

ACP Implementation Working Group
Minutes of the meeting held on 8th September 2014

Present

Professor Tony McEnery (Chair)
Mrs Yvonne Fox
Professor Charlie Lewis
Professor Christine Milligan

In attendance

Sarah Taylor

14/8 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Peter Fielding and Professor Steven Young.

14/9 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th July 2014 were accepted without amendment.

14/10 Matters arising: research application triage

The working group received a draft flowchart of the triage system that RCSI intends to use to prioritise research applications whilst ensuring all applications are dealt with promptly. Mrs Fox explained that eight key questions had been identified which will be used to determine the urgency and complexity of the proposal.

Members considered whether the financial recovery rate should also be considered as part of the process, with greater priority given to the higher recovery rates. It was agreed that this would not be appropriate as a low recovery grant may have high strategic importance.

The Chair observed that a statement should be added to the flowchart noting that it provides general principles rather than a rigid structure, to reflect a degree of flexibility in the system. In addition, a reject option needs to be added to cover the occasional instances where it will not be possible to submit a proposal in the timescales available. These cases will be referred to the PVC Research.

Action: YF

14/11 Matters arising: service level agreement

Members received a copy of the RCSI service level agreement which had been updated to tie in with the targets set out in the triage flowchart. It was agreed that information on flexibility within the system, dealing with short deadlines and rejecting applications should be added to the document. Mrs Fox commented that it would be helpful to receive feedback regarding the section on expectations from department staff.

Action: All

14/12 Matters arising: ACP user acceptance testing plan

Members received an outline of the planned user acceptance testing. There are 3 proposed phases to the testing:

- Ongoing testing of all aspects by RSO
- Informal testing of the system by future users

- Formal, structured testing with a wide range of future users

The Chair requested the provision of a schedule of the types of users that will be involved with the formal user acceptance testing.

Action: ST

14/13 Matters arising: ACP access for department and faculty users

The group received details of the ACP access that will be granted to department and faculty users. Accounts will be set up automatically for most users, which will provide view access to their own/their department/their faculty costings, as appropriate. In addition there will be access to user appropriate reports.

A query was raised regarding the use of non-academic HoD substitutes for workflow tasks. It was noted that this raises some issues as access to ACP tasks cannot be separated from access to other financial tasks. Mrs Fox agreed to discuss the matter with Mr Fielding.

Action: YF/PF

14/14 Matters arising: Draft costing pro forma

Members received a draft pro forma for use by staff requesting the creation of a costing for a research project. The form requests the data that is required to set up a project and costing in ACP and the information needed for the triage assessment. The pro forma circulated was created using Adobe Forms and a final version in this format will be made available to staff. In addition, a pro forma will also be created in Agresso (ACP). It is anticipated that the Agresso version will be more suitable for complex costings but staff will be free to use whichever version they prefer. The group agreed that the draft form provided appeared to be suitable.

14/15 Faculty feedback

The group considered the summarised feedback submitted by the faculties and provided responses. In some instances the issues raised were unrelated to ACP or outside the remit of the working group so these points could not be addressed. It was agreed that members would continue to seek feedback for consideration at the next meeting.

Action: All

Feedback: RCSO can be slow and unresponsive

IWG response: UMAG agreed that the costing support should be over-resourced in the first instance to ensure that the new system does not create delays for research grant applicants.

Feedback: Timeframe and turnaround times may not be plausible

IWG response: The working group has given this significant thought at its meetings. Processes have been agreed that put measures in place to ensure proposals can be turned around in an appropriate timeframe (though they may be rejected where timescales are completely implausible). See minute 14/10 above.

Feedback: What initial and ongoing training will be available, including for HoDs

IWG response: RCSO will provide training before and at the point of go live. ACP training will also be embedded within the OED training programmes e.g. HoD training. RCSO will continue to provide ad hoc one to one training and specific events (e.g. for new staff, early career staff etc.) as required.

Feedback: People find the workflow flowchart overwhelming, there appear to be a lot of additional steps

IWG response: There is very little difference to the existing pFACT workflow, most of the steps are already going on behind the scenes. There is ongoing effort to streamline the approval process as far as possible and that the lines of communication are clearly identified.

Feedback: Will there be a role for specialist administrators?

IWG response: It is not the role of the IWG to review who does what. Decisions made by the IWG may eliminate certain possibilities, other than that it is outside the remit.

Feedback: How will bottlenecks be avoided?

IWG response: Bottlenecks cannot always be prevented as they can be created by the timing of funder deadlines. The following measures will minimise their impact:

- a) Academics give as much notice as they reasonably can (training will raise awareness for the need to involve RSCO at an early stage)
- b) RSCO is adequately resourced so that bottlenecks are the exception, not the rule
- c) The triage system (see minute 14/10 above) gives a principled way of dealing with applications.

Feedback: RSCO has a lot of part-time staff and there is a lack of continuity.

IWG response: Additional resource will mean that there can be more than one point of contact per faculty. This feedback will be taken into consideration with respect to the structure of the team going forward.

Feedback: Will JeS be populated automatically by the software?

IWG response: ACP is not yet compatible with JeS or other electronic systems. RSCO will be happy to add the costs to JeS for all proposals, although academics can still do this themselves if they prefer.

Feedback: What is the impact on the role of faculty staff

IWG response: There has not yet been a decision on the role of faculty staff and it is outside the remit of the IWG.

14/16 ACP implementation timeline

The group received an updated timeline. It was reported that there had been delays to the timeline as the initial set up of the live system had taken longer than anticipated. Problems copying the workflow from the development environment to the live environment combined with staff leave had caused an additional delay. It was noted that as a result of these delays the implementation was running approximately 4 weeks behind schedule.

It was observed that further delays to the schedule will impact on the training programme. The Chair requested a draft training schedule with multiple scenarios to show how training will be delivered if there are additional delays to the implementation. Delays that are likely to impact on delivery must be reported to the Chair as they arise.

Action: YF/ST

14/17 Communication plans

It was reported that a notice had appeared in LU Text after the IWG meeting on 10 July. It was agreed that updates should be sent to LU Text on an approximately monthly basis and these should also be submitted to faculty newsletters. In addition the IWG agendas, papers and minutes should be made available through the RSCO website. It was also suggested that the offer should be made to demonstrate the system at future PRC meetings.

Action: YF/ST

14/18 Any other business

A query was raised regarding whether improved reporting on awarded grant expenditure would be available as part of the ACP implementation. It was noted that it will be easier to make reports available to academics as they will all have Agresso accounts and will become familiar with Agresso Self Service through using ACP. However, new reports are not expected to be available until a later phase of the implementation. The Chair requested that a paper is submitted to the next meeting with an outline of the reports that it is anticipated will be made available.

Action: YF/ST

14/19 Next meetings

It was expected that the next meeting will take place in early November.