PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1.1 Apologies/Leave of Absence

Apologies were received from: Prof J Fulcher and Prof F Safaei.

1.2 FRC Membership

It was noted that, for this meeting:
- Professor J Hill is the Dean’s nominee as Chair.
- Dr S Gower is the Dean’s nominee as Deputy Chair.
- A/Professor N Gray, A/Professor T Marchant and A/Professor T Wysocki are Head of School nominees.
- Professor R Safavi-Naini is the Faculty Postgraduate Coordinator.
- Professor J Chicharo, A/Professor F Naghdy and A/Professor J Rayner represent the three key research institutes in the Faculty.
- Professor J Seberry is the elected Faculty Representative.
- Mr M Freeman is the elected Postgraduate Student Representative.
- Professor H Brown and A/Prof G Spinks are the two external members, as required by the URC Small Grants Scheme 2004 Guidelines.

1.3 Confirmation of Minutes for the Meeting of 2 July, 2003

The minutes of the meeting held 2 July 2003 were confirmed.

1.4 Business Arising from Previous Meeting

There was no business arising.

The Committee agreed to consider Item 5 out of agenda order.

PRACTISING RESEARCH SUPERVISION

A/Prof Tim Marchant spoke about the report, noting that the RTS was the impetus for the project. The main aim of the report was to recommend structures to be put in place to improve completion rates. The report includes specific recommendations regarding improving information for students, managing candidature and providing assistance to supervisors.
A/Prof Marchant noted that the majority of recommendations will need to be implemented by URC, however, the Faculty will need to implement recommendations regarding improving information for students, and putting schemes in place regarding professional development for supervisors.

It was suggested that FRC produce an action plan of what needs to be implemented. In addition, it was suggested that A/Prof Marchant review the Faculty website and provide a report on the content requirements.

2. RANKING OF URC SMALL GRANTS 2004

Each member present at the meeting provided a preliminary ranking prior to the meeting.

The Chair discussed the process to be undertaken and noted that a budget of approximately $56 000 was available. It was noted that the strategy of the URC is to fund a small number of high quality proposals.

The Chair noted that A/Professor Tad Wysocki was not allowed to rank the applications of Beata Wysocki or Peter Vial due to conflict of interest. A method was devised where both applications could be appropriately compensated for this disadvantage. The Chair explained the manner in which compensation should be determined and the Committee agreed that the method used was fair and equitable.

The Committee extensively discussed the guidelines regarding budget items not supported, in particular the exclusion of the purchase of computer equipment. The Committee noted that this particular rule disadvantages the Faculty of Informatics, if read as written in the guidelines. It was mooted that the rule is referring only to computer equipment which is not essential to the research activity, and that a request for computer equipment will not render an application in breach of the guidelines if it is genuinely required for research reasons. The Committee agreed to interpret the guidelines in this manner, but noted that the guidelines need to be clarified for the next round.

The Committee agreed that each application would be discussed in reference to the guidelines and the ranking (as provided by each member prior to the meeting) be revised accordingly, if deemed necessary. A/Professor Wysocki was asked to leave the room during the discussion of Beata Wysocki’s and Peter Vial’s applications.

At the conclusion of discussions, the final ranking and recommended $ were approved.

[Rankings and recommended $ omitted due to confidential nature]

The Committee agreed to formally comment about the guidelines regarding the exclusion of computer equipment.

Resolved (FRC03/01)
The FRC unanimously requests that the URC Small Grants Scheme Guidelines regarding the purchase of computer equipment be reconsidered in view of the central role technology plays in the Faculty of Informatics.

FRC notes that the Faculty of Informatics is particularly disadvantaged by this stipulation and requests that specialised computers for research should be allowed and that the guidelines should be revised to reflect this.
3. REPORT FROM CHAIR

No report made.

4. SECTE RESPONSE TO WUPA SPACE AND RESOURCE PAPER

The Committee noted that the WUPA report is a valuable review of space and resources and that FRC should provide a response to the report.

Professor Joe Chicharo noted that, as a result of the report, SECTE is completing an audit of the space and resources allocated to postgraduate research students. SECTE’s major concerns about the report are:

- That the recommendation for research students to submit a budget proposal for up to $1000 is unreasonable, as it will result in a School running at a loss. It needs to be made clear that charges such as internet and phone charges, among other things, need to be paid out of the small amount that Schools receive from the Research Maintenance Fund.
- The school agrees that research students should have access to the Introduction to Tertiary Teaching (ITT) and GCertBus courses, but only on the proviso that they are not undertaken in the first year of a student’s enrolment.

It was noted that the issue might be raised at the next Postgraduate Research Policy Committee meeting.

The Committee agreed that Schools should be asked to review the WUPA report/recommendations and provide feedback to FRC so that it can be passed onto WUPA and PRPC.

6. RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING MANAGEMENT REPORT 2003

Members noted that the University report is available online.

As a related issue, members asked Professor Joe Chicharo to report on the progress of the Faculty Research Structure Working Party. He noted the following:

- The main aim of the working party was to improve the submissions from SITACS and SMAAS, however most of the work has been completed within the Schools, which is to their credit.
- The SITACS proposal is for an Institute for Intelligent Software, and it is much more cohesive and united proposal than the previous proposal put forward to Professor Margaret Sheil.
- SMAAS representatives will be meeting with Professor Sheil soon to discuss the viability of their proposal.
- The Faculty will need to ensure that emerging strengths in the Faculty are supported appropriately.

The Committee asked that the outcome regarding the SMAAS meeting with Professor Sheil be communicated to Committee and Working Party members.
7. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

8. NEXT MEETING

Thursday 13 November, 2003   Faculty Meeting Room, Building 39/105A

Dr Steve Gower
Deputy Chair