

MINUTES OF RESEARCH STAFF WORKING PARTY

Wednesday 23 May 2018

Present: Professor Alastair Poole, Biomedical Sciences (Chair)
Professor Nishan Canagarajah Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research
Dr Patricia Lucas, School for Policy Studies
Dr Neil Davies, Bristol Medical School
Dr John Day, UCU Rep, Department of Physics
Dr Anthony Croxford, Mechanical Engineering
Dr Simon Swales Head of Academic Staff Development
Dr Mike Gulliver, Academic Staff Development
Dr Scott Greenwell, Chair of Repts Committee
Dr Paras Nailk, School of Physics
Katie Manktelow, Academic Staff Development (Minutes)

Apologies: Professor Chris Hawkesworth, Earth Sciences
Claire Buchanan, Director of Human Resources
Claire Wrixon, Academic Staff Development

1. Welcome and announcements

- Alastair Poole (AP) noted apologies from Claire Buchanan (CB), Claire Wrixon (CW) and Chris Hawkesworth (CH)
- AP noted a change of membership. AP will be stepping down as Faculty Research Director and therefore he will also be stepping down as chair of the Research Staff Working Party. Nishan Canagarajah (NC) announced that the new chair will be Tim Peters, Professor of Primary Care Health Services Research, Bristol Medical School.

2. Minutes of meeting on 24 January 18 - Matters arising and actions

2.1 APPROVED: the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2018 as circulated.

2.2 AGREED: the actions from this meeting were reviewed. All actions were complete or to be marked as on-going.

3. Email Access

MG updated the group on the email access for leavers. There has been no change since the last meeting. The group noted their disappointment at the length of time this has taken to be moved forward by IT considering it has been 2 years since the issue was initially raised. It was noted that the development fund from this year could be used to further this.

ACTIONS

- **MG To talk to Pete Walker about the possibility of spending the development fund on a person to implement the email response for leavers.**
- **AP is to draft an email regarding this for NC to send to Darrell Sturley & Rachel Bence.**

4. Incentive awards

MG updated the group on his investigation into incentive awards. MG has looked at the awards that the university offer (Teaching, Environmental, etc.) however, these seem to be the wrong context for a research award. MG noted that awards for those encouraging the development of research staff could be adopted by the Bristol Research Staff Development Centre in the future.

5. Reps update

Changes to Membership

Scott Greenwell (SG) noted a change of membership in the Reps Committee, Kristopher Magee has been selected to replace Dinithi as co-chair.

Attendance

SG noted that recent attendance at the Reps Committee meetings has seen a decline. Scott will be emailing the Reps reminding them of their commitment to the reps' charter and what is expected of them as a rep. SG will be approaching Heads of Schools to ask for them to nominate reps from the Schools that are currently under represented, Ideally two from each School, with a gender balance. There was a discussion around pathway 3 researchers joining as reps. NC felt that they would need their own forum if the issues they faced were different from pathway 2 researchers, i.e. more to do with the teaching aspect of the roles.

Travel and subsistence credit card

SG noted that after speaking with the Reps, the experience of attaining a travel and subsistence credit card varies across Departments, this seems to come down to the discretion of the PI or Head of School. SG is going out to researchers and is compiling case studies which will be put into a report to see if we can identify where the inconsistencies are in this process.

ACTIONS

- **Katie Manktelow (KM) to put rep's attendance and recruitment as a standing agenda point while this is ongoing.**
- **AP to send a welcome letter to Kris Magee. KM to invite Kris Magee to next year's meetings.**

6. Progression and Promotion update

MG gave an update on promotion and progression. He noted that, although the P&P implementation group is taking forward the proposals that were agreed by Senate, these have largely set aside the important recommendations for cultural change made within the Pathway 2 P&P review. Consequently, he expressed concerns that as the group moves to consult on implementation, Pathway 2 staff will not perceive any great change, and will be resistant. MG requested support of the RSWP to follow up on the important cultural content of the Pathway 2 review, and to ensure that that too is addressed. There was consensus that if those in charge of enacting changes to Progression and Promotion processes do not fully understand them and are not supported to adopt a different culture, then there will be no real change. The implementation of the changes to policy will be key to bringing around lasting change.

ACTIONS

- **MG to write a draft email to capture these concerns around the implementation for AP to raise with the implementation group.**
- **MG to explore if SG could sit on the implementation group as the chair of the Research Reps.**
- **NC to raise these concerns with Judith Squires and at the URC.**

7. Research staff Development fund

Gemma Hammerton has been notified that she has been granted her bid for the development fund. She will be implementing her project at the start of the next academic year. This means that the development fund for 2017/2018 has not been spent. There was a discussion on sending out another call to researchers to apply for the bid, however as the money would need to be spent before the end of the financial year it was felt that the deadlines would be too tight. It was noted that Claire Buchanan (CB) would need to justify the underspend to the CFO, with any future overspend in compensation.

The group discussed the future of the fund and if it should be advertised as a £3000 pot rather than three smaller pots of £1000. There was consensus that there was no need for the £1000 restriction and researchers should be able to bid for up to £3000. A second question was raised around if we group wanted to identify areas of strategic focus for researchers to focus their bids on.

ACTION – MG to look at the application call for the development fund and re work to state bidding can up to £3000.

8. Bristol Research Staff Development Centre

MG updated the group on the Bristol Research Staff Development Centre. This has been a project from the PVC-Research, to explore the need and form of a 'Research Staff Development 'Centre''. After looking at other institutions' physical and virtual spaces, it was decided that Bristol's need was for a virtual space. This centre will encompass a new mentoring scheme, training for researchers, residentials and 1:1 appointments.

Identity exercises have been carried out with research staff, led by Andy Degg from Green Hat Design, with main themes emerging around the need for clarity – clear training, policy, information, expectations etc. The idea of journeys was a strong focus, with maritime links to Bristol. The idea of a body was played with, with associations to a community, a college or corpus. With these themes of clarity and an open landscape in mind, and with a goal for the centre to provide research staff with time to think, consider and plan, the name of the centre will be 'Bristol Clear', with the strapline: 'Time for research staff at Bristol'.

The group expressed views that people may not understand what the team does as it is not obvious from the name and were unsure how it will be perceived by the wider community. It was suggested that the reasons stated for the name has validity across the university and are not unique to research staff only. Making 'Clear' into an acronym was discussed. However, there was also opinion expressed the name could generate more interest than an acronym would, due to being different and standing out from the university language. It was noted that once people do know the team and what they do the name would become inherent and adopted by the community.

9. Strategic Priorities

The group agreed that a greater strategic direction is needed. It was agreed due to the limited time left in this meeting this item could be followed up via email but should be finalised by the next meeting. Anthony Croxford (AC) noted that he felt one important issue for research staff is the fact that most are on short term contracts, along side the fact that most are at a time of life where they are trying to buy homes and start families. Expectations need to be managed and completion rates on PIRLS need to be raised. AP felt that equality, diversity and inclusion should be a priority as well as the visibility and valuing of research staff.

It was also noted that the terms of reference should be updated to reflect current membership and set a new quorum, as well as addressing equality & diversity for this group.

Patricia Lucas (PL) suggested using the underspend of the development fund to conduct a Delphi survey to reach a consensus on priorities.

Action – MG to check with finance and then speak with PL about setting up a delphi survey.

Action – KM to update terms of reference.

10. AOB - N/A

11. Equality and Diversity issues

Having a gender balance was mentioned when speaking of membership within the Research Staff Working Party and regarding Heads of Schools needing to consider this when recruiting reps.

Dates for 2018 upcoming meetings: TBC.

Katie Manktelow

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