Present: Professor Ross McAree (Chair), Mr Aleks Atrens, Professor David St John, Prof David Mee, Associate Professor Rowan Truss, Professor Jin Zou. Ms Katie Gollschewski.

Apologies: Associate Professor Han Huang, Professor Paul Lever.

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2010 were approved. The minutes of the meeting held 14 February 2011 were approved.

1. Scholarships
Members noted the School did very well in the first scholarship rounds in 2011. The School’s nominees received one IPRS (out of 3 nominations) and two UQI (50/50) (out of 2 nominations) and three APA (out of 3 nominations) scholarships.

Members noted that only one of the APA nominees was a strong candidate, however all three nominated students received APA scholarships. This indicates that the school needs to target domestic applicants.

After the February scholarship round, one academic questioned the School’s ranking process after a CSC applicant was unsuccessful in receiving a fee waiver. Members noted that the CSC program has caused some confusion within the School and that it was difficult to rank Chinese students who were just completing their Bachelor degree. Members agreed that the current process, to only accept exceptional candidates, was valid and that if at least three committee members returned a similar rank then this was an indication that the system was working.

Members noted that the decision to recommend a student for admission to the program and nominate for a scholarship remains with the School.

It was recommended that –
(i) A list of CSC applicants be created and analysed (applications, scholarships offered, and commencements) and submitted to the committee at the next meeting; 
(ii) Data be provided to the committee on the cost and income per student over the duration of their candidature.

2. Conference
The postgraduate student conference date has been finalized as 6 June 2011 and will be held in Hawken Building, spread across five rooms. Each engineering school will contribute $2000 towards the conference (excluding prizes), creating a budget of $10,000 (the Faculty will not be making a contribution). Emails have been sent to students and academics in the participating schools confirming this date. Members agreed that the Head of School should contact School staff to encourage attendance.

3. Vivas
A set of guidelines on the objectives, composition and structure of an oral examination have been created by the Graduate School to help guide the organisation of these examinations. Members noted that a copy of the School guidelines would be submitted to the committee at the next meeting.

4. Milestone Chairs
Peer review is central to the University of Queensland’s RHD milestone process. In almost all circumstances the advisory team rightly acts as the candidate’s advocate, so it is essential that the Milestone Chair be impartial.

The Chair is an independent academic not involved in a candidate’s research. The Chair is the Head of School’s representative on the milestone review committee and is responsible for ensuring due process is followed, that the highest academic standards are adhered to and there is sufficient body of evidence presented by the candidate to give confidence that they are on track to complete their research higher degree in the nominal time (2 years for an MPhil and 3 years for a PhD).

By taking on this role, the Chair is committing to see a candidate through to the end of their candidature, acting as chair for three milestones and through the thesis examination process as Chair of Examiners. The School places emphasis on timely completion which is reflected in milestone reviews.
A list of clusters will be circulated to members with the minutes.

It was recommended that –

(i) A list of ‘clusters’ be created and advertised to staff;
(ii) when a candidate’s milestone approaches, the principal advisor nominate a review chair from a cluster other than their own; and
(iii) all review chairs be approved by the Postgraduate Coordinator.

5. **English Language policy**

The School identified students who might benefit from English language assistance and these students were approached to undertake one of the English language assistance programs offered by the University. Three students are completing WRIT6001 in semester 1 and another two students are undertaking an English for Academic Communication (EAC) course. While the EAC course is free, and the Research Committee is currently funding the student’s WRIT6001 tuition fees ($2907.00 total). The other action items are currently being pursued, namely identifying the ‘cost of a student’ and meeting with ICTE staff to discuss the EAC course.

6. **Information sessions**

Members noted that the School will be taking part in an RHD Information Evening organised by the UQ Advantage Team in April for honours and high achieving undergraduate students designed to provide students with information about research higher degree options at UQ.

7. **Skills building workshops**

A list of training programs will be made available to enrolled students on the School’s website. It will include seminars and worships offered by the Graduate School, Student Services, Library and the School. A training program list was created and members requested that several additional items be added before circulation to students.

8. **Standard Living Allowance for research students**

At the last meeting members expressed concern over pay equity between current and incoming China Scholarship Council (CSC) students as the CSC stipend rate had increased. The School had received advice from the Faculty that it was not possible to reduce the pay rate for existing students as these students has received and accepted a binding offer. A clause will now be included in all top-up scholarships that ‘... the total value of this scholarship will equate to the APA rate (or insert appropriate rate here), therefore the top-up scholarship may decrease in line with subsequent increases in the base scholarship’.

The School will attach a letter of request for a TUAP to the Dean of the Graduate School with each eligible application and existing China Scholarship Council applications be checked for TUAP eligibility and subsequent requests forwarded to the Graduate School if appropriate. Details of the TUAP scheme will be included in the email sent to potential advisors when they are completing the School Recommendation form.

10. **ARC consultation notice**

The ARC has posted a consultation notice inviting observations on any aspect of the ERA (but not, by implication, on the journal rankings, which are being considered separately). A copy of the notice is located at: [http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2012/era_consultation_march11.htm](http://www.arc.gov.au/era/era_2012/era_consultation_march11.htm).

The form that ARC provides directs those who offer observations to a number of specific issues, but there is also the opportunity to comment on any issue (through an answer to “question 8, General Comments”). The final date for receipt of comments was Thursday 7 April 2011. The Chair formulated a response on behalf of the School.

9. **School Operational Plan**

The School’s Operational Plan was created by the School Manager and Head of School and comments were being sought from the committee regarding the Discovery section. Under the Discovery heading, members discussed the below goals:
- Increase the percentage (average number of publications) of staff who have published at least 3 DEEWR publications in the last three years (refer to School Based Performance Framework)

Members noted that three publications over a three year period was not arduous, however output could be limited by the project (e.g. confidentiality). Members agreed that it was important that the school recognise other forms of engagement, as external collaboration is a strength of the school. It was noted that external engagement usually has a financial trail that is reflected on the Q-Index.

- Increase Category 1 funding to reach Stage C of the SBPF by 2013 (= $50,000 per level B and above staff member) Increase the amount of Category 2 and 3 funding to reach Stage A of the SBPF by 2013 (= $140,000 per level B and above staff member)

Members noted that the materials group in the school has a higher success rate than other groups for receiving ARC funding and discussed options for increasing the school’s overall success rate. Members noted that in previous years Prof Graham Schaffer would organise a presentation session for all staff compiling grants and that the preparation for this presentation was useful. It was also noted that other schools use readership schemes, but these can be difficult to manage as the people with the knowledge to provide critical feedback are often working on their own submission and do not have the time to assist. Members also considered holding workshops or distributing a successful application to staff to be used as a guide.

- Review and further develop the school’s research strengths/themes and provide support for emerging research strengths

Members noted that the school needs to be aggressive in advertising for laureate and fellowships.

- Actively support RHD students’ timely progress toward attaining milestones and award of PhD/MPhil including through publication and engagement with other research groups

Members noted that the School’s Milestone Guidelines have resulted in our cohort progressing well through the milestone process and that the publication output of our students was been addressed through writing workshops.

- Enrol top quality RHD students

Members noted that it was a challenge to enrol top domestic undergraduate students into the RHD programs and that many undergraduate students are not aware of the research that is occurring in the school. Members agreed that undergraduate students should be encouraged to talk to numerous academics to find out what research is occurring and that 4th year thesis students should be attending seminars in their research area as it will aid in the completion of their thesis and may also increase their interest in undertaking a research higher degree. Members determined that the School should aim to enrol 10 APA, 30-40 ARC/CRC etc and 50 international students per year by 2013.

The committee has been actively monitoring and benchmarking our research student status three times per year which has highlighted areas that need addressing. Members suggested incorporating these goals into staff annual reviews so that it is easy to identify and address areas of concern.

It was recommended that –

(i) The committee members’ comments be forwarded to the School Manager for inclusion in the School Operational Plan.

10. Research Day

Members noted that it had been proposed that the School hold a strategic research day and that it was proposed that this event be held at the end of semester. Members agreed to discuss the event at a later meeting.