UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG  
FACULTY OF INFORMATICS RESEARCH COMMITTEE  

Minutes of Meeting 2/05 held at 1:30pm on Thursday, 28th April 2005 in the Faculty Meeting Room, Building 39, room 150A.

PRESENT: Prof D Steel (Chair), Prof S Bouzerdoum, Mr T Coltman, Dr G Cox, Mr A Krishna, A/Prof T Marchant, A/Prof P McKerrow, Prof R Safavi-Naini and A/Prof M Zhang.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms K Sheridan.

1. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies/Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from: Prof J Fulcher, A/Prof F Naghdy and Dr M Nelson.

1.2 Confirmation of Minutes for the Meeting of 17 February 2005

The minutes of the meeting held 17 February 2005 were confirmed.

1.3 Business Arising from Previous Meeting

1.3.1 FRC Terms of Reference and Composition

The revised FRC membership structure was approved by Faculty on 10 March 2005, with a small revision which allows an additional person to be co-opted to the Committee to satisfy the gender requirement.

A copy of the final membership structure, and a University discussion paper regarding FRC terms of reference and composition was attached to the agenda for information.

2. REPORT FROM CHAIR – VERBAL REPORT

The Chair noted that as an election for new student representatives on faculty committees was taking place this week, this may be the last meeting for the current student representative, Mr Aneesh Krishna.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked Mr Krishna for his attendance and representation on the Committee.
3. REPORT FROM POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH POLICY COMMITTEE (PRPC)

A/Prof Tim Marchant reported on the following items discussed at the last PRPC meeting:

3.1 PG Research Scholarship Ranking

This year, more emphasis will be placed on the calibre of nominated supervisors, including previous successful students over the last five years. It is suggested that the Faculty couple junior supervisors with senior supervisors and ensure that all the groundwork regarding the most suitable supervisors is completed well before the scholarship ranking process.

The closing date for applications has also been moved from 31 October to 30 September.

3.2 Completion of PG Research Forms

Supervisors are reminded that, for every research student, both Commencement of Candidature and First Year Research Proposal Review forms must be completed and forwarded to the Research Student Centre.

3.3 New PhD Scholarships available

There is now the option of offering a student a PhD scholarships that is funded by a combination of funds, which may include some guarantee of part time teaching up to a limit, as well as funds from grants and other sources.

A/Prof Marchant gave a copy of the scholarship proposal to the Chair for information.

The Chair noted that the matter can be considered by the new HDR Student Recruitment and Support Working Group.

ACTION: HDR Student Recruitment and Support Working Group to consider matter of PhD Scholarships and report back to FRC.

4. FACULTY MATTERS

4.1 Feedback on Research Week

The Chair led discussion on the success of the designated research week in March. Members noted the following:

- Although there is never an ideal week, setting time aside for research is a good initiative.
- Even without organised activities, the dedicated week allows staff to focus on research goals and activities.
- In future, may want to avoid the week following Easter, as there are only 4 days available.
- Considered a successful event, even if only 25% of staff focused on research, who wouldn’t have otherwise during that period.
In discussing the designated week in December (5-9 December), members made the following suggestions:

- Staff should be encouraged to focus on whatever aspect of research they wish to. However, it would be useful to have a faculty focus such as ARC-Discovery Grant applications or similar.

- A grant writing seminar, or similar organised event, should be considered.

The Chair noted that the Committee should discuss the success of both research weeks at the end of the year, and then consider if the initiative should continue in 2006.

4.2 Faculty of Informatics Research Development Scheme (FIRDS)

The draft FIRDS proposal was previously forwarded to FRC members via email for comment, and the draft attached to the agenda was revised in light of the feedback received.

The Chair noted the following regarding the proposed scheme:

- The scheme has been set up to provide limited support to staff or groups, as an encouragement or where other funding is unavailable.

- Approximately $50,000 will be available for the scheme each year, which will come from Faculty research funding received from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

- It is unlikely that grants will be any greater than $2,500.

- There will be a continuous application system with reasonable turn around on decisions. The Associate Dean (Research) will support an application, on the advice of FRC members. This feedback process may take place via email.

- The application criteria are quite broad at the moment, but this can be tightened in the future if deemed necessary.

- Applicants, other than Near Miss recipients, may only apply once per 12-month period.

The following suggestions and discussion points were raised by the Committee in relation to the Near Miss criteria:

- $500 grants to “Other” applicants, as listed in Table 1 of Appendix B are a token amount which may not be very useful. Perhaps providing more funding to the “Successful” or “Top 10%” categories would be more suitable.

- It was suggested that those who are successful/ unsuccessful in other grant schemes or who bring in industry money should also be rewarded. Most Committee members agreed that Near Miss grants should be limited to the National Competitive Grants currently listed, as they are the schemes that the Faculty wants to encourage staff to apply for. Other schemes may be added over time.
• It is important to recognise large Faculty industry linkages, but FIRDS is not the mechanism through which to do this. Other avenues are available, such as a direct approach to the Dean and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Members agreed to the following revisions:

• remove the $500 funding allocated for “Other” applicants under Appendix B: Near Miss grants.

• Add the word ‘successful’ before ‘application’ in the sentence on page 2 of the proposal: ‘Applicants will be limited to being part of one application a year …’.

Resolved (FRC05/02)
That FRC accepts the criteria for the proposed Faculty of Informatics Research Development Scheme (FIRDS), as listed in the attachment to the agenda, subject to incorporation of the minor revisions noted above.

4.3 Faculty Research Groupings

The Chair lead discussion, noting:

• In an attempt to clarify research groupings outside those in University-recognised research strength, submissions for Faculty research groups were called for, and submissions were received from the Institute of Mathematics and Applied Statistics (IMAS) and several groups from SITACS.

• It is expected that there will be 7-10 Faculty research groups: Some will have development potential over time; others have shown a consistent level of performance; while others may display a solid performance.

• Those groups in the third category would be identified as Faculty strategic initiatives and may receive some additional funding from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). Although there is no formal criteria for the receipt of such funding, factors such as continuity of existence, size, key researchers, leadership and performance level will be influential.

• Faculty funding of these Faculty research groups will be based primarily on performance data, but factors such as quality of research group proposal, number of researchers and what level of funding is required will also be taken into account.

• Two funding-related issues still to be reviewed is the management and distribution of maintenance funds for research students and conference travel. Members noted that attendance at conferences is expected under workloads agreements, however, very little support is provided to meet this expectation.
4.4 FRC Working Groups and Standing Committees

At the last meeting, FRC agreed to introduce several working groups and standing committees to focus on strategic issues identified as essential for improved research and research outcomes in the Faculty. A document outlining the groups and proposed membership was attached to the agenda.

The Chair reported that since the distribution of the agenda, the following staff members have been nominated to fill the gaps in membership noted in the attachment to the agenda:

- **Industry and Community Linkages Standing Committee**
  Dr Sarath Perera will be the SECTE representative

- **Impact and Quality Working Group**
  A/Prof Yi Mu will be the SITACS representative

- **Internationalisation of Research Working Group**
  Dr Jiangtao Xi will be the SECTE representative

The Chair noted that the membership of each group has been kept as small as possible to ensure achievable outcomes. The Chair will initiate meetings for each group within the next few weeks.

Resolved (FRC05/03)

That FRC agrees to the composition and proposed membership of the FRC standing committees and working groups, as listed in the revised attachment to the agenda.

5. RIBG PROCESS AND GUIDELINES

The Chair noted that RIBG Pool 2 applications are due to the Research Services Office on Monday 2 May 2005. FRC will be ranking the applications on Friday 13 May at 1:30pm.

The Chair reported that potential applicants who participated in the presentations on Friday 22 April provided positive feedback about the opportunity. In particular:

- The presentations provided applicants with an opportunity to ask questions about specific aspects of their application or the application process.

- Feedback received from FRC members present was useful and timely – able to integrate suggestions into their application before submission.

The Committee discussed the FRC ranking process, reflecting on the difficulties faced in 2004. A/Prof Tim Marchant, who chaired the meeting in 2004, proposed the following changes:

- Discuss the positives and negatives of each application first, rather than starting from the average ranking obtained prior to the meeting.

- Associate Dean (Research) and Dean to make the final decision by ranking the applications based on the discussions at the FRC meeting.
The Committee discussed the proposal, agreeing to the following change in procedure:

- Members to receive ranking sheets prior to the meeting. They can choose to complete their own ranking prior to the meeting, or to leave it until after the applications have been discussed at the meeting.

- At the meeting, the positives and negatives of each application are discussed.

- Members submit own rankings at the end of the meeting. If member has prepared a ranking prior to the meeting, they are given the opportunity to revise their rankings based on the discussions at the meeting.

- The rankings are averaged, taking into account any conflict of interest matters.

- The Associate Dean (Research) reviews the average ranking, making any final adjustments deemed appropriate given the discussions at the FRC meeting. The Associate Dean (Research) will consult with the Heads of Schools and the Dean when making any such adjustments.

**Resolved (FRC05/04)**

That FRC agrees to adopt the following procedure when ranking RIBG Pool 2 applications:

1. Members to receive ranking sheets and applications prior to the meeting.
2. Applications discussed at the meeting.
3. Members submit own rankings to Associate Dean (Research) at the end or after the meeting.
4. Rankings are averaged, taking into account any conflict of interest matters.
5. The Associate Dean (Research) reviews the average ranking. Where any adjustments are deemed necessary, the Associate Dean (Research) will consult with the Heads of Schools and the Dean before making any such adjustments.

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6. HDR STUDENT MATTERS

6.1 Ethics Training for HDR Students

The Committee briefly discussed the proposal that new research students should be required to undertake ethics training and agreed that such training is required. The Committee agreed that such training should be required.

A/Prof Tim Marchant noted that plagiarism is discussed regularly at the University Thesis Examination Committee, with the main recommendation being that supervisors need to read thesis carefully and warn students if there are any potential problems. It was suggested that the Faculty hold 2-3 workshops for research students each year covering ethics and other relevant matters, and at least 1 supervisors’ research training workshop, which includes similar material.

The Chair noted that the matter will be referred to the new HDR Student Recruitment and Support Working Group.

**ACTION:** HDR Student Recruitment and Support Working Group to consider matter of ethics training for HDR Students and report back to FRC with outcomes.
6.2 HDR Student Conference

The Chair noted that the Faculty has considered holding a Faculty-wide research student conference, built around the annual SITACS conference, for some time. Regardless of whether this will go ahead this year or not, staff should note the University’s conference on Thursday, 29 September 2005, and encourage students to be involved.

In particular, members were asked to note the following deadlines:

- 4 July 2005: Deans and/or FRCs and/or Research Strength Directors to nominate posters for the Poster Display.
- 27 May 2005: Students interested in presenting at the Conference to lodge abstracts.

7. ITEMS FOR NOTING

7.1 Research Quality Framework

Two government reports were forwarded electronically to FRC members prior to the meeting for information.

The Chair noted that the Federal Government is making an effort to consider how quality of research can be measured. However, it appears the DEST report (Research Quality Framework: Assessing the quality and impact of research in Australia) provides very little guidance or definition of the main ideas discussed. The Chair reported that UOW will be submitting a response to the government issue paper, to be submitted by the deadline of 2 May 2005.

The Chair noted that, in the past, the University has successfully aligned itself to outside forces, and as a result has been prepared when changes affecting research funding and focus have been implemented. Accordingly, it is likely that the University will continue to contemplate how to best measure the quality and impact of research within the University. The Chair has already participated in a University working party formed to discuss the issue of quality and impact, and as a result has formulated a suggested definition of ‘impact’ and some of the other terms discussed in the government issue paper, to be forwarded to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research). The Chair agreed to forward a copy of his report to FRC members.

**ACTION:** Chair to send copy of ‘impact of research’ report to FRC members.

The Committee briefly discussed the attachment listing the Faculty’s top relevant publications. It was noted that this list was hastily compiled and submitted to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) in response to a request for a list of the Faculty’s top ten publications. The Committee agreed that, rather than requesting a top ten from each Faculty, the University should define the disciplines across the University and list the top publications in each of these disciplines. The Committee noted that the list is only useful as one of many relevant indicators of the quality and impact of research.
8. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

9. NEXT MEETING

Friday 13 May, 2005  Faculty Meeting Room, Building 39/105A

RIBG Pool 2 grants will be ranked at this special meeting.

Professor David Steel
Chair