



**DEPARTMENT OF PATHOLOGY  
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE**

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**SENIOR POLICY GROUP**

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 21 April 2009

**Present:** Prof Andrew Wyllie (Chair)  
Prof Nabeel Affara  
Prof Peter Collins  
Prof John Trowsdale  
Dr Paul Digard  
Dr Stacey Efstathiou  
Dr Christine Watson  
Ms Frances McLoughlin (Secretary)  
Mrs Sandra Nowotny (Minutes)  
Mr Alan Kirby (*for item 4.2*)

**Apologies:** Prof Colin Hughes (on sabbatical)

**1. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2009**

The minutes of the meeting were agreed

**2. Matters arising**

**2.1 MRC Skills Gap Awards**

The deadline for an application from the MRC Skills Gap Awards for departmental support for bioinformatics was the end of April. After further consideration it was not felt that the Department would have a good case to make.

**3. Report from the Head of Department**

**3.1 Research Assessment Exercise**

The financial implications of RAE 2008 have now been announced. Overall Cambridge came second to Oxford in the latest RAE with the gap widening a little further. The financial impact in respect of the Department's performance was expected to be disseminated by the School in the near future.

**3.2 CIF equipment funding**

A funding award had been made for the Aperio slide scanning microscope in a joint bid with PDN. It was noted that both departments had extensive commitments to the teaching of histology and histopathology and currently collections of slide material, accumulated over the years for teaching, were

nearly all available only on glass and non-digitised images. The new microscope would enable the use of whole slide images in teaching on the web. The Department had also been successful in its bid for securing funding for the Virology microscope, Flow Cytometry equipment and for the costs of the telephone upgrade.

### 3.3 New Professorial Posts

The closing date for the Chair in Molecular Pathology had now passed. Five applications had been received, all from outside the UK.

### 3.4 Effects of the financial climate

The Committee was informed that all chest-funded posts now required School approval before filling. Approval was also required for amendments to posts.

### 3.5 Electricity

The Chair reminded members that the Department was now working to an electricity target and would be charged for any usage that exceeded this target. The Finance Committee monitored electricity usage and the last few months had seen a sharp rise, largely attributed to the BSU humidifiers.

## 4. **Policy Matters**

### 4.1 Space

- (i) A request had been made for clarity in respect of the departmental position on the provision of space to academics where grants were held outside of the Department. It was acknowledged that this issue was not straightforward in that there was a need to balance the research interests of the Department (and the need to attract good people) against the financial implications of providing space, staff time and laboratory equipment to individuals who presently were not attracting grant support to the Department.
- (ii) As a general principle it was agreed that space could not be allocated where funding was not available but that each case needed to be considered on its own merits. Where there was a strong case to accommodate someone within the Department it was agreed that it would be necessary to receive compensation for the laboratory space provided (CIMR had a set bench fee) and that the purchasing of laboratory equipment and consumables would need to go through the appropriate channels.

### 4.2 Grants held outside of the Department

- (i) Following on from the discussion about allocation of space to individuals who held funding outside of the Department, further clarification was sought on the departmental view of grants being held externally. It was felt that there was no clear policy on this.

- (ii) The Committee heard that the Cambridge Institute for Medical Research (CIMR) was also looking at this issue, the general view being that the Institute should hold the awards for those individuals who worked there but, where this was not the case, to charge a bench fee of £1,000 per annum. Reallocation of charges in this way was not straightforward particularly when individuals moved in the middle of the grant. with the administration of grants being very rigid. On the last occasion it had taken 4 months to move money. It was noted that currently there were members of the Department that held grants in Pathology but occupied space elsewhere, although it was likely that this would be addressed in the future.
- (iii) This issue presented real difficulties for the Department. As a university department, purchases of consumables and equipment for research were VAT exempt whereas this was not necessarily the case for other research bodies. The purchasing of consumables through the Department, to qualify for VAT exemption, from a grant award held by another institute / facility might not hold up to scrutiny in the event of audit and would pose significant difficulties for the Department and the University.
- (iv) It was agreed that there should be a departmental policy on this issue together with a clear statement of what people were expected to pay in terms of bench fees and other associated costs, with some room for flexibility, and it was agreed that the Chair would draft a paper to bring back to the next meeting.

*Action: Chair to draft a policy statement for consideration at the next meeting*

## **5. Report from the Finance Committee**

- (i) The issue of shortfalls in grants was raised and in particular, how this information was being disaggregated to grant holders. It was advised that Laboratory Managers had been asked to go through individual grants with the relevant PI so that appropriate budgeting could be undertaken in advance of the grant end date, avoiding, where possible, any overspend.
- (ii) The Committee held the view that where an overspend in a grant award could not be avoided money should be vired from other sources including donation accounts or divisional funds. It was acknowledged that in a small number of cases this might also be impossible, particularly in those awards that had less than 6 months to run. It was agreed that grants that fell into this category should be reported at the next meeting.

*Action: Departmental Secretary: Academic Services*

## **6. Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 19 May 2009 at 9.30am.