

Blizard Research Committee (BRC)

Monday 08 January 2024, 2.00 pm, Large Cloud and MS Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Prof William Alazawi (WA)	Prof Mary Collins (MC)
Rachael Parker (RP)	Prof Denise Sheer (DS)
Prof Cleo Bishop (CB)	Prof Kelnny Linton (KL)
Prof Neil McCarthy (NM)	Prof Silvia Marino (SM)
Prof Xavier Griffin (XG)	Vardhman Rakyan (VR)
Carlos De Oliveira (CDO)	Molly Ramalhoso (MR)
Claire Cox (CC)	

Part 1: Preliminary items

1. Apologies for absence

Silvia Marino absent.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

- MC and CB discussed potential of laptops being stored in one area within labs, CC discussed with BCI/ WHRI lab managers regarding how they manage LabArchives. CB noted obstacles regarding printing protocols and VR noted benefit/ suitability of shared tablets within labs. Committee in agreement to order some tablets and review how beneficial they are within labs.
- CDO confirmed Lab Archives official start date as 1st February across institute and requested one further group to test system w/c 15th January, post major updates.
- RP confirmed deadline for ELEMENTS as w/c 1st January, CDO notified committee that Amrita Ahluwalia noted those who did not contribute to test will not be asked to provide anything further.
- KL confirmed MR circulated email regarding Gulf students/ GEMS partnership, these will be reviewed on a rolling case by case basis.
- MR contacted Sophia Prout regarding QM Press visit to Graduate Studies Day.

3. Matters Arising

N/A

Part 2: Agenda Items

4. Lab Management items – Claire Cox

- CC requested approval for the following costs: Charging Liquid Nitrogen Cryostore Boxes (£3 per each new 100 sample box), Tissue Processor (£1.50 per sample). BRC all in agreement. CC informed committee lab management currently have one weekly run, if additional samples run required, please contact lab management.

5. Issues regarding research activities survey

- VR informed committee of continuing discussions with research leads to explain role of Research Director's Office and noting feedback. Will review and update committee at next meeting.

6. Discussion of EAB report

- MC summarised feedback from EAB panel which was circulated to centre leads, MC and WA after visit. Report has been circulated to everyone, including students and post-docs. MC advised centres review points relevant to their research and apply feedback where possible.
- **Strengths:** Trauma Science unit is world leading, panel encouraged strengthening link to basic research and lab. More use could be made of Genes & Health in expanding into other areas within the institute, MC suggested centres review role of strategic recruitment in increasing use of Genes & Health. Epigenetics, public patient involvement and outreach all positively reviewed.
- **Weaknesses:** Improvement required in pushing basic science through to clinical, gap exists between Clinicians and Basic Scientists – MC suggested getting academic clinical fellows and PhD students into basic labs. TB and Hepatitis, clear plan required for linking to other centres in London – Immunobiology to note.
- **Opportunities:** Genes & Health needs clearer outline of what it hopes to achieve in the next 5 years, encouraged to link with clinicians and/ or health ministries in South East Asia, particularly Bangladesh. Centres should think about who to recruit to form links with NIHR global funding and Genes & Health. Epigenetics theme not working so much with cancer – epigenetic regulation discovered here is critical for tumour formation.
- **Threat:** Institute encourages to think of what focus will be/ is, especially with regard to role of hospital.
- MC suggested research leads discuss report with Vardhman and Will to formulate plan to review at BRC in coming months. New panel review possibly in two years with some continuity.
- WA noted institute is quite siloed and a concerted effort is required with a cultural shift in working as part of wider QMUL community. KL noted link between breadth of research and breadth of teaching – narrower focus could restrict activities within that area. DS highlighted medical students as a useful resource for institute, should be encouraged into research. KL noted recruitment panels for medical students geared towards students coming into clinical groups, EAB noted this should be broadened to facilitate students having choice of working in academic research lab.
- WA also highlighted that while role of hospital positively impacted recruitment of clinical academics, there is an impact on research strategy. Encouraged thinking about this at next round of junior post recruitments (early career and junior researchers). MC informed committee those strategic recruitments to be professorial, encouraged thinking about which leaders would have unifying effect on research strategy. MC suggested preparing paper for discussion at future meeting.

Part 3: Standing Items

7. PGR Report

- KL informed committee Graduate Studies Day was successfully held on 11th December 2023 and would encourage more attendance, in particular PIs and post-docs. Highlighted submitted post regarding event was shortened when published in newsletter and noted Graduate Studies Day needs to be promoted more within the institute.
- KL requested to defer two PhD proposals (Fahd to be out for peer review and brought to next meeting, amended Phillipson proposal to be sent to initial reviewers and re-circulated to committee once reviewed). Committee agreed.
- KL encourages committee to work with teams to approve PhD proposals around meetings.
- WA noted we need a review of how we support mixed methods PhDs in terms of access to training.

8. Grant Report November/December 2023

- CDO informed committee of continued positive trend.
- By end of December 2023 83 applications submitted, 27 more against 2022/23 and 23 more against 2021/22.
- By end of December, submitted applications total £36.2 million in terms of value, £11.3 million more against 2022/23 and almost £30 million more against 2021/22.
- By end of December, total awards were £9.8 million, £5.3 million more against 2022/23.
- CDO informed committee of Miguel Branco's Barts Charity Research award of £3.2 million.
- MC informed committee Barts Charity awards to count in REF.
- CDO noted more people are now applying, so increase in terms of applicants as well as applications.
- WA suggested a letter from the committees to grant awardees in recognising efforts and successes. WA congratulated XG on NIHR award.

9. Honorary Staff Appointments

- WA queried QMUL Malta applicants for honorary appointments, MC confirmed QMUL Malta classed as different entity as no research links at institute.
- All approved. BRC agreed.

10. Recruitments in progress

- RP informed committee Abhi Banerjee will be starting on the 14th February as Professor in Neuroscience.
- CB to reach out to Nazma Mallik to invite her to meet.
- RP informed committee Graham Meintjes will be starting on the 1st March as Professor in Infection.
- RP informed committee advert for Luke Gammon's Deputy (Deputy Facility Manager) is open until the end of January. MC noted that committee, RP and Claire Cox could discuss what the deputy could assist with once in post.

11. Fellowships / Major Grant Initiatives

- WA informed that last RSB discussion centred around bids being submitted but will update following next meeting.
- Two bids being prepared: Molecular mechanisms in cancer bid led by BCI, and Lifelong Health bid.
- Barts Charity funding coming in Cardiac Immunology and Cardiac Metabolism.
- WA noted all should be thinking future leadership fellowships grants, Clinical Academic Research Partnerships (CARPS) and NIHR professorships. All alongside senior and intermediate fellowships.
- MC queried LifeArc bid, and CB informed committee Edel's team may return to funder in view of amending bid slightly.

Part 4: Other business

12. Any other business

Use of Biorender in the Blizard

- DS informed committee that as of 2020, institute has held continuous licences to keep library of diagrams which we can continue to add to, as opposed to taking out licences sporadically and losing data. DS has contacted users within QM/ Blizard Institute and has two options:
 - 1 – As implemented in BC and WHRI, take all research active potential users and provide everyone with licences for a third of the cost.
 - 2 – 50% discount if we create a group of minimum 20 people (PI's, post-docs and students – each would have individual licences).DS to discuss option 1 with BCI and WHRI, committee receptive to option 2.
- DS to survey users in Blizard and report back at next meeting.

Equipment Update

- CB informed committee of FMD equipment panel meeting that took place and MRC bid by Emanuel Rognoni due later this month.
- Shortlisting and ranking of BBSRC equipment bids took place, two from the Blizard: John Connelly – Povone System, Harriett Allan – Oni System.
- CB informed committee Amrita Ahluwalia would like list of all equipment under £75,000 (MUMPS) for the end of the month. CB to review with Claire and subsequently circulate to committee for ranking.

Date of the next meeting: 05 February 2024

Outstanding action list

Meeting date	Action	Person Responsible	Deadline	Outcome
08/01/2024	RP will review cost of managed tablets with aim to purchase some for labs and review usage/ suitability.	RP		Ongoing
08/01/2024	NM to continue discussions with EMULATE, colleagues at SEMS and CREATE Labs to get costings.	NM		Ongoing
08/01/2024	Committee to identify one new group to provide to CDO for Lab Archives test post-update. CDO will circulate email requesting this.	All		Completed
08/01/2024	VR to continue discussions with colleagues and research leads regarding research activities and role of Research Director's Office to provide feedback at next meeting.	VR		Completed
08/01/2024	MC to prepare paper/ strategy on professorial strategic recruitments	MC		Completed
08/01/2024	Research leads to think about strategic appointments in areas that can consolidate rather than broaden.	All		Ongoing
08/01/2024	KL returning Phillipson PhD proposal to reviewers and subsequently recirculate via email within next 10 days.	KL		Completed
08/01/2024	CB to reach out to Nazma Mallik	CB		Completed
08/01/2024	DS to survey Biorender users in Blizzard and feed back at next meeting.	DS		Completed
08/01/2024	CB to review with MUMPS list with Claire and subsequently circulate to committee for ranking.	CB		Completed