

INTERNATIONAL NETWORK of UNIVERSITIES

Research Workshop – October 2006

Introduction

At its meeting in Jönköping in September 2006, the INU Council resolved to accord a high priority to the fostering of collaborative research activities between the member universities and, to this end, included a research workshop in its Work Plan for 2006.

The Council welcomed an offer from Ritsumeikan University to host the Workshop, and a preliminary planning meeting was held in Jönköping at the conclusion of the formal Council meeting to begin preparations.

Following subsequent intensive planning, the Workshop was held at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan from 11-13 October 2006 involving participants from the following member Universities as well as representatives (including the President) of the INU:

- Flinders University, Australia;
- Hiroshima University, Japan;
- James Madison University, United States of America;
- Jönköping University – School of Health Sciences, Sweden;
- La Trobe University, Australia;
- University of Leicester, United Kingdom;
- Malmö University, Sweden;
- Ritsumeikan University, Japan.

A listing of participants is provided at *Attachment A*.

The participants were primarily the Vice-Presidents (or equivalent) with responsibility for research management within their respective universities and who, in some cases, were accompanied by senior research managers. In addition, several academic staff took part, and provided invaluable input from the perspective of the “practising” academic.

The program for the Workshop was developed around a number of critical themes and current issues with the primary objective of identifying areas of research strength or priority which were common to at least several member universities, and funding sources which could be utilized to provide financial support for collaborative research projects within the identified areas of common strength.

The Workshop also provided an opportunity for members to receive briefings on research assessment schemes in the United Kingdom and Australia (the Research Assessment Exercise and the proposed Research Quality Framework respectively) as well as research commercialisation strategies and for the exchange of experiences within these arenas.

Participants discussed a number of related issues, including mechanisms for enhanced communication between members, the establishment of a register of unique equipment and resources available for use by partner universities, student and faculty exchange at the postgraduate and postdoctoral levels, joint degree programs, a common framework for the confidentiality of research-in-progress, and the establishment of a Special Interest Group for research managers.

The following is a summary of the areas of discussion and their outcomes, together with a set of specific recommendations.

Research Profiles of Member Universities

A representative of each University presented an overview of the areas of research strengths and priorities within each University as a means by which areas of common strengths across the Network could be identified.

As well as a general presentation by each University, a separate session was convened concentrating on the generic area of Biosciences which had been identified in the Workshop planning process as the most common area of strength.

Apart from the identification of specific disciplines of common strength, a number of themes emerged from these presentations:

- a strong focus on a student-centred approach as well as the recognition of the importance of research within each University;
- the self-identification by each University of key areas of research strength, and the concentration of resources within such areas, rather than an attempt to cover a comprehensive array of disciplines;
- an increased emphasis on technology transfer and the development of linkages with commerce and industry.

Areas of Common Strengths among Member Universities

From the advice provided by each University, participants identified the following generic areas of strength which were common to several Universities at least. In doing so, it was noted that each broad area of research comprised a range of specialisations, and that the list was essentially an indicative one which would require updating periodically.

No.	Research area	INU universities
1.	Nanotechnology	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
2.	Water research	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Ma, Ri
3.	Environmental studies	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
4.	Molecular and cell biology	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
5.	Materials science	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
6.	Space science	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le
7.	Biotechnology	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
8.	GIS and disaster mitigation	Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ri
9.	Knowledge transfer and innovation	Fl, Hi, LTU, Le, Ri
10.	Clinical science	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma
11.	Health informatics	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ri
12.	Primary health care	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
13.	Health of marginalised groups	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
14.	Disability studies	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Ma, Ri
15.	Ageing	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
16.	Mathematics and Science education research	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
17.	Peace	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Ma, Ri
18.	Cultural heritage	Fl, Hi, JMU, LTU, Le, Ri
19.	International Relations	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
20.	Migration and ethnic studies/global human movement	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri
21.	International Education	Fl, Hi, JMU, Jo, LTU, Le, Ma, Ri

In addition, it emerged that most Universities held unique equipment or resources (such as digitalised archives or specialised databases) which could be listed on a central INU register and made available for use by researchers from partner Universities.

International and National Funding Sources for Collaborative Research Projects

A representative of each University presented a summary of research funding sources utilized by member Universities and, in particular, those which could be accessed for international collaborative projects.

A sample of appropriate schemes is provided at *Attachment B*.

In discussing the range of external funding schemes available, participants noted that in general these would be more applicable for scientific research projects whereas the requirements for researchers in the humanities were most often travel and accommodation assistance as well as access to library and other data collections.

Participants also noted that for many funding schemes, such as that operated by the World Bank, grant applications must be accompanied by a detailed “Statement of Capability”. It was agreed that the development of a generic INU Statement of Capability might be achieved through further analysis of the considerable data which members had provided in the pre-Workshop questionnaires submitted by each University.

Members agreed that funding should be sought from the Toyota Foundation to conduct discipline-specific workshops as pilot schemes for future collaborative activities in the following areas:

- Cultural Heritage;
- Migration and ethnic studies;
- Environment;
- Ageing;
- Peace.

In addition, members agreed that a recommendation should be submitted to the INU Council that each member university be encouraged to provide “seed funding” which could be utilized to assist research staff in any of the designated areas to explore possibilities for collaborative research projects within the INU through, for example, visits to appropriate partner universities to prepare joint submissions for external funding agencies.

There was also widespread support for a proposal to establish a formal INU Fellowship program which would encourage academic staff who wished to renew or redirect their research interests to undertake a short sabbatical period working with colleagues in the relevant disciplines at a member university. Under such a scheme, the “home” university would be responsible for assisting, as appropriate, with travel and accommodation costs whilst the “receiving” university would, where possible, provide access to office, library and computing facilities.

Research Assessment

Dr Chris Jones (University of Leicester) and Professor Chris Marlin (Flinders University) provided a summary of the research assessment approaches in the United Kingdom and Australia respectively:

- In the United Kingdom, a quality assessment approach (the Research Assessment Exercise) had been used for several years, focussed primarily on outcomes and with the objective of rewarding excellence and providing an incentive to improve research performance at the Departmental level. However, although fair and

flexible, the system was complicated, sophisticated and a massive drain on resources. It now appeared that the current system was to be phased out, to be replaced by a metrics approach.

- In Australia, a range of various metrics-based approaches had been used for several years, but it appeared that a new system based on separate quality and impact assessments (the Research Quality Framework) would be introduced in the near future.

Research Management and Research Commercialisation Strategies

Participants noted that research management was a very broad activity, including:

- helping researchers to access grants of various kinds;
- assistant researchers to link to industry and other external bodies;
- encouraging appropriate publications and participation in conferences;
- managing the process of commercialising the ideas and expertise of researchers where the increasing emphasis on attracting research income from non-traditional sources through commercialisation and technology transfer was a challenge facing all universities.

It was agreed that the establishment of a Special Interest Group comprising the research managers of the member Universities was highly desirable in order to address a range of issues pertaining to international research collaboration and to provide a forum for the sharing of information, including:

- the development of a template “Deed of Confidentiality”;
- issues associated with commercialisation and Intellectual Property (students as well as faculty);
- ethics compliance;
- regulatory/compliance issues;
- immigration and visa issues in conjunction with Human Resources departments.

Flinders University offered to host a meeting of the Research Managers Special Interest Group in conjunction with the annual conference of the Australian Research Management Society (ARMS) to be held in Adelaide in August 2007, and in which research managers from INU member universities would be most welcome to participate.

Doctoral and Postdoctoral Exchange Programs

Professor Hara outlined for members the experiences of Ritsumeikan University in the areas of doctoral and postdoctoral exchange.

Members noted that Ritsumeikan University was a founding member of the Collège doctoral Franco-Japonais, a system of co-tutelle or co-supervision of doctoral students based on an agreement between the French and Japanese governments to facilitate student mobility at the doctoral level. Since the commencement of the program in 2003, Ritsumeikan had sent five doctoral students to French universities but, to date, there had been no corresponding inbound student traffic from France.

Professor Hara emphasised that co-tutelles were not double degree programs but, rather, provided an opportunity for students to receive co-supervision from a university in the country of the bilateral exchange and to spend a period working at that university. However,

some universities were now exploring the possibility of upgrading a single degree to a double degree.

At the postdoctoral level, Ritsumekan currently had 57 such international appointments, 37 of which were in Science and Engineering, who were employed by the University through external funding. However, as postdoctoral appointments were employees of the University rather than exchange students, these involved more complex immigration and visa issues.

Members noted this information with considerable interest, and agreed that the possibility of establishing joint or double postgraduate degrees between INU universities should be explored. However, it was noted that such arrangements were more realistically feasible at the bilateral rather than multilateral level.

Communication and Information Strategies within the INU

Two related issues relating to communication and information strategies were considered throughout the Workshop:

- the most effective ways to communicate and share information between member universities;
- internal dissemination of information regarding the INU within each member university and incentives for academic staff to participate in collaborative projects/activities.

In particular, participants discussed the ways in which the INU website could be better utilized to facilitate these objectives. It was generally agreed that in order for the website to be an effective communication tool, it was essential that the INU Secretariat be provided with updated information regarding, for example, research conferences. It was suggested that this might be best achieved through the listing on the INU website of links to appropriate pages within each university's home page which were updated regularly by the home university. It was agreed that each university should nominate a contact person (in most cases, the manager or the research office or equivalent position) who could liaise with the INU Secretariat.

Participants also considered whether it would be desirable for those attending the current Workshop to meet again. However, given the critical role which would be played by the Research Management Special Interest Group in the development of collaborative research activities, it was recommended that future meetings of the current group could be held via multilateral video-conference which, in view of time zone differences, could be done on a regional basis. The establishment of a Steering Committee to act on behalf of the group, in liaison with the INU Secretariat, was also proposed.

Recommendations

1. That the INU Council note the twenty identified areas of common research strengths.
2. That the INU Council encourage member universities to provide "seed funding" to assist with the establishment of collaborative research projects.
3. That the INU Council consider the establishment of a formal INU Fellowship for research renewal.
4. That the INU Council encourage member universities to explore possibilities for the establishment of joint or double degrees, noting that this would normally be most feasible on a bilateral basis.

5. That the INU Council endorse the proposed application to the Toyota Foundation for funding to support pilot workshops in the areas of:
 - Cultural heritage;
 - Migration and ethnic studies;
 - Environment;
 - Ageing;
 - Peace.

6. That the INU Council endorse the establishment of a Research Management Special Interest Group comprising the research managers of the member universities. This group would play a critical role in addressing a range of issues pertaining to international research collaboration (as noted above) and would provide a forum for the sharing of information

7. That the INU Council establish a Steering Committee to which the Research Management Special Interest Group should report and which, in liaison with the INU Secretariat, would develop mechanisms for the effective dissemination of information between member universities.

PARTICIPANTS IN INU RESEARCH WORKSHOP

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ATTACHMENT B

INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL FUNDING SCHEMES

The following list, which is not exhaustive, provides a sample of the funding schemes available to support international research collaboration.

Funding Agency	Website	Programs/grants
Human Frontiers Science Program	www.hfsp.org	Program supports novel, innovative & interdisciplinary basic research focussed on the complex mechanisms of living organisms: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Young Investigators Grants• Program Grants• Long-Term Fellowships• Postdoctoral Fellowships• Career Development Awards
Wellcome Trust	www.wellcome.ac.uk/funding	Independent UK-based charity which funds research to improve human and animal health with funding programs in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Biomedical science• Technology transfer• Medical humanities• Public engagement• International scientific partnerships
Toyota Foundation	www.toyotafound.or.jp/etop.htm	A private, non-profit grant-making organisation with a range of programs to support the formation of networks promoting exchange in the Asian region
World Bank	www.worldbank.org	The World Bank carries out projects and provides a wide variety of analytical and advisory services to help meet the development needs of individual countries and the international community.
National Science Foundation	www.nsf.gov/funding	Funds research and education in most fields of science, including US participation in international scientific and engineering projects
European Union	www.eurunion.org/legislat/ste/eursrchipriorities.htm	European Union's main instrument for research funding
Japan Society for Promotion of Science	www.jsps.go.jp/english/	Independent administrative unit fostering scientific advancement, including promotion of international scientific co-operation
Australian Research Council	www.arc.gov.au/grant_programs/linkage_international.htm	The ARC provides funding under <i>Linkage International</i> for the movement of researchers between eligible Australia based research organisations and centres of research excellence overseas, and to foster collaboration and networking between Australia-based and overseas researchers.

Dept of Education, Science & Training (Aust)	www.crc.gov.au/Information/default.aspx	The Cooperative Research Centres (CRC) Programme, which was established to bring together researchers and research users, emphasises the importance of collaborative arrangements to maximise the benefits of research through an enhanced process of utilisation, commercialisation and technology transfer.
National Health & Medical Research Council (Aust)	www.nhmrc.gov.au	The NHMRC provides funding to foster health and medical research and training and monitors ethical issues relating to health throughout Australia. If a grant applicant can demonstrate that a component of the research is required to be done overseas and that the research will provide a substantial benefit to the health of Australians NHMRC funding may be used to that effect.
Australian Academy of Science	www.science.org.au	The Academy's International Scientific Collaborations Program provides funding for scientific visits, collaborative research projects and postdoctoral fellowships.