

School of Mathematical Sciences
Research Committee
Notes and Actions from Meeting held on 07/11/2017

Present: Mark Jerrum (MJ) (Chair), Pau Figueras (PF), Felix Fischer (FF), Chris Joyner (CJ), Boris Khoruzhenko (BK), John Moriarty (JM), Ivan Tomasic (IT), Franco Vivaldi (FV)

Apologies: Ginestra Bianconi (GB), Sasha Sodin (SS), Jo Young (JY)

Secretary: Elisa Piccaro (EP)

Minute	Summary of Agreed Actions	Who	When	Progress
07.11.17 – 2	If anyone has any idea on how to proceed with the list of aspirational journals they should inform the Chair and/or discuss it at the next committee meeting.	All	Next committee meeting	
07.11.17 – 4 – 1	Clarification is needed about the number of outputs that we may recommend for external review in the REF Dry Run.	Chair	ASAP	
07.11.17 – 4 – 2	Clarification is needed about the way the outputs will have to be submitted to College.	Chair	ASAP	
07.11.17 – 4 – 3	Clarification is needed about the environment statement. Is this needed for this dry run, since we don't know the format of this?	Chair	ASAP	
07.11.17 – 4 – 4	Send the guidance received from College to the Research Committee	EP	ASAP	
07.11.17 – 5 – 1	Make a proposal for the near miss internal scheme to SEG	Chair	Before the next RC	
07.11.17 – 5 – 2	Collect and analyse reviewers' comments on our grant applications and make recommendations to the School	Chair and EP		
07.11.17 – 8 – 1	Can we submit both CDT bids in 2018? And what would the commitment by QMUL be?	Chair	ASAP	

Agenda Item	Reports and Actions	Who	When
1. Minutes of the meeting held on 06 June 2017	REPORTED: The Chair thanks Dudley Starke and Rainer Klages for their contribution in the committee and welcomes FF and FV, both joining the committee this academic year.		

	There was one action (06.06.2017- 8) from the previous meeting in June. The Chair reported that this has been addressed. All three initial EPSRC CDT ideas have been submitted to College.		
2. Matters Arising 07/11.6.7 – 2	<p>REPORTED: FF queried why there is no action next to the Aspirational Journal agenda item discussed in the previous meeting.</p> <p>DISCUSSED: The Chair explains that this discussion has been going on for over a year now. This is something that is important for the REF and crucial for the academics to know what journals they should aim at publishing in. Unfortunately the REF panel is not releasing a list, because presumably this is not how the outputs should be judged. The School has tried in the past to create such list(s) but failed to finalise a strong, short and unique list. The research groups had different ideas and this lead to different conclusions. It proves difficult to agree on one list. The metrics given such as SNIP, SJR also give misleading results.</p> <p>IT commented that one of the problems may be that academics are not prepared to nominate top journals knowing that they will not have the opportunity to publish in.</p> <p>The Chair added that another problem is related to the wide range of research areas in the School. There is a list of about 100 journals, and we would like this list to be shorter.</p> <p>ACTION: If anyone has any idea on how to proceed with the list of aspirational journals they should inform the Chair and/or discuss it at the next committee meeting.</p>	All	Next committee meeting
3. Research Manager Report	<p>REPORTED: The Research Manager highlighted what she included in the report, with particular emphasis on the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open Access: The School is doing well as a whole and academics are engaging with EP to make sure their records on Elements are compliant. All records are complaint at the moment. - Research Enabling Fund. The committee was reminded about this faculty incentive and the need to spend the funds before 31 July 2018. Faculty is looking at ways to allow PIs to spend the funds beyond the financial year but for the moment this is not allowed. - Research Support Fund. The committee was reminded of this incentive also offered by the Faculty of Science and Engineering. This is usually conditionally awarded to large bids (>£750) and EPSRC New Investigator Awards bids. The School has secured 3 studentships funded by this scheme so far. 		
4. REF	<p>REPORTED: The Chair reported that the School has received instructions about the 2018 REF dry run by College only a few hours before the committee</p>		

meeting and that the guidance document comprises 11 pages, is very bureaucratic and there has not been enough time to learn the details within.

It appears that we will have to submit 6 outputs for each REF eligible member of staff.

All outputs submitted must have been accepted for publication already.

The Chair added that it is unclear if the School will select papers to send to the external and how. It appears that we have been asked to send the outputs to externals, and then review them internally.

The Chair asked the committee how we should proceed with this, with the aim of optimising the outcome of the REF.

DISCUSSED:

The Chair commented that it would be counterproductive to submit 6 publications for each academic because we already know about many 3* papers, and we do not want to swamp the external reviewers with so many publications. Academics who have real problems judging their own publications should be encouraged to submit 6 papers and get the external reviewer's feedback.

BK commented that in last year's research review we concluded that we are not able to judge some of the outputs, and this is why the external review would be good, to have feedback on those publications and in differentiating between 3* and 4* outputs. Therefore, some academics would actually benefit from submitting 6 outputs and getting them all externally reviewed. This is a sensitive matter. Also, there is little expertise internally to judge certain research areas. However, submitting many papers does seem to be counterproductive and it will take too much of the external reviewers' time.

The Chair and BK agreed that when asking academics to submit their outputs, they should be told that quantity is not important in this case and they should submit the best quality outputs that they have so far.

The Chair reminded the committee that the ultimate aim is to optimise the product, which is to have the best ranking that the School can achieve in the REF. The purpose of the dry run still remains to judge the REF readiness of the School.

The Chair also pointed out that since we may have new outputs generated this time, we need to a process of scoring these new outputs and that we will probably adopt the same process as last year: Self scoring, scores by HoGs and then the scores are reviewed by DoR and HoS.

We will also need to select which go to externals. Strategically we will need to allocate outputs to the external reviewers to where there is less expertise within the School. It is also very probable that we will only get 4 reviewers.

PF commented that in relativity it is clear which papers are 4* and which ones are not.

The committee also talked about submission of outputs by academics who have now left the School and how we would make a choice about the outputs to submit.

	<p>Furthermore, the College asks us to make a judgment about papers that the School may want to submit to different Units of Assessment. BK explained that this should be done strategically as it is a matter of maximising the School reputation. Should we get some outputs to be reviewed elsewhere? There is only a small fraction of papers that fall outside the maths panel. However, it is almost certain that the maths panel will not be able to judge these well, whereas for example a computer science panel will most probably assign a 4*.</p> <p>The Chair reassured the committee that the School will be keeping the above problems in mind when submitting to the College and will query some of the aspects of the guidance provided, as detailed in the actions below.</p> <p>ACTION – 1: Clarification is needed about the number of outputs that we may recommend for external review.</p> <p>ACTION – 2: Clarification is needed about the way the outputs will have to be submitted to College.</p> <p>ACTION – 3: Clarification is needed about the environment statement. Is this needed for this dry run, since we don't know the format of this?</p> <p>ACTION – 4: Send the guidance received by College to the Research Committee</p>	<p>Chair</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>Chair</p> <p>EP</p>	<p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p> <p>ASAP</p>
<p>5. Grant support</p>	<p>REPORTED:</p> <p>The Chair asked the committee if they think that the School is giving enough support to academics applying for research grants, especially on support given to unsuccessful proposals.</p> <p>DISCUSSED:</p> <p>PF commented that experience is important in securing research grants and that it is a building process.</p> <p>FV talked about a possible scheme in use in a different Institution where, if a proposal is classified as a 'near miss' (to be defined, but probably the grant was close to be funded but did not get funded in the end), funds can be allocated internally to ensure that the research can be delivered. The PI has to resubmit the proposal to a different funder.</p> <p>BK thought that this was indeed a good idea and that we should take a proposal to SEG.</p> <p>For EPSRC and ERC grants we can define the 'near miss'. However, for charities this may be a problem.</p> <p>BK added that reading reviewers' reports is at times rather illuminating. Negative comments from external reviewers are good to understand why the proposal has not been funded. He proposed to collect these comments and learn from them. Someone should be looking at all of them and make general recommendations for the School.</p>		

	<p>The Chair added that this would also serve in making the academics better reviewers.</p> <p>ACTION – 1: Make a proposal for the near miss internal scheme to SEG</p> <p>ACTION – 2: Collect reviewer’s comments and make recommendations to the School</p>	<p>Chair</p> <p>Chair and EP</p>	<p>Before the next research committee meeting</p>
6. Workshops	<p>REPORTED:</p> <p>The Chair reported that we had problems in the School in organising workshops. Going forward we will have a checklist with processes to follow throughout. Start organising early and get people involved at an early stage is key in these case.</p>		
7. Impact	<p>REPORTED:</p> <p>JM gave an overview about the approach to impact within the School. Information about REF impact can be found on the intranet. Academics who think that their research can potentially lead to REF impact are asked to fill a questionnaire. This may clarify some aspects of the project and give more details about the strength of a possible impact case. Meetings can be arranged to talk about updates, details or if academics want to ask for extra resources to deliver the impact.</p> <p>Only mature projects will be included in REF dry run.</p> <p>At the moment the School has 5 impact cases and they have been recently evaluated by the faculty. A continuing effort is needed to improve the case studies that will be submitted to the REF.</p> <p>DISCUSSED:</p> <p>The committee wondered how many impact cases we will be asked to submit for REF 2021. This is not clear yet as HEFCE has not released full guidelines on this.</p> <p>BK commented that since the Shool has grown in recent years and now we may be returning 100% of the REF eligible staff, we may need to submit more than 5 case studies. Perhaps we will be required to submit 6 or 7? We do not know at the moment.</p>		
8. Possible bid for CDT in 2018	<p>REPORTED:</p> <p>The Chair reported that there are two active bids at the moment. The first one is in Algebra (QMUL, City, Kent and UEA). Interested people have met and we have notes of the meeting so this is advancing well. The second is the Combinatorics, games and discrete optimisation (QMUL and LSE).</p>		

	<p>One of the open questions is whether we will be able to recruit well in these areas given that 90% of the students will need to be UK.</p> <p>DISCUSSED</p> <p>BK thinks that there should be no shortage of students in these two areas.</p> <p>The Chair added that match funding should be about 50% and strong industrial sponsorship is crucial (google, IBM, Microsoft).</p> <p>BK explained that the CDT is a matter of reputation, combined with a large research budget. We need to choose the right area and try to make a successful bid. If we do not bid we may have to face negative consequences from College.</p> <p>The Chair and FF explained that the bid in EECS is completely unrelated. Combinatorics tried to arrange a meeting. Applying together with computer science would make the bid more applied.</p> <p>The Chair also reported of a possible conflict of interest for the DoR to be involved in one of the two bids, there seems to be a conflict of interest.</p> <p>BK wondered whether the faculty would be inclined to submit both bids, and what QMUL commitment would be. Given that the call will open only a few weeks before the deadline, we should try to find this out soon.</p> <p>The Chief executive of EPSRC will be coming to QMUL and LSE in November. We should find out more at those meetings.</p> <p>ACTION – 1 Can we submit both bids in 2018? And what would the commitment by QMUL be?</p>	Chair	ASAP
<p>9. Date of next meeting and AOB</p>	<p>The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 27 February 2018, 14:00 – 16:00, Room E304</p> <p>AOB</p> <p>BK reminded the committee of the document that HoSAG has written about future appointment strategy. This is now with faculty for approval. There will be 8 appointments in priority areas such as statistics where the School has struggled to appoint in the past. Also number theory and mathematical biology. If not appointed we will have two more lectureships.</p> <p>BK also pointed out that this year PGT numbers are down and this will impact the budget by about £350k. Also, with the new Principal coming to QMUL, we are asked to generate a big surplus.</p> <p>FV commented that the teaching in the School is not efficient. This means that academics have less time to apply for funds, etc. There is an under investment in the data structure.</p>		

	IT agreed and added that this and administration duties impact on the research.		
--	---	--	--