

CRS Forum 22 Minutes – 27 February 2006

Apologies

Ruth Ayres (CAP), David Bacigalupo (Computer Science), Miguel Juarez (Statistics), Chris Kent (Psychology), Mark Potter (Chemistry),

Present

Shona Agarwal (Medical School), Stephan Bathe (Biological Sciences), Christine Coe (SHSS), Mairi-Ann Cullen (CEDAR), Sarah Dahl, (Institute of Education), Marie Garnett (CAP), Christine Hirst (Centre for Education and Industry), Rachel Maunder (CAP), Jenny O'Leary (Careers).

Chair: Chris Coe

Notes: Mairi Ann Cullen

1 Welcome & Introductions

Chris Coe welcomed everyone to the meeting. Attendees introduced themselves.

2 Notes of the last meeting

Notes of the last meeting were accepted as accurate apart from one query raised about the website address given under the Robert Skills Update.

Action: Marie to check and send round an amendment if necessary. (*Note: I have just tried to access the website from the URL circulated in CRS Forum 21 minutes and all seems to be OK now! MG*)

3 Future Arrangements for CRS Forum

Two issues were discussed under this item.

a) *Title of the CRS Forum*

After discussion, it was agreed to drop the word 'Contract' from the Forum title in order to include colleagues who are no longer on fixed term contracts.

Action: All to note the new title, 'Research Staff Forum'. Jenny and Rachel to ensure the websites are updated with new title.

b) Focus of the Forum

Marie explained that the CRS Forum was set up against a background of uncertainty and change, prior to the European Fixed Term Directive. After an active period, there was a sense that the CRS Forum had now reached a time when it was appropriate to rethink the focus.

There was strong support for the Forum remaining in existence under the new title. Those present considered that it continued to have a useful function as a collective voice for research staff. It was agreed that meetings would be reduced from every two months to once a term.

There was discussion about how best to involve more research staff in the Forum. Marie queried whether Forum meetings should retain their current format or should become more event focussed. Jenny described an annual conference held by Bristol University for its research staff. During discussion, there seemed to be interest in running a half-day event along similar lines.

Action: Jenny to provide Marie with the details of the Bristol Conference programme and Marie to circulate these to representatives. Representatives to discuss the half-day event idea with their colleagues so that this can be discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting.

4 Update from Personnel

Chris welcomed Margot Horsley from the Job Evaluation Framework team who presented an update on the Pay and Grading changes taking place under the Framework Agreement. Margot gave apologies from Donald Beaton.

Margot explained that the University was in the process of discussing the final draft offer of the Framework Agreement with the trades unions. This offer was up on the website. She clarified that research staff were included under the 'Academic' grouping which consists of nine or ten academic role profiles, including Research Only, Teaching Only, Senior Lecturer and Probationary Lecturer. Most research staff would be matched on to a Research Only job profile. In a small number of cases, an individual job match process may be necessary.

Across all university employees, most people will remain where they are on the pay scale or with small adjustments to bring their pay point into line with the new single pay spine. Some staff in areas where there had been historic anomalies would have their pay grade increased and a minority would be 'red circled', meaning they would not receive cost of living increases until their current pay again equalled colleagues in the same grade.

Under the new proposals, there will be annual appraisals for all staff. These will include a performance review, staff development and training and eligibility for merit pay. (Again, full details are on the university website.)

Margot explained that the letter from the Vice-Chancellor recently received by all staff was a holding letter providing information particularly for those who were not union members. If agreement could not be reached with the unions, then the university would approach staff members individually to reach agreement. The Framework Agreement on Pay and Grading would come into effect for all staff from 1 August 2006.

Stephen noted that the AUT President had e-mailed all AUT members with a letter critical of the final draft offer. (For further details, please contact your AUT representative.)

5 Update from Careers

Jenny reported that the fortnightly researcher drop-ins held on Tuesdays 12-2pm were well-attended, particularly by PhD students. Jenny is planning to offer these on a weekly basis from March.

On March 16, there is an event aimed at researchers – *Career planning for researchers* – 9.30-4.30 focusing on career management & options (See the Careers website for further details and booking information:

<http://www.warwick.ac.uk/services/careers.>)

Jenny also reported that she had recently attended a meeting organised by CRAC and the UK Grad project where a wide range of attendees were asked to brainstorm the format and content of a proposed new website for research staff. It is likely that this will be in a portal format and will be organised around four key areas:

- Self-development;
- Opportunity awareness;
- Decision-making;
- Transitions.

The proposal for this development will go to RCUK at the end of week beginning 27 February.

Action: Jenny to keep the Forum updated on this development.

6 A.O.B

a) Roberts Funding for Skills Development

Stephan asked about the distribution of the £55 000 funding for departments, under the Roberts skills development agenda. Marie clarified that this had been allocated across departments on the basis of the number of Grade 1A research staff in post on the census date. Approval from Stuart Palmer was awaited, prior to the funds being disbursed.

b) ESRC Managing Research Projects Project

Mairi Ann reported that Elisabeth Arweck from CEDAR was willing to be contacted as part of this project.

c) Medical School Research Staff Representative

Shona reported that she is leaving Warwick to return to a job in Leicester University. She is therefore seeking a replacement representative for the Forum. The Forum members wished her well in her new job.

7 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 7 June 2006 from 12-2 p.m. in the Microteaching Room, CAP Office (2nd Floor, University House).