

**Department of Paediatrics
Management Committee/Graduate Studies Committee
Wednesday 17th February 2021 13:00-15:00
Via MS Teams**

- 1. Apologies for absence**
Matthew Wood, Dominic Kelly, Joanna Bagniewska, Andy Ives, Stephane Paulus, Alexander Jones, Laurent Servais.

- 2. Minutes of meeting 28th October 2020**
Minutes of the meeting were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
 - 1 minor typo noted CSUK should be replaced with CRUK.

- 3. Matters arising and Action Points from meeting 28th October 2021 (not covered elsewhere)**
None noted

- 4. Graduate Studies Committee (CR/SL)**
Update from DGS
CR: very strong applications for early Jan 2021 deadline, submitted 3 students to internal funding competition (GSSC)
One iCASE project in the department, candidate was selected for MRC funding (best 4 out of 14 University wide candidates are selected for funding), candidate will decide between Paediatrics and Department of Engineering
Difficulties with managing iCASE and GSSC simultaneously, as non-funded iCASE will drop to GSSC
Increase in EU students division wide, but not in department, expected to drop in the future due to Brexit
Irish students have most options, qualify for Home fees AND EU funding (Best candidate we interviewed this round is Irish)
Minor spike in number of students who want to do part time
Discussions with Division, strategy to push back and find other arrangements
GH: University wide discussion, among department heads, VC: not only an issue in MedSci;
MS: part time will need to be considered for some students to offer flexibility
GH: identify reasons for part time, see if it is not only for convenience
CR: if students cannot do more than 60% of FT capacity it will be considered, will be case by case basis
1:1 Mentorship scheme, matching students with researchers/postdocs, discuss career options etc.
Include students in career talk seminars (with CH), improve career guidance as per barometer results
Students are thinking more about career options and want to try different options
Impression is that industry may be better for graduates than academia, will support in exploring industry career options
GH: Open field deadline:
Will probably have space, increase pool if necessary if more offers than places available

So far, only a few have funding, ¼ or 1/3 tend to drop out due to lack of funding

RS: timeline for open field deadline, CR will review

AP: candidates should apply as soon as they can, only interview dates need to be set

CR: student deferred from last year, will be included in top of this or last year? SL

Will check with Graduate Studies Office

AP: will most likely count to this year's numbers

SL: Students were able to defer without re-applying if reason was related to COVID

Update on 2021 student intake

SL: -received 12 applications, number is smaller than before (22 in 2020), but better quality of candidates

-4 MSc candidates, 8 DPhil candidates

-7 offers, plus one interdisciplinary MRC/iCASE candidate who was able to secure full iCASE funding for her project

-2 offers for MSc, 5 for DPhil

-submitted 3 top candidates to GSSC, waiting for outcome

Update from Student Representatives

MV: peer support is available in the department for students who are struggling.

5. Administrative staff update (SO)

- Sarah will go onto maternity leave from mid-March-November 2021. Charlotte Warburg will be acting up in her place. A plan is being made to ensure suitable cover and leadership of the HR Team.
- Successful recruitments were made for two Grant Managers to the team, Jennifer Wilkinson and Jessica Bryan-Bentley. They will join us from April/May 2021 both will be embedded within OVG.
- Colleagues in the Trust are continuing to make use of some of the office space based on level 2 for which an initial period of 3 months had been agreed. Upon further discussions an agreement has been made to extend this "lease" for another 3 months until the 17th of May. This includes a provision that allows us to take occupancy back at short notice should we needed to do so. The previous agreement resulted in some savings for the Department of up to approx. £8,000.

6. HR update (SWJ)

- HR processes presently 2 new roles and an additional 10 or more will soon be coming from OVG: 1 x live role which is the Data Manager at OVG and a further role which is going live shortly. Since October 2020 we have had 10 new recruitments and 10 appointed along with 8 leavers and 6 more due between now and end of April.
- The staff furlough scheme is still in place. The government scheme is due to end at the end of April currently. We have 5 staff members across the department on furlough, 3 are on part-time furlough.
- Sorcha from the Said Business School will be joining us shortly to cover Charlotte's role while she acts up as HR Manager.

- Sofia has been offered a new role. She will be reducing her hours with us. A plan is currently underway to find cover for this.
- Most people are still working from home across the University and people are struggling with providing home schooling. Though HR is presently not aware of any specific issues, anyone in need of further support with the situation of working from home are invited to contact HR for help. Wellbeing Resources have been circulated and a Wellbeing Talk will be organised for a Town Hall Meeting.
- HR are now looking at moving data onto a secure platform along with organising a series of online forms to try and make processes smoother and quicker. These will include contract extensions and recruitment requests; this should help to streamline between PI's and the grants team to get these approved in a timely manner.
- Standard Operating Procedures are being created. This should also help with the changes currently underway in the HR Team.
- Central HR are looking at amendments and changes to the flexible working policy. This is due to the amount of people currently working from home. Updates will be made as soon as more information is available.
- Planned staff survey which is run by the Central University was due to go out in February but has now been delayed till next term.

7. Finance update (KS)

- The position of the Paediatrics Department up to January 2021, halfway through the financial year are at a £773k surplus at this point - mainly due to the overhead generated from the covid trials projects. Variances to Q1 budget: adverse variance of £47k were mostly driven by the worsening position in the research overheads income, which is partially offset by less to spend on premises budget line. The worsening position to the overhead's income is just a timing issue, it is expected to be eliminated by financial year end. Q1 forecast of £1.8m surplus has been agreed which represents an improvement of £653k to the 2021 budget. This is again mainly driven by overheads income from covid projects. Q2 forecast signed off on Monday by Georg, but this has yet to be signed off by Division. More detail on Q2 position at the meeting in May.
- AP asked if the surplus is a bad thing or if there is a possibility of having any money removed from the Department. GH reassured the group that this was unlikely to be an issue and that we had been invited by the Division to identify opportunities to spend down our surplus on items of wider benefit to the department. Over the longer term, proposals were also being considered, which if adopted would enable departments across the division direct access to their reserves.

8. Equality & Diversity/Athena Swan update (RS)

- There is a change in the structure of the Athena Swan Award which means that awards will now go from 4 years to 5 years after a letter of request is submitted (which has now done) and our current Silver Award is now valid until 29th April 2023.

- The date of the Equality and Diversity meeting has been requested to change. It normally takes place on the same day as the Management Committee Meeting. However, some of the members do not currently work on a Wednesday which makes it impossible for attendance. A new date for these will be sought.
- RS thanked the team behind getting the staff intranet up and running. This addresses many of the action points within the agenda of the Athena Swan Award and will be a really fantastic resource.

9. Outreach and Engagement Activities (SO)

- There are a few public engagement projects ongoing in the Department at various stages of development. Carlo's project on assessing muscle strength in children, and Alex Jones' exercise project for teens. There are also a number of graduate students online tools which provide mentoring opportunities.
- The Idea Festival is being revamped and will become a new entity. Dependent on the outcome of this the Department may wish to consider taking part next year either in person or digitally if the pandemic affects this.
- JB along with help from Tonya Thomas has been involved in addressing vaccine hesitancy across different minority groups in the UK working particularly with the Polish Community. If anyone is available who might be able to talk with the Sikh community or others, then please do contact JB directly.

10. OUCAGS/ACF update (MS)

- A round of interviews were conducted just before Christmas which were competitive with primary care for ACF posts. Roisin Mansfield was appointed for Paediatrics to work with Rebecca Slater. Roisin has previously worked with us as an undergraduate medic, and she's come back primarily to work with Luke Baxter looking at how resting state brain activity relates to how we then respond to events in our external environment. There were two other candidates who could have been appointable, however, this wasn't pursued as an option to fund them directly. MS is currently having a final chat with 1 candidate regarding OVG.
- Paediatrics will be taking part in the next round of the Clinical Lecturer appointments. Dates will be circulated for those as soon as they are available. Please keep in mind that these will be competitive interviews for Clinical Lecturer post in Paediatrics in case there is anyone suitable who has a PhD as these will be NIHR posts. Paediatrics will be in competition with Infectious Diseases, Clinical Oncology, Therapeutics and Clinical Pharmacology. The department is underwriting the cost implications for successful applicants that are within the Department of Paediatrics. This is in addition to the 3 x Departmental Clinical Lecturer posts we have.
- AP informed the group that Seilesh has returned from Australia.

11. Paediatric Academic Fellowship (MS)

- Advertisement and Job Description for the Victoria Smallpiece Fellowship will be going live shortly. These are posts that are designed to attract local trainees and are only open to local paediatric trainees to provide full research opportunities in Oxford as their 50% clinical/50% research. Most people so far have taken a 6-

month block of research and a 6-month block of clinical. The research funding for this needs to come from your own budget in the Department. This is a way of opening up research opportunities to local trainees that is supported by the School of Paediatrics so they will allow people out of clinical training to undertake this work.

12. CRF update (RS)

- Following the road map discussion an expression of Interest was made around developing a paediatric CRF. The objective is to create a Paediatric Clinical Research Facility located in the children's hospital. A CRF will provide us with transformative opportunities to develop trials where previously this has been difficult to set up due to the challenges of space. It will enable us to run more complex studies. It will also attract, develop and retain more researchers which will support us to gain further external funding. We are in a very preliminary stage, but space for a CRF has been identified (on an extremely limited scale) within the Children's Hospital. Initially there would be space for 4 beds running between 8 a.m. - 8 p.m. We are looking at earmarking funds for refurbishment of this space and putting together a business case to submit to the trust to convert the space in the longer term. It is felt by taking the opportunity with the current space it would be a positive way to launch into a bigger plan. Currently data is being gathered on what trials could be run through such a facility via normal academic routes and those with industry. Engagement with external collaborators is also underway to look at minimum requirements to set-up a relatively small facility as a 'pop-up CRF'. How this is integrated with the Neuromuscular Centre is under discussion and all PI's will be involved as this moves forward. GH added that the NIHR will have a call for new CRF's, and we are in discussions to see how an overall structure could be formed where Paediatrics is not an entirely autonomous but an integrated part with standalone features that will profit from a back office and a common interface with the Adult Services. There will be a couple of meetings coming up in the next weeks and months until the submission likely sometime in May.

In parallel with Lucy, our Development Officer, we're putting together a glossy pamphlet to help raise external funds, we have 2-3 people already identified that we will gently approach with the notion that Paediatrics wishes to have something bigger that would fit with our capabilities to run clinical trials. It could be that the Children's Directorate may build a new centre next to the Children's Hospital for Oncology so then within the Children's Hospital itself further space could become available for a CRF or it may even be possible that we could combine these efforts for a new oncology building with our aspirations for a CRF.

13. Departmental Roadmap Meeting (GH)

At the end of last year, we felt that it was time to look forward and see where the department should be and could be. This is due to some of the revenue that we have from growing overheads, developments in changing landscape within Division, but also for the needs within the Department itself as we grow. A meeting took place and the main discussion points were:

- It is important for new incoming departmental members which represent new areas that there is an environment in which they can function effectively and quickly in a competitive fashion.
- How can we create better coherence within the department?
- How can the department be more effective with regards to infrastructure and back-office activities? Should we invest in a person who sits in Research Services and is our liaison person.
- Have more grants officers?
- Should the department develop an in-house data scientist or data management capability?

At the end of the meeting working groups were approved. The first working group is led by Andi Roy and Alex Jones to look at establishing an interdepartmental series of seminars and interactions which allow us to have a better understanding of who does what and provides a platform for insight into research group activities. The second working group is a research working group which has been asked to Identify opportunities for the scientific growth of the Department, with the aim of strengthening its research portfolio. This will be led by Andy Pollard, Irene Roberts and Georg Hollander. The third research group is the CRF led by Rebeccah Slater, Matthew Snape, Laurent Servais. The last working group is led by Matthew Wood and Georg Hollander it will focus on proposals for the development of better computational biology and bioinformatic support within the Department. As a first step, in order to better understand the potential requirement, the various research groups have been asked to provide further information about the size and make-up of existing data sets. This information will be used to help support a dialogue with colleagues in the BDI about potential opportunities to work more closely in this area.

ACTION POINT:

- SO is coordinating collection of the information regarding data sets from each of the research groups, as well as keeping track generally on progress of all of the agreed actions.
- A follow-up Roadmap meeting has been planned for May and a further update will provided be made available following on from this.

14.

AOB

Oxford Vaccine Update

Global policy recommendation has now been obtained for use of the vaccine from the World Health Organisation which allows it to be used in developing countries based on those recommendations in all ages over 18. This week the regulatory arm of the World Health Organization has granted approval for the AstraZeneca version of the vaccine, which is made in Korea and the Indian version of the vaccine can go to any country that has applied for membership of COVAX so as of this week there is global distribution happening.

15.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 19th May 2021, 12.00pm-2.00pm