Present: Professor Ross McAree (Chair), Mr Aleks Atrens, Associate Professor Han Huang, Professor David Mee, Professor David St John, Associate Professor Rowan Truss, Professor Jin Zou. Mrs Kim Lamb.

Apologies: Professor Paul Lever.

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2011 were approved.

1. CSC Scholarships

Members noted that since 2008, the School had received 44 applications from CSC eligible students. Out of the 44 students, 12 (27%) had not been offered scholarship support. None of these students received other funding and as such had not commenced studies at UQ. Of the 32 students (73%) who had been offered tuition scholarships, 13 (41%) commenced; 7 (22%) would commence soon; 11 (34%) had withdrawn for various reasons; and 1 (3%) had not yet accepted the scholarship offer.

Members noted that approximately 45% of the CSC applicants were from Central South University, 16% were from Northeastern University, 9% from Chongqing University and 30% were from other Chinese institutions (no significant numbers).

Professor Zou suggested that the withdrawal rate in earlier years might have been higher due to the University’s deadline which had since been changed to an earlier date to allow the application processing to occur in a more timely manner. He also said that he had visited three Chinese universities with the Executive Dean to pursue additional links, including a ‘3+1+1’ program which might allow students to do the integrated BE/ME then move to a research higher degree or coursework masters (e.g. MEngSc). It was suggested that SCUT students might also be targeted for this program.

It was resolved –

that a report be run on the CSC applicants to determine their university of origin and acceptance/withdrawal information.

2. Conference

Members noted that the Engineering Postgraduate Conference Organising Committee announced that Dr. John Wright would be the keynote speaker at the 2011 conference. Mr Atrens reported that the number of registrations was now 86, including 38 from the School. The program would be centered around 8 themes and some discussion was required to appropriately align prizes along the themes.

3. Vivas

A set of guidelines on the objectives, composition and structure of an oral examination had been created to help guide the organisation of these examinations (adapted from the Graduate School guidelines). A copy of the School guidelines was distributed to members along with the agenda papers. Members noted that these guidelines would be incorporated into the next version of the RHD handbook. Three students had opted for the viva to date.

4. Milestone Chairs

Members noted the draft guidelines on milestone chairs which had been circulated with the agenda papers. It was proposed that potential chairs be organised into clusters: dynamics and control, materials and structures, fluids and hypersonics, geothermal and energy, design and education, and mining.

The key principles were to (i) put steps in place to ensure that chair of examiners was independent from the research group (and part of another cluster) and (ii) add to the academic rigour of the process.
4. **Milestone Chairs (cont’d)**

Members discussed the clusters and noted that some clusters could be further divided (e.g. materials could be divided into composites, powder metallurgy, etc). Some members expressed concern that the requirement to appoint a chair from another cluster might increase the workload of the chair as they would not necessarily be expert enough to adjudicate on student progress. There was also a degree of overlap between clusters which could cause some potential confusion. It was agreed that the clusters needed further review, bearing in mind that the key principles. It was also suggested that the Chair should be from within the School, with staff from other schools or institutes serving as the ‘independent academic’ if their expertise was required.

It was noted that once these were finalised, a workshop would be run for staff.

It was resolved –

that members review the proposed clusters and circulate changes to the Secretary.

5. **Assessment of ARC Grant applications – Confidentiality**

The 2012 funding rules for ARC grant applications have been changed with respect to provisions relating to the confidentiality of information provided in a proposal. The funding rules for 2012 explicitly stated that the ARC gave no undertaking to keep confidential any information provided in a proposal.

From a patent perspective, this meant that the information in a proposal would be regarded as prior art and potentially rendering a subsequently filed patent application not novel.

In the interim, it has been proposed that ARC applicants discuss any concerns about the information contained in their application and the inability of the ARC to assess this under confidentiality with the Faculty’s MICD, Mr Howard Leemon. Options included revising the proposal or seek to protect significant IP prior to the submission.

Further to a Go8 meeting on 12 April 2011, the ARC advised that it would be acceptable to mark proposals ‘commercial-in-confidence’ where researchers, on the advice of MICDs, consider this to be appropriate.

6. **Intra-Faculty Challenge Project Scheme (IFCP)**

The Faculty of Engineering, Architecture & Information Technology announced the commencement of the new Intra-Faculty Challenge Project Scheme (IFCP) and called for expressions of interest by 6 May 2011. The purpose of the Scheme was to support researchers to undertake highly innovative and potentially transformational research that examines the “big questions” and address major world issues. Research projects which linked existing EAIT, UQ and Australian research strengths and built critical mass with new capacity for interdisciplinary, collaborative approaches to address the most challenging and significant research problems was the focus of the scheme.

A primary objective of the EAIT Intra-Faculty Challenge Project Scheme was to provide seed funding for the development of an application for the funding of a major project such as an ARC Centre of Excellence (CoE), ARC Special Research Initiative (SRI), a Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) or a large ARC Linkage grant.

Members noted that the initiative had a very early closing date and that it coincided with the due dates for other major funding activities. Additional information on the purpose would have been useful.
7. **UQ Postdoctoral Fellowships**

The UQ Postdoctoral Research Fellowships timeline had been adjusted in response to comments received at Research Committee, delays due to the scheme review, and to ensure the deadline did not conflict with the ARC Discovery Early Career Researcher Award (DECRA). The timeline this year was as follows:

- Applications Open: 28 April 2011
- Close in Schools/Centres: 20 June 2011
- Schools refer applications to Faculties/Institutes for assessment: 4 July 2011
- Faculties/Institutes submit recommended applications to R&ID: 5 August 2011
- R&ID to PVC(R&I) for endorsement: 12 August 2011.
- Announcement of outcomes: mid – late August.

9. **Research Higher Degree Recruitment**

A proposal for recruiting domestic research higher degree applicants, prepared by the student representative, was circulated to the Committee for discussion. The proposal had been developed in response to the School’s operational plan and mainly focussed on increasing the visibility of a PhD as a viable career path through various communication plans to increase awareness of research, and providing long term competitiveness in the workplace.

Several mechanisms were proposed including workshops and information sessions, inviting later year students to the Postgraduate Conference and the provision of direct information to students at the end of Year 3 as well as involving the student societies.

It was further suggested that the incorporation of research topics into undergraduate lectures might increase the relevance of research. Another suggestion included ensuring relevant web sites contained up to date information, in particular the UQResearchers page.

It was agreed that these should be included in the School’s operational plan.

10. **Benchmarks**

Members reviewed the School’s quarterly benchmarks.

11. **Postgraduate Supervision Conference**

A/Professor Truss reported on his recent attendance at the Postgraduate Supervision Conference in Melbourne. He noted that UQ’s processes were very good compared to other universities’ processes and that the milestone processes appear to have eliminated some of the issues still faced by other (smaller) universities.

12. **English Language Pilot**

The Chair reported that three new RHD students were enrolled in WRIT6001 (an English language writing course offered through the Faculty of Arts) and another three were enrolled in the University-funded ICTE course. He stated that he and the School Manager met with Ms Mary Cole from ICTE who indicated that ICTE could develop a specific module for engineering students, either as part of the University-funded program, or alternatively, through a more specific module designed with input from engineering staff. The Chair would discuss this further with the Associate Dean (Academic) and report back to a later meeting of the Committee.