Present: Professor Ross McAree (Chair), Mr Mitchell Dunn, Professor Han Huang, Professor David Mee, Dr Liza O’Moore, Dr Vincent Wheatley, Professor Jin Zou, and Ms Katie Gollschewski.

Apologies: Dr Saiied Aminossadati, Dr Christopher Leonardi, Ms Brianne Mackinnon, Wouter Mostert, A/Prof. Rowan Truss.

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2014, having been previously circulated, were taken as read and confirmed.

Business arising from the minutes

1. Welcome to new member
Members welcomed new member, Dr Liza O’Moore from the School of Civil Engineering.

The School’s gender composition has meant that the Research Committee has lacked a balanced representation of views. Dr O’Moore was invited to join the committee to redress this balance.

2. ARC Linkage Grants
The ARC recently announced the results for ARC Linkage Projects to commence funding in 2014. Members congratulated school staff who were involved in two successful applications:

LP140100485
StJohn, Prof David H; Dargusch, A/Prof Matthew S; Nogita, A/Prof Kazuhiro; Mu, Dr Dekui
Partner Organisation(s): Nihon Superior Co. Ltd
Project Summary: This project aims to combine recent advances in understanding grain refinement during solidification with novel techniques of microstructure control through the application of external stimuli during processing and the addition of nanoparticle master alloys. This approach aims to enable the manufacture of fine-grained high performance products. The research is intended to be applied to soldering and brazing operations for improved behaviour during manufacturing and increased reliability. The involvement of a major global supplier of alloys to the electronics sector aims to facilitate the application of the research in the development of advanced products suitable for incorporation into next-generation electrical devices.

LP140100992
Zhu, Prof John; Chen, Dr Zhigang; Rosenberg, Dr Steven P
Partner Organisation(s): BHP Billiton Worsley Alumina Pty Ltd
Project Summary: This project aims to develop a fundamental understanding of the cracking of gibbsite and smelter grade alumina, thus providing useful guidance for the alumina refiners to control the particle size distribution of the smelter grade alumina. This addresses an important issue in alumina refineries in terms of providing a high quality product for the downstream aluminium smelter.

3. Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) scheme
Members noted that Round 7 of the Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) scheme had been cancelled in Federal budget, and that CRC Ore would be permitted to re-bid.

4. Excellence for Research Australia (ERA)
The 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) is in process (for publications from 1 January 2008 to 31 December 2013). Cluster leaders have been appointed, in conjunction with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) for 2-digit fields of research (FoRs). The Faculty is currently assisting with the appointment of cluster leaders for 4-digit fields of research (FoRs).

5. UQ Post Doc and Post Doc for Women
The Faculty has completed reviewing applications for the UQ Postdoctoral Research Fellowship (UQ PDRF) scheme and UQ PDRF for women scheme. Members noted that there were no eligible
applications received by EAIT for the UQ PDRF for women, and that the criteria of interruption to career often rules out applicants. Members also noted that the School was hopeful to be successful with one PDRF application this year, and that the quality of the applications has lowered over the past couple of rounds.

The EAIT Faculty encourages School’s to co-contribute funding for this scheme, which allows more post-docs to be appointed. The 2015 recipients are yet to be announced.

The recruitment of good applicants to these schemes can take considerable time and investment from relevant academics. Members noted that it would be prudent to start thinking about 2015 applications.

6. EAIT RIS Awards

The structure of the EAIT Research Innovation and Supervision Awards have been under discussion by the EAIT Faculty to ensure that they clearly recognise achievement and encourage further efforts in the relevant areas. It has been suggested that the Early Career Researcher and Postgraduate Supervision awards should continue, but that the other awards should have more general conditions to increase engagement.

7. UQ Journal List

The University is in the process of replacing the current ERA Journal List with an internal list to be known as the UQ Tiered Journal List. A ‘ranked journal list’ is useful for advising colleagues (especially those that are less experienced) about the journals that UQ values and helping them understand where to publish. These rankings would be used to assess performance for Q index and also to distribute publication funding. The list would be reviewed again in 2 years.

Contributions were sought from UQ staff in August last year, and a final draft has been circulated to the EAIT Research Committee who have given their input. It is expected to be finalised within the next few months.

8. ARC Linkage and ARC DP performance and strategies for improving success rates in the School

The Associate Dean (Research) has circulated an analysis of EAIT’s ARC Linkage and ARC DP performance over the past four years. The School has targets around funding, which are outlined in the Operational Plan.

Members noted that our performance in the last two linkage rounds has not been strong, and in the last round there was one School-led award out of seven applications. It was noted that it takes some time for the splits for each grant to filter through, so the 2014 numbers are not yet finalised.

Members discussed the ARC Linkage performance data, and considered ways to improve our performance.

A School readership scheme was successful for the last round of DECRAs, and members noted that there is value in having someone outside the project to critique a grant application. Members agreed that for a scheme to have any value, the internal deadlines would need to be brought forward. Members recommended that a readership scheme be arranged for the next ARC round.

Members noted that the ARC DP performance would be discussed at the next meeting.

9. RHD Performance Report

RHD benchmarks are reported annually through a performance report, the 2010-2013 RHD Performance Report. Members noted the report, specifically –

- 56% of the EAIT RHD cohort are international, with the School on a slightly lower level at 45%);
The School has the lowest female proportion in EAIT, though the percentages are consistent with undergraduate cohort splits. Members noted that attaining scholarships and retention are not issues with female students, but attracting them to apply is;

Commencements have dropped since 2012 in both international and domestic cohorts, and this is likely to continue in 2014;

The number of successful CSC recipients had lowered this round. Members discussed the possible reasons, including potential limits on the number of CSC scholars per supervisor, failure to meet English Proficiency requirements, and quota restrictions. Members requested that the postgraduate administration officer seek clarification from the Graduate School regarding changes to their process, particularly in relation to quota. It was also suggested that the School promote to students that we require a successful IELTS result when an Expression of Interest is submitted. Prof Zou indicated he would be visiting China in September to promote the School to potential CSC applicants and noted that it would be beneficial to have a project and supervisor summary to distribute to students.

One member noted that international students who complete their MPhil at UQ are precluded from applying for full scholarships, and are only eligible for a co-funded scholarship. Members asked the postgraduate administration officer to raise this with the EAIT Research Administrators Network.

10. Gender balance in the School

Prof Peter Knights submitted a memo on the School’s gender balance to the Head of School and as this was already an item under consideration by the Research Committee, the memo was distributed to members for consideration.

Member noted that under item 3 of the memo, the suggestion that bonus points should be provided in scholarship ranking to female candidates was not supported. Data from the 2010-2013 RHD Performance Report showed that female applicants have been highly successful in obtaining scholarships, and that the issue is in attracting them to apply. Scholarships should be awarded on merit.

Members noted that the memo focussed on barriers to women, whereas the committee should focus on mentoring.

Members noted that there were some options that could be considered to increase the number of female RHDs, namely –

- Our undergraduate numbers are low, so start by increasing these and tracking students through their program, and encourage high achieving students to undertake RHDs;
- Consider altering the first year mechanical project to be related to sustainability, or that has a focus on making the world a better place;
- Ensure that there is a good gender balance of tutors, particularly in years 1 and 2;

The EAIT Women in Engineering program, formed in 2013 with industry partners, aims to increase female enrolments and support current students. Female academics in EAIT meet regularly and have formed a network that could be approached to mentor our female research staff and RHD students. Members recommended that a list of our female research staff and RHD students be forwarded to Dr O’Moore to be raised with the network group. It was also noted the Prof Sarah Springman would be visiting UQ in October and would likely be able to engage with this group as well.

It was suggested that in future, when recruiting for an academic position, that female interviewees have a scheduled lunch with the EAIT female academic network group.

10. Operational Plan

Members noted that the remaining three operational plan items would be addressed in the next meeting.