Present: Professor Ross McAree (Chair), Professor David St John, Associate Professor Rowan Truss, Dr Vincent Wheatley, Dr Saiied Aminossadati, Mr John Varghese, Ms Katie Gollschewski (Secretary), Ms Viviane Crosthwaite (A/Secretary).

Apologies: Mrs Kim Lamb, Professor Jin Zou.

1. ARC Funding

Members noted that School staff performed very well in the latest round of ARC Grant outcomes for funding to commence in 2012. It was noted that:

- Eight projects involving staff from the School were awarded ARC Discovery projects to commence funding in 2012, which comprised an impressive 40% of the Faculty total.
- Three projects involving staff from the School were awarded ARC Linkage Infrastructure, Equipment and Facilities projects to commence funding in 2012.
- One project involving staff from the School was awarded an ARC Linkage project to commence funding in 2012.

The School was also successful in receiving funding for future fellowships and DECRA. Members congratulated staff who received funding and noted that the School performance was impressive, receiving 40% of the funding received by EAIT.

2. UQ Career Advantage PhD program and Milestones

Members endorsed the School’s implementation plan and agreed that the UQ Career Advantage PhD program should be incorporated into the milestone process and recorded onto the Thesis Development plan.

Members discussed the current Milestone process and the changes introduced in the new Milestone Guidelines. Members noted that the confirmation form is too long, with too much focus on assessing items separately (e.g. report, oral and interview). Members noted that the form is always completed by hand and lacks any record of general discussion (usually it contains cryptic comments). While members felt there were too many forms involved in the process, they acknowledged that the process is a mechanism for providing feedback to students. Members recommended that the School’s evaluation forms be updated and submitted to the committee at the next meeting.

Members noted the committee would need to hold information sessions in January regarding the new Milestone Guidelines. The Student Handbook and Milestone Guidelines would be mailed to staff with a memo outlining any changes, and students would be asked to collect a copy from the School office.

Members noted that the Thesis Development Plan had been embraced and was well used and had brought the idea of publishing as you go to the forefront. The Portfolio of Achievement was also being used appropriately with most are recognising that this is a broader document, and not merely a list of publications.

The student representative questioned whether the confirmation report guidelines were compulsory and members noted that these were merely a guide for students. Members had an in-depth discussion in 2010 about whether to create guidelines and it was decided that these may help students produce a document of an appropriate length, containing critical analysis rather than a literature review.

3. School Research Areas

After the last meeting a list of relevant FOR codes was disseminated to members for consideration. Members noted that computational fluid dynamics could be removed from the list; ‘Hypersonics Propulsion and Hypersonic Aerodynamics’ should be changed to ‘Hypersonics’; and ‘Composite and Hybrid Materials’ should be changed to ‘Composite and Polymer Materials’.

A- KG
A- KG / VC
Members requested that the below list be submitted to the Graduate School to incorporate into the online Expression of Interest.

1. Automation and Control Engineering
2. Composite and Polymer Materials
3. Dynamics, Vibration and Vibration Control
4. Energy Generation, Conversion and Storage Engineering
5. Engineering Education
6. Hypersonics
7. Manufacturing Engineering
8. Metals and Alloy Materials
9. Mining Engineering
10. Nanotechnology

4. ERA

Members noted that the ARC released the 2012 submission guidelines and the final ERA 2012 Journal List. Heather Todd is managing the ERA Team for the 2012 submission and updates of the University’s progress are available online: http://www.uq.edu.au/research/index.html?page=161517&pid=124268. Members noted that the school submission was being managed by:
- Prof David Mee - mechanical
- Prof Michael Smart – hypersonic
- A/Prof Mingxing Zhang – materials
- Prof Peter Knights – mining

5. Research Quarters

From 1 January 2012, the UQ academic year will be divided into Research Quarters for research higher degree (RHD) students as opposed to semesters. Transition arrangements were put in place by the Graduate School for students aiming to submit by 31 March 2012. Members noted this change and endorsed the School’s implementation plan.

6. SoMME Grant Preparation Workshop

One for the goals of the committee is to improve our success rate in obtaining ARC funding. To assist in achieving this goal, a grant preparation workshop was organised for the 17th of November. The goal of the workshop was to provide guidance and feedback on maximising the chance of success participants’ grant applications at an early stage. It was also hoped that the workshop would provide the opportunity to promote new collaborations within the School.

The workshop began with three brief presentations from Prof. Graham Schaffer, Prof. Jin Zou and Cristina Ghiculescu, outlining the workings of the ARC and strategies for successful grant writing. Participants then had the opportunity to give 3-minute presentations on their proposed project, focusing on the 100 word summary and what will appear on the first page of their project description. These are amongst the most important elements of a grant application as they must capture the attention of the reviewers. A panel of senior researchers who have been successful in obtaining ARC funding volunteered to provide feedback to the participants on their proposals. The presentations were kept short to allow more time for feedback.

A total of 7 early career researchers volunteered to give presentations on their grants (2 withdrew due to illness or other issues). Attendance at the workshop was greater than anticipated; 40 researchers attended the invited talks and approximately 20 remained for the 3 minute presentations and catered lunch.

Feedback on the workshop as a whole was very positive. The invited talks from Graham and Jin provided a wealth of useful information for early career researchers and even senior Professors felt they
gained new knowledge from attending. A number of researchers also indicated they found Cristina’s talk to be exactly what they needed to improve their presentation of their track records. Members noted that the School needs to work on an engagement strategy with the Library to maximise benefits.

The researchers pitching their grant proposals received critical, quality feedback from both the expert panel and audience members. The panel was uniformly commended for their participation. At the very least, the result of the workshop will be a substantial improvement in the grant applications of the presenters. It was felt that the time set aside for the presentation and feedback for each participant was sufficient, but presentations did tend to go over 3 minutes.

The lunch was also a success and provided an opportunity for informal networking. In particular, early career researchers took the opportunity to question this year’s DECRA recipients on both the scheme itself and strategies for applications. At least one new research collaboration was initiated. The participants stated they found the workshop to be extremely useful, and asked whether it would be possible to run further workshops on other critical application sections.

Members congratulated the organizing subcommittee, Vincent Wheatley, David StJohn and Saied Aminossadati for arranging the successful event and noted that it should be run again in 2012.

7. Benchmarks

Members reviewed the School’s benchmarks noting the School had performed well in the domestic scholarship rounds but had underperformed in the international scholarship rounds. Members noted that the School had not had strong candidates for the IPRS, but noted that mechanisms should be put in place in early 2012 to address this issue.

Members also reviewed the UQ School-Based Performance Framework which provides a means for translating the University’s strategic priorities – in the three dimensions of learning, discovery and engagement – to a school level and enables an assessment of where each school currently sits in its interpretation of the institutional strategy.

8. Review of Postgraduate Studies at Monash. Feedback to Group

The Postgraduate Coordinator, A/Prof Rowan Truss participated in a review of postgraduate studies at Monash. A/Prof Truss noted that the visit was a good opportunity to benchmark our School processes and in particular noted that:

- Monash has a 2 + 2 program with some Chinese schools, and they have a strong conversion rate (40%) into RHDs. Members noted that the committee should consider recruitment options through existing student linkages.
- APA scholarships are underwritten for all Honours I students. Members noted that the committee had recently endorsed a similar scheme in the School.
- The Summer Research Scholars program for undergraduate students is used as an opportunity to make contact with students and encourage them to undertake higher degree research. Members noted that this was a good opportunity to recruit students and requested that this be addressed in 2012.
- Monash supervisors take part in online accreditation which determines their level of responsibility (e.g. 1 = associate 2 = primary etc.). Monash has also had a regeneration of staff so while their staff numbers are high, each only has a low RHD load. Members noted that there are TEDI sessions for new UQ staff that all new academics are required to attend.
- Monash has a space model where each organisation buys space, so those with greater budgets get more advanced facilities. Members were critical of this model.

9. Postgraduate Conference

Members noted that preparations for the 2012 Postgraduate Engineering Conference were progressing and that the organising committee had decided on the abstract streams and were currently debating potential keynote speakers.