

CRS Forum 13 – 24 March 2004

Present : Ruth Ayres (CAP), Sue Burrows (Physics), Michelle Ellefson (Psychology), Marie Garnett (CAP), Phillip Gould (Biological Sciences), Louise Moody (Statistics), Jenny O'Leary (Careers) Mark Potter (Physics), Rob Tanner (Physics)

Apologies : Mark Barrow (Chemistry), Chris Coe (SHSS), Sarah Dahl (Education), Ewart Keep (WBS)

1. Matters Arising

Rob Tanner reported that a reply to Chris Coe's letter regarding the University Study Leave Scheme for Research Staff had now been received from Stuart Palmer. In short the letter suggested that it would be unwise for the University to change eligibility so that researchers with two years' service could apply or to publicise the scheme more widely, given the limited amount of funding available. It was also suggested that if more than one application date was given, researchers applying later in the year could be disadvantaged. The CRS Forum expressed the view that the Study Leave Scheme was not accessible to CRS in its current format and that all of the suggestions in Chris Coe's letter could be implemented if the selection criteria for granting of Study Leave were altered.

Action: It was agreed that Rob (in collaboration with Chris) would draft a response to Stuart Palmer

2. Report back from the ASDAC Subgroup

Marie Garnett reported that the Working Party on Fixed Term Contracts would be reconvened in the Summer Term and would pick up the work started last academic year, on the pilot project looking at the process for transferring fixed term workers to open-ended contracts. Marie also reported the Subgroups concern in ensuring that CRS were certain that their rep. could/would represent their views adequately, given that some of the current CRS Reps. are permanent members of staff. The concern about replacing CRS Reps. at the end of CRS contracts was also raised again.

The CRS Forum suggested that CAP should circulate to departments twice per year to check current records of CRS Reps. It was also noted that the new Horticultural Research Institute employing mostly research staff should also be invited to nominate a CRS Rep.

3. Careers Support for CRS

Jenny O'Leary (Careers) outlined a number of ways in which she might assist CRS in researching and pursuing career choices. These included careers seminars, one-to-one interviews, specialist booklets for CRS, employer resources, mock interviews, website materials, case studies, Career Fairs, departmental talks etc. The CRS Forum agreed that departmentally focused careers talks would be useful: There are specialist Careers Advisers available for the different subject areas. They also welcomed two separately focused University-wide Careers Seminars (Science / non-Science) and suggested that these should be offered earlier in the academic year. The CRS Forum also suggested that it might be useful to publicise the support available to CRS from the Careers Service. This could be done via the CRS website. Additionally, it was

decided that Jenny would produce a flyer, which could be circulated to CRS Reps. and displayed on departmental CRS noticeboards. The CRS Forum offered to review the flyer at a future meeting if this would be helpful to Jenny. There was a request for an email or similar to be sent out by the Careers Service to promote awareness of any relevant Careers Fairs.

4. CROS Survey

Marie Garnett reported that Warwick would participate in the national, web-based Contract Researchers' Online Survey (CROS) being run in May this year. The results of last years' survey have been used to inform development during the last year and, indirectly, led to the appointment of a Careers Adviser with a remit to advise CRS. Marie asked CRS Reps. if they would be prepared to assist in publicising the survey to fellow CRS again this year. The CRS Forum agreed that the inclusion of an optional question to identify the department in which they worked was appropriate, since this may aid future development.

5. Getting more CRS.Reps. involved

Ruth Ayres invited ideas from the CRS Forum on a proposed social event to encourage more CRS Reps. to attend the Forum meeting. One suggestion was that CRS Reps. should be sent personalised invitations to the CRS Forum meetings rather than a general circulation. It was noted that the view of many CRS in departments is 'why bother getting involved if I'm only going to be here for a short time.' There was also a concern raised that some CRS are reluctant to become Reps. because they feel that politically, such involvement may not aid their future in departments. It was suggested that it would be useful to have a social event open to all CRS to raise awareness of the CRS Forum more generally. This could be an 'Open House' over lunchtime with refreshments available. The CRS Forum could be presented as a resource for CRS with examples of what can and has been achieved through the Forum as well as information about the current context and provision for CRS in the University. It would be helpful if the CRS Forum had a permanent physical location, possibly a room in University House, which CRS and CRS Reps. could associate with the CRS Forum. There was a suggestion that this room could be located near the Careers Service to promote links in this area.

6. Directory of Services

Rob Tanner reported that he had suggested to Stuart Palmer that a list of the research equipment available in Departments across the university should be compiled. This would enable other departments to source research equipment that might be loaned or accessed in relation to their research. The task of compiling this information has been passed to Larry Attwood (Research Support Services). The CRS Forum also suggested that it might be useful for the University to compile a parallel list of staff expertise.

7. Updating the CRS Website

The CRS Forum made several very useful suggestions relating to the updating and development of the CRS website pages. These included:

- a 'noticeboard' section on the front page giving the date and time of the next CRS Forum meeting together with a listing of CRS Reps
- 10 things you didn't know about being a CRS – Frequently Asked Questions

- make sure Web pages are linked from the external as well as the internal University home pages
- put pageowner on each page to give a point of contact for informing of broken links etc.
- campaign to get the CRS website linked directly from departmental pages
- add links to personnel pages, with particular focus on issues such as visas, national insurance information, etc. for overseas CRS
- add links to the relevant careers service information

8. Funding for CRS Training and Development

The CRS Forum members agreed to find out their departmental arrangements for funding training and development for academic staff, PhD students and CRS. This would be reported back to the next meeting of the CRS Forum.

9. Enterprise Fellowship Scheme

Attention was drawn to the literature relating to the Enterprise Fellowship Scheme, recently circulated by the VC. In connection with supporting enterprise, Jenny O'Leary provided information about a workshop for CRS, PhD students and University alumni on 'Starting your own Business' being run on 15 May. Places are limited to 50. More information is available from the Careers Service.

10. A.O.B

The CRS Forum thanked Rob Tanner for his support and commitment over the last two years and wished him well in his new post.

The next meeting of the CRS Forum will be held from 12-2 p.m. on Thursday 27 May 2004.