

Blizard Research Committee (BRC)

Monday 13th March 2023, 2.00 pm, Large Cloud and MS Teams

MINUTES

Present:

Prof William Alazawi (WA)	Dr Neil McCarthy (NM)
Prof Mary Collins (MC)	Dr Natalie McCloskey (NM)
Carlos De Oliveira (CDO)	Prof Klaus Schmierer (KS)
Prof Kenny Linton (KL)	Prof Denise Sheer (DS)
Prof Silvia Marino (SM)	Susanne Bell (SB)

Part 1: Preliminary items

1. Apologies for absence

Prof Cleo Bishop

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The BRC approved the minutes of the last meeting held on Monday 13th February.

3. Matters Arising

- WA went through outstanding action points. The BRC agreed that they still want to use Lab Archives. WA confirmed it is still being discussed at faculty level and will continue to push this forward.
- The BRC agreed that CDO will draft an email to staff to remind them of best practice, including current guidance from existing QMUL and JRMO policies, and those of major funders. **Action CDO**
- The BRC agreed that the recording of the meeting by Bryony Butland should be made available to everyone.
- MC asked if staff from SBBS who are located in the Blizard building can be invited to give a talk at Blizard Club.

Part 2: Agenda Items

4. Three-year grant analysis

- WA presented data pulled from Worktribe for a three-year period from 01-Apr-19 to 31-Mar-22. This showed applications submitted and awards granted per (anonymised) individuals by centre.
- WA said they need to identify the individuals who are unsuccessful and don't reapply after being rejected, it is the Blizard's responsibility to look after them. Additionally, they need to find out what the highly successful staff need support with and see if they can buddy up with the unsuccessful staff.
- MC agreed that co-application with younger staff is important.

- WA said that getting rejections is part of the process and having post-mortems of failed bids should be a regular procedure at centre level. We do a lot of mock interviews, but not many written responses are discussed.
- MC asked if we could have mentors for staff.

5. Maintenance of essential Blizard infrastructure

- SM asked for clarity, Blizard researchers are asked to mend -80 freezers when they breakdown, which staff have been assigned but not purchased. PI's don't have funding allocated to this and need to know in advance so they can start budgeting for this in their grants. SM is not sure that a funder will agree to this, and asked if they need to start talking about bench fees? This could be more palatable to funders.
- MC is trying to obtain a list of which categories of equipment are centrally managed, and which items are not, and to make this transparent.
- MC is also trying to get an account of what the core facilities budgets are spent on
- MC said that each centre has a cash budget, but she needs to know how much this is and what it's spent on. The institute has a cash budget, but this is a small amount.
- MC would like to present the results of the laboratory services survey at a future BRC meeting with Lab Manager, Claire Cox. Alongside this would be the accounts for each core facility, and to listen to ideas about other ways for organising this.
- KL would like to see core facilities bench fees.
- MC suggested they ask Cleo Bishop to look at other funding for core facilities (SM pointed out we don't have the leverage of BCI for example with CRUK).
- MC said that over £100K can go to UKRI infrastructure research funds, although they don't pay service contracts or staff. Under £70K can go to FMD for replacement equipment.
- WA said that the Horizon Scanning Committee now have a live list of equipment which is ready to go when calls are made.

Part 3: Standing Items

6. PGR Report

- KL informed the committee that a cohort of fully funded dental students from a private Jordanian university are looking for institutions to complete PhDs. KL suggested that when the call comes out, Blizard staff put forward a portfolio of collaborative projects with dentistry.
- KL reported on an issue with BBSRC LIDo funded students and confusion over 3-month extensions issued by QMUL.

7. Grant Report

- CDO presented figures of the grants report for February 2023.
- Applications and actual awards are still down from the same period compared to 2021 and 2022.
- Since 01-Aug-22 there are still 66 bids, of which 10 have a value over £1M, still awaiting a response. This represents a total value of £30M. CDO is hopeful that some of these bids will have a positive decision. Average response time is 6-9 months.
- DS felt that the atmosphere at the Blizard has improved, with whiteboard sessions and Blizard Club.
- Universities are graded by UKRI and QMUL was downgraded to C from B. This was discussed at BRC in autumn 2022.
- WA considers that the message is still the same, that applications need to increase. Also believes quality needs to be pushed as well.
- MC thinks that younger academics need to be included in grant applications, to give them experience in the grant application process. Also need to consider collaborations.
- WA said that help is available, in the form of facilities lists and environment statements etc. Their HARP PhD programme holds workshops which are open to all, including how to do good PPIE.

8. Overspend on grants

- None reported

9. Honorary Staff Appointments

- The committee approved seven of the ten applications submitted.
- The BRC rejected two applications as they should apply to be Postgraduate Research Associates.
- The BRC queried one application as the CV was out of date.

10. Recruitments in progress

- The Blizard are interviewing for a clinical senior lecturer in metabolism. Shortlisted candidates will be presenting a seminar and then having an interview afterwards.
- MC said they were also looking to recruit a clinical chair in liver disease, a new chair in gastro, and a new position in epigenetics.

11. Fellowships / Major Grant Initiatives

- Two fellowship calls have been made:
 - Future leader's fellowship, of which QM can have six so will sift for this.
 - Newton international fellowship, of which there will be no QM sift.

Part 4: Other business

12. Any other business

- MC updated the committee on the new ways of working plan for the Blizard building.
- WA would like the Blizard to voice concerns to the proposals.
- WA read out CB's agenda point, for posters of staff or research to be displayed on the screens and poster board on the wall next to the Institute manager's office.

Date of the next meeting: 11 April 2023

Outstanding action list

Meeting date	Ref	Action	Person Responsible	Deadline	Outcome
11/11/22	5	Write the Blizzard's own archives policy after reading the faculty's policy and inform staff on what they should be doing.	BRC	Next meeting	Completed
10/10/22	3	Organise a 'Blizzard Day' event to take place in the next few months to celebrate achievements and the latest research, education updates and new innovations.	NM/CDO	Next meeting	Completed
13/02/23	5	Arrange meeting for Bryony Butland to present update on funding opportunities with UKRI. Invite Dentistry and Wolfson and hold in the Perrin.	CDO/SB	Next meeting	Ongoing
13/02/23	6	Send an email to the Blizzard with an update on grant funding and actions the Blizzard are taking.	CDO/WA	Next meeting	Completed