



UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE MINUTES 1 JUNE 2022

Minutes of Meeting 03/2022 of the University Research Committee held on 1 June 2022 via Zoom.

Present:

Prof J Martin (*Chair*)

D/Prof D Adams
Prof M Batterham
Prof J Chen
Prof D Currow
Dr P Di Pietro
Prof C Gibson
D/Prof S Kaye
Prof P Kelly

Ms S Martin
S/Prof A Okely
Prof C Ritz
D/Prof R Roberts
S/Prof S Robinson
Prof G Rose
S/Prof A Sims
A/Prof D Skropeta

Dr T Stutchbury
Dr M Thompson
Mr G Tomka
Dr E Twyford
D/Prof A van Oijen
S/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 Dr A Boyle, Prof K Clapham, Prof H Ecroyd, Prof P Innis, Prof L Kervin, S/Prof P McGuirk, A/Prof G Peleckis, S/Prof Pascal Perez, Prof M Randle and Prof W Vialle.

A/Prof D Skropeta representing Prof H Ecroyd, Prof C Gibson representing Prof P McGuirk.

Stefan Delfgou, Associate Director Research Grants and Development and Karen Lovasz, Manager Strategic Projects attended for discussion on agenda items 3.4, 3.5 and 3.6.

The Chair welcomed Prof David Currow, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Health and Sustainable Futures) to the meeting. Prof Currow will be the Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) from 14 June 2022.

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, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 3.8 and 5.1 were starred for the meeting.

Resolved (22/2022)

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

1.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Resolved (23/2022)

That the minutes of the previous meetings held on 9 February 2022 and 28 April 2022, 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

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation Course

The Chair encouraged Committee Members to enrol in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Foundation Course, run online through UOW's Indigenous Strategy Unit and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. Please contact Tammy Small, Manager Projects, Indigenous Advancement for more information.

New Federal Government Ministerial Appointments

The Chair advised appointments as follows:

- Jason Clare is the new Education Minister, presumably responsible for both higher education and international education. Tanya Plibersek, who worked on the opposition's education policy for the past six years, has been given the Environment and Water Portfolio;
- Brendan O'Connor is the new Skills and Training Minister, with the responsibility for tertiary education is split between two ministers. O'Connor previously held the employment, skills and training ministry for a few months during Kevin Rudd's Prime Ministership;
- Ed Husic is the new Industry and Science Minister, having been the Shadow Minister for Industry and Innovation since the beginning of last year;
- The other notable appointment is former Melbourne and Griffith Vice-Chancellor Professor Glyn Davis AC as Secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

ERA Update

On 27 May the ARC released documents for the ERA 2023 submission process as follows:

- ERA 2023 Submission Guidelines and ERA-SEER Technical Specifications; and
- ERA 2023 Discipline Matrix

The ERA Submission deadline is now confirmed for 31 March 2023.

The Chair also noted outcomes of recent ARC Consultations as follows:

- Consultations on the treatment of preprints in ERA was overwhelmingly supportive of not including preprints as an eligible research output type in ERA 2023 and as a consequence, preprints will not be eligible for ERA submission; and
- As a result of consultations with universities on the eligibility of controlled entities in ERA, the eligibility of controlled entities in ERA 2023 has been changed to Australian-based controlled entities.

The RASS team is holding weekly training sessions with ERA Discipline Leaders to work through these changes.

2023 ARC College of Experts Nominations

On 27 May, the ARC opened for College of Expert nominations from qualified and experienced individuals, including senior academics, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders, and end-users with peer review experience. A strong emphasis will be placed on multidisciplinary expertise and nominations are due by 6 July 2022, with the ARC holding an Information Webinar for potential College nominees on 7 June 2022.

The RSO has provided ADRs with a list of potential nominees based on ARC Areas of Interest, level of experience, ARC track record and other factors, for review by COB 1 June. This list will be forwarded to the DVC-RI for consideration and decision and will then confirm the nominees who are approved to proceed with their application on RMS by COB 2 June. Research Offices are required to provide a full list of UOW nominees available to join the webinar to the ARC by COB 3 June. Questions should be directed to Lucas Hughes in the RSO lucash@uow.edu.au.

Research Block Grant Reforms Consultation Paper

The Chair advised that UOW has made a submission in response to the Government's RBG Reform to boost incentives for greater university and industry collaboration Consultation Paper. Key points in UOW's submission were:

- questioning if this change is really needed considering all the other recent changes around research commercialisation;
- the changes should not disadvantage universities that do well at fundamental research and should not disincentivise fundamental research; and
- RBG funding should increase, not be redistributed.

The Director Research Services Office will distribute the submission to Committee Members.

Indigenous Research Strategy Update

The Chair advised that UOW researchers and colleagues are developing a UOW Indigenous Research Strategy to support activities that develop and enhance the growth and development of Indigenous-led research, as recommended in the RAP. Two Strategy Workshops have been held in October 2021 and April 2022 to draft and refine the Strategy, in addition to consultation with Executive Deans, ADRs and AD-EDIs.

Three strategic imperatives have been identified for the Indigenous Research Strategy: (i) People & Opportunity, (ii) Knowledge & Impact, and (iii) Partnership & Community. Work is now underway to identify key priorities, actions and outputs to be achieved in the Strategy, as well as a longer-term aspirational Vision. It is anticipated the Strategy will be finalised by the end of 2022, following consultations with community and internal stakeholders.

Research Centres and Institute Framework Review Update

The Chair advised that in October 2021 a Review of UOW's Research Institute and Centre Framework commenced and a URC Working Group established. Phase 1 of the Review involved information gathering, benchmarking and a university-wide consultation process, closing 18 February 2022.

Over 300 points of engagement were recorded through surveys, focus groups and submissions. The Working Group met in late March 2022 to consider consultation outcomes and conclude Phase 1. Phase 2 of the Review, to develop and implement the new framework, is currently being developed in consultation between the interim DVC-RI and the VC.

Research Performance Policy Review Update

The Chair provided an update as follows:

- the current Research Active Policy specifies a minimum level of research outputs, income or HDR supervision that academic staff must achieve to be classified as "Research Active", and includes aspirational faculty targets;
- a revised policy was put forward for consultation, featuring customised targets for each discipline and closer alignment with Academic Performance Framework levels. It shifted from mandating minimum thresholds, to focus on supporting researchers to meet realistic performance targets, informed by national discipline benchmarks, median levels of performance for UOW staff and an emphasis on quality;

- the Research Performance Policy consultation ran from September 2021 - February 2022 and a total of 88 survey responses and 11 written submissions were received;
- the Working Group met in late February to discuss consultation outcomes including recommended changes, key concerns and suggestions for improvement; and
- further work on the Policy, now proposed to be renamed the Researcher Development Policy, is currently on hold pending consideration by the interim DVC-RI and VC.

The Chair noted the key issues that need to be addressed are as follows:

- concerns, especially in the HASS discipline, about the need to achieve in all 3 areas (research income, publications, HDR completions);
- successful implementation will rely upon adequate support and training for Heads of School and supervisors;
- should actual targets be specified in the policy, or should we refer people to relevant medians in Research Performance Dashboards (as medians may continually change);
- delivery timeframe for individual performance dashboards (data transparency and validation); and
- other performance matters (EBA negotiations for academic staff, ERA23 preparations, Academic Performance Framework review).

PART 2 CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

There was no Confidential Business

PART 3 GENERAL BUSINESS

3.1 Research and Innovation Report

Resolved (24/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the Research and Innovation Report for the June 2022 URC Meeting, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.2 Graduate Research Update

The Director Graduate Research School noted:

- the UOW 3 Minute Thesis (3MT) is coming up on 10 August and PhD Candidates should be encouraged to enter;
- the GRS are currently providing support for Research Proposal Reviews for those faculties that have opted into the process;
- the GRS continue to receive applications for Scholarship extensions for students that candidature is impacted for COVID related reasons;
- the new system that will be used to track HDR participation in Internships is now online and training is also available;
- supervisor induction training is ongoing and well received and a HDR Supervisors Resource Hub on Moodle has also been well received;
- the HDR Peer Mentoring Program is ongoing;
- work is continuing on the HDR Systems Improvement Project and a HDR Systems Roadmap to complement the project;
- scholarships for Spring Session are currently being offered with hopes for more international students, although this is being impacted by visa processing delays .

The Director Graduate Research School also thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and the Dean of Graduate Research for their ongoing support and commitment for the Graduate Research School and HDR Candidates.

A committee member questioned whether the roadmap would address the ongoing issues and challenges with understaffing in the GRS and the resulting turn around times, noting also that

this was the subject of much discussion at the last Academic Senate Meeting. The Director GRS clarified that the roadmap mentioned is specifically related to improving the HDR Systems, although also acknowledging that the Graduate Research School has a lower number of staff when compared to other universities of a similar size. When resources allow, the plan is to increase staff numbers, however the current priority is to address those staff on short term contracts, the extension of those contracts or moving those staff to permanent contacts.

A committee member noted the improved performance in a number of GRS areas. It was also highlighted however, that the delays in providing international students with a Confirmation of Enrolment (CoE), required to apply for a visa, are ongoing. While the CoE is provided by the Admissions Team, the link and communication between the GRS and Future Students Team is vital to working towards reducing these delays.

Resolved (25/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the Graduate Research Update, as provided in the agenda papers and as presented by the Director Graduate Research School, at the URC Meeting.

3.3 Associate Deans (Research) Update

The ADR's passed on thanks to the Research Services Office for the recent support of ARC DP and NHMRC Grant Rounds.

The ADR-GR SMAH advised the committee of the upcoming SMAH Research Forum to be held in July and planned to be held annually.

Resolved (26/2022)

That that the University Research Committee note the Associate Deans (Research) Update, as provided in the agenda papers, and as presented by the Associate Deans (Research), at the URC Meeting.

3.4 Draft Research Co-Investment Guidelines

The Chair advised that the draft Guidelines have been developed to provide clear and consistent guidance on requests for approvals of cash co-investment from the UOW Research Block Grant. Cash co-investments can support a range of research activities, most commonly project costs, research personnel salaries, fellowship salary shortfalls, HDR scholarships, and equipment costs. The Committee provided the following feedback:

- the timeline be extended from the proposed 4 weeks to possibly 2 months or more, to allow for more forward planning, inclusion in career development planning, more opportunity for the RSO and ADRs to provide feedback on competitiveness (UOW ARC Academy) and also to discourage applications that are not sufficiently mature;
- agreeing with the point above for standard grant rounds (ARC, NHMRC etc), however maintain some flexibility for schemes with shorter deadlines;
- for UOW-led Major Research Investment applications and the expectation that the proportion of total grant funding to be retained at UOW is at least 50% - is this realistic and is this currently happening at UOW, possibly amend the policy to include '**where possible**';
- for Major Research Investment and the calculation of co-investment amount, it should be clarified in the policy that the DVC-RI will generally approve a total co-investment of no more than 10% of the external fund to be awarded to UOW, possibly amend this to include '**however faculties are able to contribute more than the 10% if the application is of high strategic value**';
- multidisciplinary research and faculty co-funding needs to be encouraged, so systems to accommodate co-approvals etc also need to be in place; and
- the approval process for faculties be standardised, with the Director Research Services Office advising that for Major Research Investments a '*RBG Co-Investment Request Form*'

would be available as part of the NOI process and the DVC-RI suggesting that the ADR's work together to provide a proposal as to how this can be done more effectively.

The following points were further clarified:

- in relation to co-funding by faculties, the DVC-RI confirmed that the current arrangement where the Faculty/School/Research Centre or Institute will be expected to contribute a minimum of 20% of this UOW Co-Investment will continue for next year, with further discussion with the incoming DVC-RI and VC to occur at a later date;
- where the draft policy notes 'Other major government, industry and philanthropic research funding schemes' the intention is to leave this as is, that is - more generic in the policy, and make changes and be more specific in the appendices from year to year;

The DVC-RI noted that going forward there will need to be agreement on where to spend limited research funding, ensuring that it is aligned with UOW's Research Strategy and priorities.

Resolved (27/2022)

That the University Research Committee endorse the principle of developing UOW Research Co-Investment Guidelines, with appendices updated annually to outline specific requirements and incorporating the feedback discussed, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.5 Internal Grant Schemes Update

The Director Research Services Office discussed recent Internal Grant Schemes and asked for feedback and/or endorsement of those going forward.

EMCR Enabling Grants

Following feedback after the first round, it is recommended that:

- the amount of accessible flexible funding be increased from \$500 to \$3,000;
- the ADR approval process to be adjusted (as detailed in the agenda paper); and
- more targeted and valuable feedback be provided to improve the development support to EMCRs applying to the scheme.

The ADR EIS discussed some of the eligibility issues that were noted in EIS, where there are a large number of researchers on fixed term contracts, which would deem them ineligible for this scheme. The AD-GR SMAH advised those same issues resulted in a much lower number of applications than expected. It was suggested that those on short-term contracts may be able to still apply with an endorsement/letter of intent from their Head of School. Another way to address the eligibility issues would be to require just one researcher within a team meet the eligibility requirement. It is also important to make it clear that if a researcher leaves UOW, the funding should be expended and would remain at UOW.

Other feedback:

- that some matching flexible funding be made available to incentivise spending the large numbers of accounts that have small amounts of money in left in them, noting also that there are ongoing issues with the receipt of research reports from financial services; and
- scheme closing dates should be out of semester to encourage teaching/research academics.

Feedback will be incorporated into the guidelines and circulated to committee members.

Open Access High Impact Grants

The committee agreed with the EC-DC recommendation that the limit to the number of applications be removed, as detailed in the agenda papers, and that the scheme be reviewed in 6 months.

AEGiS Research

Application numbers for this scheme were lower than expected, with just \$583k of the \$1million of budget expended. The Manager Strategic Projects suggested this may have been due to competing ARC and NHMRC deadlines during that time. Consideration is being given to re-directing the unutilised funds to other schemes (eg, MEG).

Research Partnership Grants

Similar eligibility issues were noted in this scheme as noted earlier for the EMCR Enabling Grants and AEGiS Research Scheme, with lower application numbers due to competing deadlines, the Easter period and SAL. In addition, the 1:1 cash matching requirement may have been too onerous for Industry Partners. The Committee also suggested that the amount of work required to establish a partnership may be just too much for industry partners.

Resolved (28/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the new internal grant schemes updates and proposed amendments to the EMCR Enabling Grant Scheme Guidelines, and incorporate feedback as discussed, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.6 UOW ARC Academy Update

The Director Research Services Office advised that feedback provided at the last URC Meeting has been incorporated into the Terms of Reference. In addition, the timeline has been reviewed and a draft EOI Nomination Form now included. Invitation letters to Academy Members will be distributed this week. It was noted that there are very few members from HASS and the ADR BAL was asked to encourage HASS Academics to apply for membership.

Resolved (29/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the revised UOW ARC Academy Terms of Reference and Draft Expression of Interest form, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.7 UOW Data and Decision Science Initiative

Resolved (30/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the UOW Data and Decision Science Initiative Update, as provided in the agenda papers.

3.8 Early Career Disruption Committee – ECR Survey Results

The Chair EC-DC discussed the results of the Survey conducted in November 2021 to investigate the impacts of natural disasters and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on ECRs across the university. There were 96 respondents to the survey, down from 165 from the survey conducted the year before. Full survey results are detailed in the agenda papers, noting that the top 5 disruptions to research were:

- Being unable to meet collaborators or attend conferences;
- Mental health suffering from burnout and/or anxiety;
- Research objectives facing significant delay or otherwise affected;
- One-UOW and organisational changes causing confusion; and
- Increased teaching load negatively impacting capacity to do research.

The survey further highlighted the same eligibility issues for ECR's that were discussed at agenda item 3.5, where those on short term contracts may not be eligible to apply.

Resolved (31/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the Early Career Researcher Survey Results, as provided in the agenda papers, and as presented by the Chair, Early Career Disruption Committee, at the URC Meeting.

PART 4 BUSINESS FROM UOW COMMITTEES

4.1 SAGE Athena Swan Implementation Committee

Resolved (32/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 15 December 2021 and 15 February 2022 Meetings of the SAGE Athena Swan Implementation (SASI) Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.2 Research Integrity Committee

Resolved (33/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 8 December 2021 Meeting of the Research Integrity Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.3 Graduate Research Committee

Resolved (34/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 1 December 2021, 15 February 2022 and 15 March 2022 Meetings of the Graduate Research Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.4 Research IT and Systems Committee

Resolved (35/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 1 February 2022 and 28 March 2022 Meetings of the Research IT and Systems Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.5 Early Career Disruption Committee

Resolved (36/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the summary for the February to April 2022 Meetings of the Early Career Disruption Committee, as provided in the agenda papers.

4.6 Research Infrastructure Advisory Group

Resolved (37/2022)

That the University Research Committee note the minutes of the 16 February 2022 Meeting of the Research Infrastructure Advisory Group, as provided in the agenda papers.

PART 5 FINAL BUSINESS

5.1 Other Business

On behalf of the Committee, the Dean of Researcher Development and Integrity thanked the Chair for her work and commitment to the URC over the past three years, and for her leadership of the research and innovation portfolio through a very difficult period. Further thanks were extended for Prof Martin's important work and achievements towards improving Equity, Diversity and Inclusion at UOW.

5.2 Next Meeting

The next University Research Committee Meeting will be held on Wednesday 24 August 2022, 10.30am to 12.00pm.

The meeting closed at 12.00pm.

ACTION ITEMS

- 1.3 J Evans – file URC Minutes 9 February and 28 April 2022
- 1.5 S Martin – distribute RBG Reforms Submission to URC Members
- 3.4 S Martin – incorporate feedback/changes as discussed
- 3.5 K Lovasz – incorporate feedback/changes as discussed
- 4.1 N Asquith – file SASI Minutes
- 4.2 R Perkiss – file RIC Minutes
- 4.3 J Barrie – 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 .../.../2022