

CHUDE Annual Report to RES Council 2013

In January 2013 there was the triennial change in leadership: I took over as Chair, from Neil Rickman and Professor Daniel Zizzo (University of East Anglia) succeeded Tim Worrell as Secretary.

The two main pre-occupations with CHUDE over the past 12 months have been the REF 2014 and the Economics Network, although I will also briefly mention the Open Access issues and CHUDE's links with officialdom.

REF2014

At the CHUDE meeting at the RES Conference in Cambridge (Easter 2012) Peter Neary helpfully spoke of the REF remit as he saw it, in addition to answering many questions for Departments intending to submit to UoA18. Rachel Griffiths kindly agreed to undertake a similar question and answer session at the RES Royal Holloway Conference meeting this year. CHUDE has had many opportunities to discuss many important issues and we owe a big thank you to Peter and to Rachel for their time and patience.

Impact has also taken up much time at recent CHUDEs and again the sharing of ideas and problem has been very helpful, although I am sure that major measurement problems, some stemming from the heterogeneity of work, still exist and probably will do for a long time yet.

My personal concern is that it is likely that the number of Economics Units submitting to Unit 18 will be less than 30, although there are some 65 Units offering Economics degrees. Part of this is that many Departments have been restructured as part of broader Business Schools – including my own at Loughborough – which is not always helpful to the subject. For example, we are not submitting to Uo18 – only to Uo19 – so the majority of the economists will not be returned including several staff with potentially 3* and 4*-rated outputs. Thus University strategic decisions may make Economics look smaller than it really is and some high-quality research in Economics is not going to be recorded by the REF.

The Economics Network

During this year a formal subscription model, similar to the transitory version used last year, has been put in place to put the funding of staff at Bristol on a more secure basis and to augment the funding from the RES and SES.

A letter from CHUDE to the universities outlining the details of the new subscription model and to encourage participation, has led to the EN receiving £53,500 from 30 universities. Eight of these are paying at the higher rate of £3,000 that was introduced this year. There are around 10-15 others (including Bristol and UWE) that we know will pay, and it is estimated that about 40-45 universities will be subscribers. Last year (2012/13) some £65,750 was raised through subscriptions and this is likely to be exceeded in the current year 2013/14.

Many universities have either committed or pledged for 3 years, as requested in the CHUDE letter, which currently amounts to some £31,750 pledged actually, or in principle, for the next two years 2014/15 and 2015/16, with income from universities expected to stabilise at around £65,000-£70,000. The income "carry forward" from 2011/12 and the RES/SES contribution means that we will have healthy budgets for the next year or so. If it is assumed that RES funding falls to zero after the payment for next year, once the carry forward is spent, the network would be operating at a loss of around £20,000 per annum in the steady state. Staff employed from next year total 1.5ftes spread over 4 individuals.

Major activities include: GTA workshops, New Lecturer workshops, Developments in Economics Education conference, the EN website and a research project on student expectations in conjunction with 22 universities. In the coming year the EN will be prioritising the "Why Study Economics" website to help entice more young people into the subject and profession.

Open Access

There was a very passionate discussion about Open access following the Finch Report. Neil took the lead on this and helped draft a document which was provided to the BIS committee as noted in the February minutes. Although Open Access was widely recognised as the future, the path towards such an objective did raise some important issues about international publications and implications for the next REF, staff recruitment as well as the future of the Societies journals. CHUDE, like the RES, is keeping this as agenda item.

Official Links

Andy Ross (formerly GES) and now Andrew Gurney and Daniel Nixon (Bank of England) will continue to be invited to the biennial meetings of CHUDE to keep open the valued linkage between two large employers of economists and the academic branch of the profession. Their inputs are highly valued by CHUDE and I hope that these relationships can be maintained and strengthened over the next few years. One manifestation of this was Diane Coyle's review of the teaching of Economics post-crisis (with Andy Ross) last year.

Eric Pentecost
Chair, CHUDE
12/06/2013