



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE MINUTES 1 SEPTEMBER 2021

Minutes of Meeting 03/2021 of the University Research Committee held on 1 September 2021 via Zoom.

Present:

Prof J Martin (*Chair*)

D/Prof D Adams
Prof C Baldock
Prof M Batterham
Prof J Beck
Prof K Clapham
Dr P Di Pietro
Prof P Innis
D/Prof S Kaye
Prof L Kervin

Prof R Lewis
Ms S Martin
S/Prof P McGuirk
S/Prof A Okely
A/Prof G Peleckis
S/Prof P Perez
Prof M Randle
D/Prof R Roberts
Prof G Rose

Dr T Stutchbury
Dr M Thompson
Mr G Tomka
Dr E Twyford
D/Prof A van Oijen
Prof W Vialle
Prof S Ville
Prof J Wang

Minute Secretary:

Ms J Evans

PART 1 OFFICIAL BUSINESS

1.1 1.1.1 Acknowledgement of Country

The Chair delivered an Acknowledgment of Country.

1.1.2 Welcome and Apologies

Apologies were received from Prof A Sims, Prof Sharon Robinson and Ms Amy Boyle.

The Chair welcomed new Committee Members to their first URC Meeting:

- Dr Paul Di Pietro, Dean, Research Knowledge Exchange and Translation;
- Prof Melanie Randle, Dean, Researcher Development and Integrity;
- Dr Tamantha Stutchbury, iAccelerate Director of Research;
- Prof Jiazhao Wang, Research Leader AIIM (replacing Prof Zaiping Guo); and
- Prof Peter Innis, Interim Associate Dean Research, AIIM (replacing A/Prof Germanas Peleckis)

The Chair thanked Prof Will Price for his membership of the Committee, who now leaves for a period of LSL followed by retirement.

Ms Claire Carter attended for discussion of agenda items 3.5 and 3.6. Dr Willo Boniface attended for discussion of agenda item 3.5.

1.2 Arrangement of the Agenda

1.2.1 Conflicts of Interest

There were no conflicts of interest declared.

1.2.1 Starring of Items

Agenda items 1.1, 1.2, 1.5, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8 and 5.1 were starred for the meeting.

Agenda Item 3.8 Review of UOW Research Institute and Centre Framework was a late addition to the agenda. Due to time constraints this item will be discussed at an additional URC Special Meeting.

Resolved (23 /2021)

That the University Research Committee adopt the draft resolutions for the un-starred items.

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved (24/2021)

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 June 2021, as circulated to members, be confirmed and signed as a true record.

1.4 Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

1.5 Chair's Business

New Appointments

The Chair advised the following new appointments:

- Professor David Currow, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Health and Sustainable Futures) commences at UOW in November. Prof Currow has held senior leadership positions as foundation CEO of Cancer Australia, and is currently the NSW Chief Cancer Officer and CEO of the NSW Cancer Institute; and
- Currently recruiting internally for the Director, iAccelerate Education, who will work with Dr Tamantha Stutchbury in her new role as Director of iAccelerate Research. Both 12 month roles will report to the Dean, Research Knowledge Exchange and Translation.

Universities Australia DVCR Meeting

At the meeting held this week, the major topic of discussion was the pre-prints eligibility issue with the Australian Research Council (ARC), and the decision by the ARC to rule ineligible 32 DECRA and Future Fellowship applications that mentioned pre-prints in their applications. All 32 applications were in the Physical Sciences field, where the use of academic pre-prints is widely used. This is becoming a sector wide issue and there have been a number of submissions made to the ARC, however as yet there has been no resolution. UOW did not have any applications ruled ineligible as a result of pre-prints.

Internal Grant Announcements

The **UOW Prioritising Emerging Research Leaders (PERL) Fellowship Scheme** was funded using \$5M in additional RSP funds to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on Australia's research workforce, initiatives and activities. PERL provides short-term support for the retention of emerging research leaders (12-18 month fellowship salary, Levels A – C, with up to \$10K project funds), and Indigenous UOW HDR students about to complete their studies. Outcomes were announced on 23 June as follows:

- 28 PERL Fellowships awarded out of 51 eligible nominations (55% success rate);
- 3 Fellowships awarded to Indigenous candidates; and
- 50:50 split male and female awardees.

As part of additional RSP Funds, \$1.4 million has been distributed via the **RevITALise (RITA) Research Grants Scheme**. The scheme prioritised ECRs and interdisciplinary teams impacted by COVID-19:

- **Investigator Grants:** up to \$20,000. Applicants must be an ECR or have been COVID impacted; 25 grants funded, totalling \$1,011,658 (success rate 61 per cent):
- **Teams Grants Scheme:** up to \$50,000. Teams must include an ECR or an investigator who is COVID impacted or Team is interdisciplinary and includes at least one STEM and one SHAPE researcher; 26 grants funded, involving 119 investigators and totalling \$399,346 (success rate 46 per cent).

The **Major Equipment Grant (MEG) Scheme** applications closed 30 July 2021 with total funding of \$1.65 million available. Applicants for the first time were able to request funding in one of two funding streams:

- Stream 1: \$25,000 to \$75,000 for small items of research equipment; and
- Stream 2: \$75,001 to \$200,000 for major equipment or infrastructure.

The Committee met on 24 August and applicants will be advised of outcomes by early September.

Special Studies Program Policy

The Special Studies Program Policy (formerly the Sabbatical Leave Policy) is currently under review. Proposed changes, including changing its name to Special Studies Program Policy, have been suggested to better align with UOW and Faculty strategic objectives. The policy will be provided to the People and Culture, Finance and Infrastructure Committee (PaCFIC) for approval on 8 September 2021. The DVC(R&I) confirmed that a previously ambiguous statement in the draft policy about academics on study leave being unable to remain in Wollongong has been removed.

Review of Research Centres & Institutes Framework

The DVC(R&I) noted that this review will begin in late September. The objective of the review is to develop a new framework for UOW Research Institutes and Centres that supports international research excellence, a positive research culture, and growth in high impact (including translational) research.

The Draft Terms of Reference have been shared with Executive Deans, ADR's and key researchers. Executive Deans have been invited to nominate 1-2 external representatives to participate in the Review. This is a late agenda paper, as the review terms of reference were awaiting Vice-Chancellor approval, which has now been provided. A further URC Special Meeting will be convened early next week for discussion of this item, so that Committee Members have time to review the papers.

The DVC(R&I) explained the timeline and emphasised that there will not be major changes next year. In 2022, current Centres & Institutes will be supported the same way as they have been, however, beyond that there will be limited resources. A committee member questioned how commitments already made for future years would be funded, with the DVC(R&I) advising that this would be examined as part of the review. A committee member also questioned what information will need to be provided by faculties, in particular, the amounts in faculty budgets that have previously supported centres and institutes. It was suggested that budget information for 2020 would not be a true reflection of faculty support, as those budgets had been reduced, and that 2019 details should be used.

PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

There was no Confidential Business

PART 3 GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1 Research and Innovation Report

Resolved (25/2021)

That the University Research Committee note the Research and Innovation Report for the September 2021 URC Meeting, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.2 Graduate Research Update

The Dean of Graduate Research (DGR) noted:

- the Graduate Research Committee (GRC) will begin meeting more frequently from next week;
- an HDR Indigenous Working Party has been established to progress the HDR Indigenous Strategy;
- a successful Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Event was held on 25 August; and
- the proposed iGrad Program is now out for consultation, feedback will then progress to the working group, then to the GRC and back to the URC meeting in November, and go-live in 2022.

The DGR confirmed that there is no news on when international students are due to return to UOW. There have been some exemptions, however the whole process is quite challenging.

A committee member raised some concerns with regard to the iGrad Program, and some aspects of the proposed points system, specifically the table of points-eligible activities. The concern is that the proposed schedule of points does not create a level playing field across disciplines. It may be that the intention is that individual disciplines should develop/propose alternative activities to correct this imbalance, but some of the details will need to be ironed out 'before' this proposal is communicated to students, to avoid causing them serious anxiety and concern. It was suggested that the URC should be paying close attention to this as it potentially has major ramifications for PhD Students. The DGR advised that these concerns would be included in feedback as part of the consultation process and will be discussed at the next URC Meeting.

A committee member asked for clarification of the timeline for the consultation process for the iGrad Program, with the DGR confirming that pending approval at URC, the program will commence in 2022 for all new HDR Candidates. Whether or not the program will be mandatory for new HDR Candidates will be included as part of the consultation process.

A committee member asked for an update on COVID-19 HDR scholarship extensions. The DGR advised that HDR Candidates currently coming to the end of their scholarships have been invited to submit requests. The University is supporting scholarship extensions and some HDR candidates have already been awarded an extension. The ADR AIIM advised that this process was not occurring in AIIM and would follow up with the DGR outside of this meeting.

Resolved (26/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the Graduate Research Update, as provided in the agenda papers and as presented by the Dean of Graduate Research, at the URC Meeting.

3.3 Associate Deans (Research) Updates

The Associate Dean (Research) BAL advised:

- An Early Career Mentoring Scheme commenced in July with 14 researchers participating;
- Discussions are underway for a Mid-Career Mentoring Scheme;
- Linkage success with Dr Michelle Voyer awarded \$418k over 3 years from the ARC for her project '*Better oceans, better futures: Indigenous knowledges and oceans governance*';
- AHSRI have celebrated their 10 year anniversary; and
- During the pandemic and its associated challenges, BAL colleagues continue to publish regularly in top journals and engage on policy issues.

The Associate Dean (Research) SMAH advised:

- SMAH continues to be a high performing faculty across all aspects of research performance;
- The ARC for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage (CABAH) recently completed an ARC mid-term review with outcomes expected to be advised in December; and
- SMAH success with one NHMRC Investigator Grant (details currently under embargo).

The Associate Dean (Research) ASSH advised:

- The great work Heads of Research and Research Leaders to support the research activity across 7 schools and Early Start is acknowledged and appreciated;
- ASSH success with one NHMRC Grant (details currently under embargo);
- There are currently 6 pending HERDC Category 1 grants submitted since 1 July;
- ASSH has 32 grants pending with commencement dates in 2021 and 33 pending with commencement dates in 2022;
- 26 domestic HDR completions so far in 2021, and 9 international HDR completions;
- The UOW node of the ARC Australian Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child is located in Early Start and is currently recruiting research fellows;
- Early Start Research currently working with TwoCollaborate, to articulate the role of Early Start Research in the new expanded faculty and in connection with Early Start's vision and mission.
- Recent successful outcomes: an Alcohol and Drug Foundation Research valued at \$136,164; a UGPN Grant; RITA Grants - 6 individual projects and researchers involved in 10 team grants; PERL Fellowships - 5 awarded to ASSH researchers; and ASSH researchers awarded various VC Awards for Research Excellence.

The Associate Dean (Research) EIS advised:

- The Academic Ranking of World Universities were recently announced with EIS with ranked 20th in the world for Energy, Science and Engineering, ranked 47th in the world for Mechanical Engineering, and rankings in the top 75 and top 100 in a number of other areas;
- Recent ARC Grant success included one DECRA, one Linkage Project at UOW and involvement in another at UNSW, and the ARC Industrial Transformation Training Centre awarded \$5 million, and 2 other grants that are currently under embargo;
- PERL Fellowship and RITA Grant success with EIS involved in a number of successful applications;
- EIS ran 2 internal funding schemes (REV and summer scholarships) to ignite research and encourage students to progress to a PhD;
- Delays continue through the GRS with a number of processes, however, there has been a huge improvement, noting there is still much work to be done to reach the required standard;
- Student and staff concerns about the proposed iGrad Program, that the increasing workload during COVID-19, when students are having trouble accessing labs and doing fieldwork, is not appropriate. Further concerns include whether the program would be mandatory or optional, with students already undertaking alternative programs (graduate certificate, diplomas etc), and further noting that the iGrad Program is a good idea – but maybe not a good idea for now.

The Associate Dean (Research) AIIM advised:

- AIIM was involved with 3 DECRA's awarded to UOW;
- HDR scholarship funding previously held back to use for a mid-year intake is now exhausted, with offers sent to 3 international UPA's and 1 domestic RTP;
- Researcher support across AIIM has been allocated to be spent by year end and researchers have been encouraged to collaborate and pool resources;
- Work continues on an external research partnership program 'Aim for Gold' and a matching scholarship scheme where external partners fund a HDR Scholarship for 3 years;
- The majority of AIIM students are international and COVID-19 has had a large impact on them, and HDR students overall, especially with restrictions on lab access;
- VC Award success with AIIM Researchers awarded both the Researcher of the Year Award and Emerging Researcher Award; and

- AIIM researcher awarded UOW's only ARC Future Fellowship.

Resolved (27/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the Associate Deans (Research) Update, as presented by the Associate Deans (Research), at the URC Meeting.

3.4 Revised University Research Committee Terms of Reference

Resolved (28/2021)

that the University Research Committee endorse the revised University Research Committee Terms of Reference, as provided in the agenda paper, and forward to Academic Senate for approval.

3.5 Research Stocktake Update

The Director Research Services Office (DRSO) noted that the Research Stocktake Scope, provided to Members at the last meeting in June, has had a number of changes as a result of feedback received from the ERA and EI Executive Committee. The Research Reporting & Analytics Manager RSO provided a presentation (attached) to Committee Members, which outlined an overview, scope, timeline and key decisions of the Research Stocktake. Three key points as a result of feedback received are:

- ensuring information and data presented in the Stocktake Report showcases the University's unique disciplines in their best light;
- a revisit of the scope was required to ensure that what is delivered is quality, given the timeline and resources available; and
- this report will be used to make key decisions about the future of research at UOW, so it is vital to present the data in the best possible way.

Key points to note are as follows:

- the ERA and EI Executive Committee and discipline leaders will perform the deep dive analysis by FOR Code as experts in their fields;
- the timeline has been revised to accommodate the analysis above;
- research data assessed will be for the period from 1 January 2016 to 30 June 2021.

A question was raised regarding the process for individual research strengths and institutes to provide information. The DRSO advised that the Research Centre and Institute Review would seek this information as part of Phase 1 consultations.

A question was raised about discrepancies between funding recorded by the faculty versus funding recorded via other systems, noting that this particularly applies to categories 3 and 4 funding. The Associate Director, Research Analytics & Systems advised that audited HERDC financial data is used.

Resolved (29/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the Research Stocktake Update, as provided in the agenda papers, and presented by the Research Reporting & Analytics Manager, at the URC Meeting.

3.6 Revised Research Performance (Active) Policy

The Associate Director, Research Analytics & Systems provided a presentation (attached) to committee members, noting a summary of the key changes as follows:

- renamed Research Performance Policy, from Research Active Policy;
- revised 'Purpose' to align with the Strategic Plan;
- new research performance targets will be tailored by career level and discipline;
- alignment with the Academic Performance Framework;
- performance assessment in accordance with Hong Kong Principles & DORA Principles;

- removal of the faculty definitions from the appendix.

In summary, the policy focus has shifted from mandating minimum thresholds with penalties for under achievers, to supporting staff to reach realistic performance targets informed by national discipline benchmarks. The terms research ‘active’ and research ‘inactive’ have also been removed.

The Associate Director, Research Analytics & Systems further explained the new performance targets, noting;

- that researchers will now have access to their own research data;
- explained the Hong Kong Principles for assessing researchers;
- explained the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA); and
- advised next steps in the policy revision process (as noted in the presentation and agenda papers).

Committee members noted the following:

- measurable quantitative processes are available for Commercial Research and is something to be explored; and
- the possibility that HDR completion targets are variable across faculties.

The Committee further discussed how to measure outputs across different faculties. The DVC(R&I) stressed that it is absolutely essential, in a resource constrained environment, for researchers to source external income for their research. UOW does well with Category 1 income, however under-performs in Categories 2 to 4. The research income measures proposed in the revised policy are considerably lower than the national benchmark, having been scaled backed to UOW medians (not national medians) due to COVID-19 and the enormous amount of change required to meet the national benchmark. Any further feedback can be provided during the consultation process.

Resolved (30/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the revised Research Performance (Active) Policy, as provided in the agenda papers, and presented by the Associate Director, Research Analytics & Systems.

3.7 UOW Data and Decision Science Initiative

The Director, NIASRA, provided an update and presentation (attached), noting the following:

- The Data and Decision Science Initiative (DDSI) came about due to there being no mechanism at UOW to collaborate about data science and big data and is also part of the UOW Strategic Plan; and
- the DDSI reports through the URC to the DVC(R&I), supported by a Steering Committee, an external Advisory Committee, networks and working groups

Resolved (31/2021)

that the University Research Research Committee note the update on the UOW Data and Decision Science Initiative, as presented by the Co-Director NIASRA, at the URC Meeting.

3.8 Review of UOW Research Institutes and Centre Framework

Due to time constraints, this late item will be discussed at a Special URC Meeting to be convened within the next week. For those that are unable to attend the meeting, please provide feedback to the DRSO by close of business Monday 6 September.

PART 4 BUSINESS FROM UOW COMMITTEES

4.1 SAGE Athena Swan Implementation Committee

Resolved (32/2021)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 17 May 2021 and 24 June 2021 Meetings of the SAGE Athena Swan Implementation (SASI) Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.2 Research Integrity Committee

4.2.1 Revised Research Integrity Committee Terms of Reference

Resolved (33/2021)

That the University Research Committee approve the Revised Research Integrity Committee Terms of Reference, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.2.2 Research Integrity Committee Meeting Minutes

Resolved (34/2021)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 26 May 2021 Meeting of the Research Integrity Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.3 Graduate Research Committee

Resolved (35/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 4 May 2021 Meeting of the Graduate Research Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.4 Research IT and Systems Committee

Resolved (36/2021)

that the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 25 February 2021 Meeting of the Research IT and Systems Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.5 Early Career Disruption Committee (EC- DC)

Resolved (37/2021)

That the University Research Committee note the summary for the June to August 2021 Meetings of the Early Career Disruption Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

PART 5 FINAL BUSINESS

5.1 Other Business

Farewell to Professor Jenny Beck

The DVC(R&I) farewelled Prof Jenny Beck as this is her last meeting as the Associate Dean (Research) for SMAH, departing UOW on long service leave from 1 October followed by retirement from 1 February 2022. Prof Beck will continue with an honorary appointment, using her vast experience with grant review, mentoring and other research related activities. The DVC(R&I) thanked her for her work with the University Research Committee and SMAH.

Farewell to Professor Clive Baldock

The Dean of Graduate Research advised that he is leaving UOW from 1 October 2021 to take up a position at the University of Western Sydney. Prof Baldock thanked Prof Jennifer Martin for her support and leadership over the last year, and further acknowledged the great work done by colleagues Dr Melissa Thompson and A/Prof Honglin Chen.

The DVC(R&I) thanked Prof Baldock for his dedication, support and wisdom during a challenging time, highlighting a number of recommendations from the GRS Review that have been implemented by Prof Baldock in the last 12 months:

- Led the restructure of the GRS and its increased student-focused model;
- Implemented a new HDR scholarship allocation model and process;
- Initiated and overseen the development of the iGrad Program;
- Established the Graduate Research Committee;
- Established a HDR Strategic Recruitment Committee focussing on a more coordinated recruitment of HDR students; and
- Established a HDR Indigenous Working Party.

The DVC(R&I) advised a call for Expressions of Interest for an interim appointment will be made soon, whilst recruitment for the position is underway.

5.2 Next Meeting

The next University Research Committee Meeting will be held on Tuesday 2 November 2021, 9.30am to 11.00am.

The meeting closed at 11.00am.

ACTION ITEMS

- 1.3 J Evans – file URC Minutes 18 February 2021
- 3.4 J Evans - forward Revised URC TOR to Governance for Academic Senate agenda
- 4.1 K Lindenau – file SASI Minutes
- 4.2.1 J Evans – forward approved RIC TOR to Research Integrity Officer
- 4.2.1 R Perkiss – file RIC Minutes
- 4.3 J Evans – file GRC Minutes
- 4.4 M Oakman – file RITAS Minutes
- 4.5 L Sherwood – file EC- DC Summaries

Signed as a true record



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Chairperson 4 / 11 / 2021