Operation of FRC

3.2.1 Research Grant Ranking

Members agreed that the ‘average’ ranking method currently used works well and provides consistent results: the highest ranked applicants in the final ranking are usually those who have been ranked highly by all members.

Members discussed the importance of ensuring that applicants receive timely support prior to the submission of applications, and feedback after the process is completed. It was agreed that the following activities should be undertaken this year to improve support and feedback:

- Send a list of generic feedback to all applicants either after the release of results or just prior to the following round.
  

RIBG Applications:
- hold a workshop for potential applicants 3-4 weeks before applications are due.
- Request that potential applicants attend with a 2 page proposal and provide a 10 minute informal presentation on the project.
- FRC members would be strongly encouraged to attend and provide feedback.

• URC Smalls:
  - As in 2004, Chair to invite applicants to contact him after the ranking is complete to obtain individual feedback.
  - 1-2 months before applications are due, Chair to send email to all staff advising of a briefing workshop to be arranged for this scheme.

As the Chair was not a member of FRC when RIBG applications were ranked in 2004, A/Prof Tim Marchant agreed to prepare a list of generic issues which could be raised when assisting applicants in 2005.

3.2.2 Helping Researchers
Members agreed that FRC should focus on assisting researchers in the following ways in 2005:

• Provide useful feedback to grant applicants and holding workshops on grant applications, as discussed above.
• Foster leadership in, and promoting the benefits of, research groups.
• Introduce Faculty Research Weeks (29 March – 1 April and 5 – 9 December), during which forums may be held to discuss important issues. Eg., discuss ARC Grants in the December Research Week.
• Organise 3-4 Research Career Development Seminars during the year, with internal and external guest speakers who focus on matters such as how grant applications are assessed.
• Hold Forum for cross-discipline research.
• Identify grant opportunities and notify staff on an ongoing basis.

3.2.3 FRC Working Groups
Members agreed to set up the following FRC standing committees and working groups to focus on particular areas identified as essential for improved research and research outcomes in the Faculty:

• Postgraduate Research Standing Committee
  - This standing committee will be chaired by the Associate Dean (Research) and include each School’s Postgraduate Research Co-ordinator (or equivalent).
  - The membership currently includes: Professor David Steel, Professor John Fulcher, A/Professor Tim Marchant and A/Professor Fazel Naghdy.

• Linkages Standing Committee
  - This standing committee will be chaired by the Associate Dean (Research) and include 1 representative of each School plus a representative from TITR. These representatives may be members of the FRC or may be co-opted.
  - The standing committee will focus on opportunities for linkages and gather information regarding commercial and academic interactions and networks.
- It was agreed that Professor Rei Safavi-Naini should be involved with this standing committee.
- Schools are to nominate a representative for the Standing Committee.

- Quality & Impact Working Group
  - This working group will be chaired by Professor Salim Bouzerdoum.
  - SITACS and SMAS must nominate 1 representative each.

- HDR Student Recruitment & Support Working Group
  - This working group will be chaired by Professor Philip Ogunbona.
  - SECTE and SMAS must nominate 1 representative each.

The standing committees will be ongoing, whereas the working groups will be convened to address specific issues. The standing committees and working groups will consist of both FRC members and appropriate staff co-opted from the Schools.

The Chair agreed to produce brief terms of reference for each standing committee and working group.

3.3 Research Groups and Structures

Within the next 3 or 4 weeks, the Faculty needs to decide which research groups outside of University-recognised research strengths should be listed on the University research website. To this end, the Chair is in discussion with Heads of Schools about research groups and funding principles (discussed below).

3.4 Funding Principles and Processes

The Chair noted that Faculty strategic initiatives (see below) will receive Faculty funding.

Members discussed research funding principles, noting:

- There should be base funding provided to each research group.
- Additional funding provided on the basis of past performance plus strategic proposal which outlines what additional money will be spent on.
- Guidelines need to be produced which clearly outline what performance indicators are used for the allocation of additional funding, how the funding is disbursed and what reporting requirements will be in place.
- A different funding model will need to be developed for new researchers.
3.5 **Strategic Initiatives: how to Identify and Support**

The Chair described the Faculty strategic initiatives scheme to be set up to fund research. In summary, the process will be:

- Researcher/Research Group submits a two page proposal to their Head of School or Research Strength, which includes information regarding grants, papers and other research indicators.
- The proposal is referred to FRC for advice.
- Dean and Associate Dean (Research) considers advice provided by FRC and decides whether will fund the proposal, and how much funding to grant.

The Committee agreed to consider the remaining matters listed for discussion at the next non-ranking meeting.

4. **OTHER BUSINESS**

4.1 **PG Research Upgrade Seminars**

Professor Fulcher noted that the PG Research Upgrade Seminars will be taking place on Thursday 24 March 2005.

5. **NEXT MEETING**

Thursday 28 April 2005 1:30pm in Faculty Meeting Room 39.150A

*It is likely that RIBG Applications will be ranked at this meeting.*

Professor David Steel  
Chair