RESEARCH STAFF FORUM  
WEDNESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2018, 12 NOON – 2PM (WITH LUNCH PROVIDED) 
WOLFSON 3, WOLFSON RESEARCH EXCHANGE, THE LIBRARY  
CHAIR: SANDY SPARKS  
MEETING NOTES

1. Present:
Helen Ascroft (HA, WMG), David Armstrong (DA, Physics), Jane Cooper (JC, LDC, Notes), Mairi-Ann Cullen (M-A C, CEDAR), Samantha Flynn (SF, CEDAR), Daria Luchinskaya (DL, IER), Mandy Maredza (MM, WMS), Christopher Patrick (CP, Physics), Deepak Parashar (PP, WMS), Sharifah Sekalala (SSE, Law). Sandy Sparks (SS, LDC, Chair)

Apologies:
Elisabeth Arweck (CES), Sandra Beaufoy (E,D&I), Catherine Constable (Film & TV Studies), Beth Middleton (WMG), Gregory Moorlock (WMS), Sophie Rees (WMS), Michele Underwood (SC&S)

SS welcomed everybody to the RSF and explained that the RSF has been running for over 10 years noting that there were lots of reasons for its formation eg: Concordat and fixed term contracts and sharing information etc. SS highlighted that it gives departments the opportunity for representation as RAS researchers can often feel isolated: it gives researchers the chance to meet researchers from other faculties/departments, enables them to update themselves with University Research news together with familiarising themselves with updates from the University’s Research Committee and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. The RSF comprises of department representatives and researchers who have been successful in securing RAS Network Funding. Researchers also have the opportunity to chair the forum – an ideal opportunity for career development and confidence building. The forum has a ‘Focus on’ topic - recent focuses have included Research and Impact Services, Public Engagement and the Promotions Process.

2. Actions and Amendments from Previous meeting – 24 May 2018
1. Discussion about full economic costings (FeC), timeframe & implications etc

Discussion about Research Active staff not being able to put in bids, grants or contracts due to it not being fully economically funded, this has an impact on RAS income generation & also on potential collaborator or working in an interdisciplinary way.

SSE said that some project that had been accepted / approved were not FEC but the recommendation being that the business case & impact was essential to support the decision to go ahead with non FEC research activity.
A further suggestion was making sure that the case was linked to the strategy of the University & the 6 areas of focus as well as the dept benefits and those for the individual researcher.
SSE further commented you need departmental support in order to make a case that the University will not be worse off financially or that it has a further impact useful for research purposes and REF.

ACTION: SS to contact R&IS asking for support for RAS in building a case for income generation that was not able to FeC
2. Discussion re recognition of ‘different’ grants in the promotions process & the University recording system.

DP brought to the forum instances where researchers are not being recognised for their grant successes since some of the external grant awarding bodies have changed their schemes from an ‘individual-bid’ to an ‘institutional-bid’. For example, the MRC iCASE award that was previously applied for directly by the researcher leading the project has now changed to a format where the institution i.e. a designated university lead pools the proposals from individual academics together with financial commitment from their industrial partners, but the system does not class these individual academic researchers as Principal Investigators. This has led to the university promotion / probation committee making a decision that the academic researcher did not have a PI grant and hence was not evaluated favorably. Unfortunately, the university research system only classes the researchers as PI or Co-I.

Another example is that of the prestigious Turing Fellowships of The Alan Turing Institute, where the system classes the awardees as Co-I. It is rather unfair that the academic researchers leading the academic project and bringing in external money as well as repute are caught out in the static university system impacting their career. The proposal, therefore, is to ask the university for a definition of PI and Co-I and to address the issue in right earnest.

M-AC emphasised the importance of DP’s point: the University’s system should be updated to reflect changes in the funding environment to ensure that those taking a leading role are credited with this.

DL noted that the Warwick-Monash Alliance Catalyst fund does not have any actual money on the Warwick side, that it is a budget virement instead.

**ACTION:** SS mentioned that she might ask the Warwick-Monash Alliance to highlight this on their website. SS to email requesting clarification.

**ACTION:** SS to update on what the Institution is doing and seek clarification on (a) Full Economic Costings (b) information around PI’s and (c) Warwick Funding. SS to email & get clarification.

3. Update from Department Research Representatives, Network Leads, Current Events and Issues.

**Samantha Flynn - CEDAR**

SF reported that staff in CEDAR were putting in a lot of funding applications, with some being funded. A new Research Assistant started in October.

**Network Lead:** [Education and Psychology Research Active Network (EPRAN)](https://example.com)

SF thanked LDC for the continued funding for the EPRAN. The EPRAN had its first seminar in September and this was very well attended after being publicised by CEDAR and CES. The speaker was Naomi Ekas from Texas Christian University who was at the University of Warwick for another meeting, so they asked her to present while she was at Warwick. SF noted the next seminar will be held on 14th February 2019 and Dr Corinna Grindle from the Centre for Behaviour Solutions Ltd. will be discussing her work with children with intellectual disabilities. All are welcome to attend and further details are published on the LDC website.
Deepak Parashar – WMS
Network Lead: WMS Medical Statistics and Journal Club
DP noted this is the 7th year that the club is running and is grateful to the support of the LDC. The club is a central point of activities for statisticians in the medical school, with participation from other university departments too. The topics are a blend of methodological and applied statistics at the forefront of research, and engages researchers from PhD students through to Professors in a relaxed atmosphere. We have started off with one session already held in October, another one to be held in November, and several others planned throughout the year including external speakers. We extend a warm welcome to researchers working in adjacent areas too, in order to benefit from cross-disciplinary

Sharifah Sekalala - Law
Law has no researcher staff, Laws staff are mostly either Academics or Teaching Fellows. There is not a lot to happening. Currently there is re-organisation of legal education in the UK with the introduction of changes to the training of solicitors which could potentially have an impact on student numbers.
We are still preparing for REF 2020 through a number of initiatives.

Christopher Patrick - Physics
CP explained that he was attending the RSF as a member of the physics department. Together with Reza Kashtiban, who attended the previous RSF, he also attends the Physics Research Committee, basically with the aim of feeding back (via email) issues he feels to be relevant to the contract research staff in physics. Across the Science faculty, the process has begun of organising a one-day symposium for postdoctoral researchers working at Warwick, which follows on from the successful inaugural event in April 2018.

David Armstrong - Physics
Network Lead: Centre for Exoplanets and Habitability Research Network
DA reported that the Centre for Exoplanets and Habitability Research Network Had a seminar on 12th November discussing the evolution of cognition. The Centre was happy to welcome people from any area of the university and were particularly keen to increase participation from departments outside Physics. DA also commented he is interested in finding out more about where current research centres find funding.

Helen Ascroft - WMG
Network Lead: WMG Researcher Forum
HA reported that the Researcher Breakfast Forum had had their first meeting of the academic year. Following a recent survey, they agreed to leave the meeting timings and format but were monitoring gender balance and research group attendance to make sure that they are meeting the needs of all research staff at WMG. The large growth at WMG has meant that it is sometimes difficult to capture all new starters and make sure that they are aware of what the forum offers, this is an ongoing challenge they continually address. HA thanked LDC for their continued funding and support. In addition, the research forum committee members have been nominated and subsequently given a bronze recognition award from WMG recognising the committee’s efforts running and organising the research forum.
HA also reported that she attended the first run of a new course on the WMG Line Manager training programme; Stress & Mental Health Awareness. Feedback on this new course and learning outcomes are due to be discussed at the next WMG Welfare and Communications Committee (HA is a member of this committee). There was then some discussion if similar
courses were available across the whole University and whether Research Staff were able to attend. See this Useful Information and Courses available to RAS.

**Daria Luchinskaya – IER**

DL is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Employment Research, that is a contract research centre similar to CEDAR, that only has PhD students (no UG or other PG students). IER runs lunchtime workshops around once a month / every two months, and IER staff are also part of the Connecting Research on Employment and Work (CREW) network (funded 2017/18), headed by Carol Wolkowitz at Sociology. CREW will be running a networking event on the 7 November. DL highlighted that she is concerned about whether IER PhD students were potentially isolated, as they have quite a small PhD community. SSE suggested DL look at the PRES survey results for IER to look at the PhD students’ attitudes, and perhaps get in touch with Student Careers and Skills. SS informed Michele Underwood is the lead.

**Mandy Maredza - WMS**

**Network Lead:** Health Economics Journal Club

MM is attending as the Network lead for the Health Economics Journal Club. MM commented that this event has essentially turned into more of a seminar series where we invite both internal and external speakers to discuss ‘hot’ topics or ongoing research related to health economics. We especially encourage new staff members to present in this friendly environment as this allows others within and outside the team to identify overlapping areas of research interests. The 2019 seminar series begun in October; unfortunately, the first event was cancelled as the speaker couldn’t make it. We are going to host (jointly with Warwick Evidence), an additional seminar on the 5th December which will be delivered by Professor Billingsley Kaambwa from Flinders University, Australia. Billy is looking into potential collaborations with our research group and we thought that a seminar will be a good place for people to understand his research interests and identify potential synergies. Our next seminar will be on the 29th November; Professor Oliver Rivero-Arias will present ongoing research related to eliciting health preferences among young respondents using the EQ-5D-Y instrument.

MM also commented that the Health Economics Journal Club is growing, noting a PhD student has recently started and 4 new posts have been advertised at research fellow and research associate levels.

4. Committee Feedback

**University’s Research Staff Committee**

**RSF Rep: Sharifah Sekalala**

SSE reported to the meeting two main points which were discussed at the Research Committees at the last meeting. The first, Research Centres - the University is going to think more strategically so they all fit into an environment statement to fit in with the REF and is also thinking about the Research Centres and what constitutes and category 1, 2 or 3 Research Centre. The committee was concerned that there’s no strategic oversight about what all the Centres are doing - lots of excellent things are happening but it’s unclear how they all link together, what is good practice and how do the centres achieve better collaboration. Work is going to start on this next year.

The second is a piece of work on the Global Research Priorities Programme. Over the summer there was a survey to establish if people know about the various centres and how they engaged with them. 470 responses, the committee is looking at how to refresh those, how they appear to the outside world and whether they should be a priority. SSE noted that input from anybody on this forum would be very useful.
SS noted that the reason the Global Research Priorities Programme starting was that people were doing a lot of excellent work but were not collaborating, the idea being that with Global Research Priorities Programme the University is better able to respond to bids.

SSE commented that the next REF will have an impact on fractional appointments. For the next REF everybody must submit two pieces. Strategically the University is thinking about the fractional appointments it makes. The REF panel has responded saying that anybody on a 20% contract are required to have a ‘substantive connection’ with the University. The University is reflecting on what ‘substantive collection’ means.

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee**

**RSF Rep: Mairi-Ann Cullen**

M-AC informed the forum that the minutes of the 11 May 2018 meeting are available for everyone to read. M-AC drew to the Forum’s attention

- the Gender Pay Gap report and the work of the Gender Taskforce
- the resolution that the University of Warwick reviews its maternity provision with a view to improving it
- the encouragement of gender neutral language
- the presentation of the Pulse 2018 results focused on the Equality Act ‘Protected characteristics’.

M-AC urged the Forum members to publicise among their colleagues and to become familiar themselves with the Concordat to support the career development of researchers noting that the University has signed up to this. M-AC also noted the HR Excellence in Research action plan is structured around the Concordat principles and that it is through this action plan that the Concordat is being implemented at the University.

**HR Excellence in Research**

**SS on behalf of Sandra Beaufoy**

SS circulated the HE Excellence and one pager document and requested feedback on this by 16 November 2018.

In Sandra Beaufoy’s (SB) absence SS briefed the forum from SB’s update. SB is the lead on Equality, Diversion and Inclusion and is therefore involved closely with the three charter marks (HR Excellence, Athena Swan and Race Equality). The University holds the Athena Swan Silver award. The University is currently working on the HR Excellence award which is a 6 year process that is due for renewal in January 2019 – the University is therefore required to take an internal self-assessment of progress against the 4 year action plan. SS requested ‘track changes’ to the HR document by 16 November 2018. Last time the four year award noted the Impact Reports and case studies as exemplar. M-AC encouraged RAS to google Concordat on the VITAE website and download themselves a copy. SS noted it’s getting harder and tougher – more evidence is required to achieve awards. M-AC told the forum that, in her view, funding is required for more staff to oversee the Learning and Development of Researchers. She also noted what an excellent job SS does. M-AC enquired who do we approach about gaining that additional support.

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HR
No update

5. Support Feedback
LDC – Sandy Sparks
A [one pager](#) document written by SS was circulated. SS made the forum aware of the [Impact Reports](#) are available for Network Funding, 1-1’s, [Preparing for Leadership and Leadership in Action (2017/18)](#), saying just as researchers and academics get measured so does she – she needs to show the impact of the various initiatives, hence the Impact Reports. Impact Reports for 2017/18 have been written for 1-1 support (both Career Support and Academic Writing), Preparing for Leadership and Network Funding and are available to read on the [website](#). The Impact Report for Leadership in Action will be available circa the end of November.

SS pointed out that all the Network Funding for 2018/19 has been allocated and that she is trying to secure further funding from Research & Impact Services and the Pro-vice Chancellor for Research. SS acknowledged the budget is overspent but explained not all the networks spend their allocated funding (on average networks underspend by £150).

SS also highlighted what’s offered to RAS staff namely, the two Leadership programmes (both originally designed by VITAE) Preparing for Leadership – Term 1 and Leadership in Action – Term 2, together with 3 Academic Writing workshops (Being a Prolific Writer, Raising your Article Quality and Writing for Impact). SS attended the VITAE conference which resulted in her sharing in the November RAS Newsletter two documents: the first [What makes a 3 and a 4 Star Journal](#), the second being [Guidelines Around Publishing](#). Other workshops offered in term 1 include Introduction to Unconscious Bias and Managing your Research and Academic Career. Places are available on all workshops – visit the [LDC website](#).

LDC also run collaboration workshops with the Engagement Team (Public Engagement,) and the Library (Data Management Planning).

SS drew to the forums attention the WMG event ‘Scriberia Academy’ which she attended to establish what support they can offer RAS. Scriberia Academy is a team of world-leading visual problem-solvers. They believe that anyone can learn simple drawing techniques to help them think more clearly, understand and remember complex ideas, communicate with impact, work efficiently, plan effectively and visualise a project, teaching or the future. For further information contact Cathy Haynes [cathy@scriberia.co.uk](mailto:cathy@scriberia.co.uk) or see the November Edition of the [RAS Newsletter](#) (page 6)

6. Any other Business
M-AC suggested that the Research Staff Forum ought to use its voice to urge the University to do more to protect and enhance the work done in LDC to meet the learning and development needs of all Research Active Staff. Currently, the University funds one part-time post (currently held by Sandy Sparks). The Action Plan for HR Excellence in research demonstrates (a) how much activity depends on this post (and therefore the degree of risk to the University should the current post-holder leave) and (b) the limits that only having one such post place on potential activity in pursuit of HR Excellence in research and the Research-Active Staff angle to each of the equality and diversity charters and marks that the University is engaged with. It was [agreed](#) that the Forum’s representatives on Research
Committee and on Equality and Diversity Committee should each raise this issue on behalf of the Forum.

7. **Next Meeting**  
   Date: 13 February 2019  
   Time: 12 Noon – 2pm (lunch available from 11.30am)  
   Venue: Research Exchange, The Library.  
   Chair: We rotate the Chair of the Research Staff Forum to give people the opportunity to practice in a safe environment. If you would like to take advantage of this opportunity please make Sandy or Jane aware of this.