

Minutes of RAGnet AGM held at Ramada Jarvis Hotel, Leicester

2 May 2002

Chair: Jacqui Forsyth

Present: Sue Baines, Helen Fitzgerald, Yasmin Glover, Doreen Corlett, Chris Needham, Kaye Carver, Anne Evans, Michelle Duxbury, Clive Randall, Mike Ibbitson, Adrian Gilbert, Annie Lambert, Frances Tyson, Alistair McDermott, Jen Shearer, Catherine Duncan, Ian McCue, Chris Semple, Helen Andrew, Stuart Mealing, Peter Townsend, Geraldine O'Leary, Matthias Heger, Edward Hughes, Renee Taylor, Rosemary Hatch, Kate Hall, Kathleen Callender, Rossanna Dowsett, Jeanette Hall, Simon Kerridge, Kate Nimmo, Phil Clare, Jacqui Forsyth, Nigel Bilsbrough, Steff Hazlehurst

1. Apologies for Absence

The following apologies were received; Andrea Bailey, Kathryn Ludlow, Pauline Muya and Kerry Wilding.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the previous AGM held at Holiday Inn Hotel, Seaton Burn, Newcastle-upon-Tyne on 24 May 2001 were agreed to be a true and accurate record of the proceedings and were signed as such by the Chair. There were no matters arising from the minutes.

3. Annual Report 2001-2002 by Jacqui Forsyth. RAGnet Chair

A written Annual Report was presented to the meeting brief highlights of which are given below:

- Individual membership now stands at over 400 representing 110 universities and colleges in the UK and Ireland
- A major focus of activity this year has been international collaboration
 - The organisation has been actively participating in the Association of Commonwealth Universities' (ACU) four year Research Management Programme
 - RAGnet has been approached to join the International Consortium of Research Management Societies (ICRMS) together with others including SRA International, EARMA, CAURA, ARMS and SARMA
- The organisation has also sought to strengthen links with funding bodies. A very successful two day study tour to the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) was arranged in March and it is hoped that this will be repeated
- Several training events have been held during the year including the Annual Spring Workshop attended by more than 90 delegates and the Fourth Induction Workshop which attracted 46 participants as well as several Expert Seminars
- The Chair thanked all members for their continued support of, and participation in, RAGnet.
- 4. Financial Report for 2001/2002 by Kate Nimmo, RAGnet Treasurer

A written Finance Report was incorporated in the Annual Report showing the position as at the 31 March 2002. The Treasurer reported:

- The association continued to maintain healthy reserves
- An Inland Revenue concession to avoid having to submit an annual Corporation tax self-assessment has been applied for. However, this has necessitated only being able to offer our events to members
- The organisation is still outside the VAT threshold but should be exempt in any case as a "professional or learned society".

5. Future Plans

The Chair reported on the following:

Membership

Membership continues to grow and it is hoped to reach 500 this year. There are plans to increase the membership penetration in organisations which sponsor research. International Collaboration The organisation wishes to increase collaboration with our international colleagues. The meeting was asked if it was happy to endorse RAGnet becoming a member of ICRMS. The meeting unanimously agreed.

Website

The website continues to expand and develop. It now contains over 2000 documents relating to publications, training events, questions and answers from the discussion list, etc. The web editor, Steff Hazlehurst, has devised a cataloguing database to ease searching the site which is now ready to pilot and she will be seeking volunteers to assist.

Benchmarking

HEFCE have funds to support research into good management practice and the Committee is considering the possibility of RAGnet submitting a proposal to undertake a benchmarking project on research administration. Similar projects carried out by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) and the Association of Research Administrators (ARA) have been extremely valuable. The project could encompass some quantitative work on benchmarking across a large number of universities and some qualitative work on process benchmarking, for example looking at ethical approval, in a smaller number of institutions. The Chair invited members interested in participating in such a project to contact her.

Appointment of Administrative Officer

The Committee feels that (a) it has now taken the organisation as far as it can with its existing resources (the voluntary input of the Committee members plus a small amount of clerical assistance) and (b) there are many exciting developments that could take place with additional support. The Chair reported that consequently the Committee would like to explore the part-time appointment of an Executive Officer. Though initially this position could be funded from reserves, it would be necessary to increase subscription rates over the next few years. It was noted that current rates had not been revised for over five years. The Committee also intends to seek financial assistance from organisations with an interest in good research management in HEIs. The meeting was asked for its thoughts on the proposal.

Several points were raised from the floor including what the role and responsibilities of the appointee might be, and where they might be physically located. The meeting was impressed by how much the organisation had achieved with its limited resources but supported the proposal overwhelmingly and were prepared to pay increased subscriptions if required.

Events

Planned future events included a repeat of the expert seminar on web sites, probably in June/July and a fifth Induction Workshop to be held at Burleigh Court, Loughborough on 23rd/24th September 2002.

It was also hoped to hold an Expert Seminar on the dissemination of research results and to repeat the EPSRC study tour. Members asked if this could be extended to other research councils.

The meeting was asked to suggest other topics which they might like to see covered and these included involvement in TRAC and the post-award management of research.

6. Amendments to the RAGnet Constitution

Several amendments to the existing constitution were proposed to more accurately reflect the current reality and to aid the increasing professionalisation of the organisation. Copies of the amendments and the existing constitution had been circulated to members and Steff Hazlehurst was asked to speak to the proposed amendments. In brief:

- To redefine eligibility for membership
 - to include members not employed by universities or research institutes

- to include Corporate Members and Partner Organisations as previously defined.

The meeting carried the proposal.

- To create a new honorary officer in the organisation, an additional deputy chair.
The meeting carried the proposal.
- To change election procedures to postal ballots.
At the moment only those members attending the AGM are eligible to vote. As the organisation has grown and the majority of members do not attend the AGM this is no longer seen as appropriate. In order to facilitate the change and to ensure that an even number of vacancies on the Committee were available each year several amendments to existing terms of office were also required.
- The meeting carried the proposal.

7. Elections to the RAGnet Committee

The meeting having agreed to the creation of a second Deputy Chair, Jacqui Forsyth proposed Steff Hazlehurst for the position which was seconded by Phil Clare. The meeting carried the proposal.

The Committee had received one nomination for the vacancy on the Committee from Ross Dowsett, University of Sussex; proposed by Ed Hughes, City University, seconded by Kate Hall, University of Kent. The meeting carried the proposal.

Finally, the Chair wished to officially record the organisation's thanks and appreciation to Maureen Skinner, previously at London Institute now at Thames Valley University, who had resigned from the Committee, due to a changing work role, during the year

8. Any Other Business

There being no other business the Chair thanked members present for their continuing support and closed the meeting at 18.20.

Nigel Billsbrough
RAGnet Secretary
30 May 2002