

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH

INFORMATION PAPER ACR 095/10 AGENDA ITEM 9, 25 OCTOBER 2005

PROGRESS ON RESEARCH MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES

Executive Summary

This paper updates the Committee on progress on research management initiatives.

The Committee is asked to **note** the progress and future plans for other research management initiatives and the actions proposed for the ACR.

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Issue

1. This paper updates the Committee on progress on research management initiatives. At each of its meetings the Committee has reviewed progress and agreed actions the ACR should take in overseeing implementation of the Arbuthnott recommendations and other research management initiatives.

Background

2. Progress, developments and, where appropriate, actions proposed for the Committee in five areas are described in the following papers:

The Agency's draft Science Strategy	ACR 091/10
Research prioritisation	ACR 092/10
ERA-NET	ACR 093/10
Collaborative working and European research	ACR 093/10
Research programme reviews	ACR 094/10

Postgraduate Scholarship Scheme (PGSS)

3. The third annual PGSS call for proposals, for scholarships to begin in October 2006, was published in September on the Agency's website and publicised in New Scientist and the Agency's research e-Newsletter. The deadline for applications is 31 March 2006. Revised Guidelines reflecting changes in eligibility criteria and increased stipends for scholars were published with the call.

4. Panels of Agency staff and independent experts have evaluated proposals received in response to the 2nd PGSS call. The Agency has agreed in principle to fund four PGSS scholarships from this round. Two of these contracts are now in place, starting on 1 October 2006:
 - PG1008: Immune responses by pregnant and non-pregnant women and neonates to hens' egg and cows' milk allergens (University of Southampton)
 - PG1009: Glycosylation of *Campylobacter* iron transport systems and the role of host stress hormones (University of Leicester)
5. Contracts for the two other studentships are under negotiation.

Nanotechnologies

6. The Agency's Research Co-ordination Unit (RCU) continues to co-ordinate Agency input on nanotechnology issues to the cross-governmental co-ordinating body, the Nanotechnology Issues Dialogue Group (NIDG), and its sub-group the Nanotechnology Research Co-ordination Group (NRCG). The RCU is co-ordinating an Agency review of regulatory gaps in its areas of responsibility, as part of a cross-Government review. The Agency's report will be completed and published by the end of 2005. The Committees on Toxicology, on Carcinogenicity and on Mutagenicity are jointly considering generic issues around nanotechnologies as part of the wider government activity.
7. The Agency included a research topic on nanomaterials in food contact materials in its latest call for research proposals, Research Requirement Document 19, published in September. The title is: 'Assess new and potential applications of nanotechnology for food contact materials in the UK, considering the consumer safety and regulatory implications of their possible use.'

Quality Assurance of research

8. The Agency and Defra are in the process of inviting tenders to audit research contractors against the Joint Code of Practice on Quality Assurance. It is expected that audits will commence in the 2006. As well as assessing compliance with the provisions of the Code, the work will aim to identify examples of good practice and highlight issues that may be of help to all contractors in the future. This will build on the publication last year of outputs from baseline

assessments carried out as an earlier part of the implementation of the Code.¹

Co-ordination of Committees

9. The annual event for Chairs or Advisory Committees takes place on 31 October 2005. The Agency's new Chair, Dame Deirdre Hutton Deputy Chair Julia Unwin and Chief Executive Jon Bell will all attend, as will the ACR Chairman.

Dissemination

10. A dissemination discussion group has been set up following the Committee's last meeting, comprising Agency staff (including from RCU and Communications Division) and three ACR members: Professors Donachie and Murcott and Dr Richardson. The group's first meeting is on 24 October 2005.
11. The RCU is co-ordinating production of the Agency's Annual Report on Research and Surveys 2005, which is scheduled for publication in advance of the 8 December 2005 meeting of the Agency's Board.

Planned activities

Planned activities of the ACR

12. The Committee's work over its next two meetings (including work between meetings where appropriate) is expected to include the following areas:
 - The Agency's Science Strategy
 - Options for effective research management ('alternatives to ROAME')
 - Agency policy on research publication and dissemination (including peer review)
 - Research dissemination including the annual open meeting on research
 - Horizon-scanning and emerging issues
 - The role of the ACR

Advisory Committee action required

13. The Committee is asked to **note** the progress and future plans for other research management initiatives and the actions proposed for the ACR.

¹ Further information available at:

<http://www.food.gov.uk/science/research/researchpolicy/qualityassurance/gacopres/>