

**Notes from a meeting of the  
School Policy and Resources Committee  
December 15th, 2008**

**Present**

Tracey Dart  
Jane Jacobs  
Dick Kroon  
Sue Maclachlan  
Mat Williams  
Sue Rigby  
Mark Rounsevell  
Andy Shepherd  
Martin Siegert (Chair)  
Lynn Staeheli  
John Underhill  
Iain Woodhouse

1. **Apologies** were received from Sandy Tudhope and Wyn Williams. Mat Williams and Jane Jacobs deputised.
2. **Minutes** of the meeting of November 5th 2008 were approved.
3. **Matters arising and review of actions**
  - i. The Rock Physics post. The Memorandum of Understanding is now with the legal team at the British Geological Survey, so recruitment can't proceed until the School get final clearance. The HoS asked that the Advert and Further Information be prepared so that the School can begin the recruitment process as soon as approval is given.
  - ii. UKBA new regulations on migrant workers. The SA gave an update on two important aspects of the changes:- (a) The School has a responsibility to report *unauthorised* absence of sponsored staff (i.e. migrant workers), and in order to do this the School needs an effective system to report *authorised* absence of all staff (e.g. sick leave, family leave, annual leave, working from home or working away). Having looked at the ways other Schools are doing this, the SA proposed adopting a system in use by Biological Sciences, for its simplicity. Members of staff will be obliged to log absence into a web-based system via EASE. The HoS and SA will have overall access. (b) Managers of sponsored staff (HoS and PIs) have new responsibilities, and the SA will meet them individually to advise.  
New regulations to be introduced re. students from overseas will be particularly challenging.
  - iii. The School website. The HoS has taken note of comments sent, proposed that the School needs a member of staff with overall responsibility for leading improvements and development of the website. The SA will present a case at the February meeting of SPARC.
4. **Chair Remarks**
  - (a) **Staff News**

- i. Sue Rigby was congratulated by everyone on her appointment as Assistant Principal (with responsibility for PGT) from January 09. The HoS thanked her, on behalf of the School, for her achievements in getting the TO into shape.
  - ii. Ondrej Masek has been appointed to the Lectureship in Engineering Systems assessment of biochar and soil carbon storage, and joins the School on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2009.
  - iii. Magnus Hagdorn has been appointed to the Computing Officer (Specialist Services) post, starting in February 2009.
  - iv. Clare Woulds, former PhD student and current NERC Research Fellow, has been appointed to a Lectureship at the University of Leeds.
  - v. Sabbatical Leave has been approved for Charlie Withers, Patience Cowie, Raja Ganeshram and Jane Jacobs.
- (b) Budget: problems with 09/10 uplift There will be budgetary challenges next year as early indications suggest an increase of 0.5% for 09/10, which is effectively a 3-4% cut.
  - (c) Reminder of SPARC Away-Day: Wednesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. This will take place in the Bryce Room at Salisbury Green. The day will be dedicated to the School's facilities and research strategy.
  - (d) RAE results are announced on Wednesday, 17<sup>th</sup> December. Ian Main (Acting HoS), Iain Woodhouse (Research Strategy), and Tracey Dart will inform SPARC. The news will be in the public domain the following day.

## 5. **Annual Academic Plan**

The Head of School reviewed the plan, and SPARC members suggested targets (which CSE have requested) and other amendments for each section. The SA noted these for inclusion in the final version. The Business Development Executive and SAGES Assistant Director will be asked to assist with the KE section. The HoS asked SPARC to send any further suggestions to the SA before January 6<sup>th</sup>. Deadline for final submission to CSE is January 9<sup>th</sup>

## 6. **Review of Fees Structure for non-laboratory Postgraduate Research Students**

Jane Jacobs, Deputy Director of Postgrad Recruitment, presented a paper proposing that GeoSciences PGR students from overseas should pay non-laboratory fees, as opposed to laboratory fees. The difference for both MRes and PhD is around £3k, and Edinburgh is currently one of the most expensive places to conduct postgraduate research in human geography and related areas. There has been a drop in recruitment and there is evidence of 'drift' from the School to other social science groups within CHSS because of the fee difference.

SPARC agreed that this was worth pursuing (for PhD only at this stage). For Masters courses, Jane Jacobs and the Deputy HoGO (Chris Merchant) will meet and prepare a paper for the February meeting of SPARC.

## 7. **Two Human Geography Posts**

Following due procedure and School-wide consultation, SPARC approved the cases for recruitment of two posts - a Lecturer in Historical Geographies of Science and a Lecturer in Urban Geographies of the Global South. The Business Case for both positions emphasised that these have a neutral financial

impact due to the departure (in November 08) of a member of the HGRG with a high teaching load, and to an 'open' HG post in the School's budget forecast. The HoS suggested postponing recruitment until RAE results are known, but did not anticipate any problems.

## 8. Case for replacement RF, Ion Microprobe Unit

The HoSTS presented the case for the replacement of a Research Fellow in Micro-Analysis in EMMAC. SPARC commended the excellence of this facility, recognised the urgent need for another member of staff given the current workload and also backlog of work, but were unconvinced that School resources should directly fund the required 65% component of the position. SPARC discussed the complex nature of the NERC contract, commented that staff should not be required to work long hours and at weekends to keep the facility running, and stressed the urgency of finding a new way to finance and manage the facility (one topic of the 21<sup>st</sup> January Away-Day).

SPARC approved the recruitment of the post, but with the proviso that this is largely funded within the facility, details of which will be worked out at the 21<sup>st</sup> January meeting.

## 9. A.O.B.

(i) A paper (from Hugh Sinclair) outlining modifications to the current School policy offering Research Fellows with two consecutive Fellowships an academic teaching position, was tabled. The HoS asked RSG to discuss this at their next meeting and report their recommendations to the February meeting of SPARC.

(ii) John Underhill raised the subject of credit for Co-PIs and Co-Is on Grant Proposals. The outcome was that this was approved and that the practicalities of its implementation was to be led by CSE and ERI.

### Action points

Date	Minute	Action	Action by	Deadline	completed
December 15th	3 i	Prepare Advert and Further Information for Rock Physics post	ESPRG (Ian Main)	asap	
December 15th	3iii	Prepare case for web development post	SA	SPARC Feb 18th	
December 15th	5	Further suggestions for Academic Plan	SPARC members	January 6th	
December 15th	6	Fees for overseas Masters students paper	Jane Jacobs Chris Merchant	SPARC Feb 18th	
December 15th	7	Prepare adverts and further information for 2 Human Geog posts	HGRG	asap	
December 15th	8	Seek permission to recruit replacement EMMAC RA	SA	asap	
December 15th	9	Paper on policy for Double Research Fellows	Research Strategy Group	SPARC Feb 18th	

*The next meeting of SPARC will be the Away-Day on January 21<sup>st</sup> 2008 in the Bryce Room, Salisbury Greent*