

ROYAL ECONOMIC SOCIETY

CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENTS OF ECONOMICS

CHUDE Committee Meeting
Wednesday 11th April 2007
11.00 a.m. Start

Venue: Royal Economic Society Conference
Room: Panorama 3, Rootes Building
Warwick University

Minutes of CHUDE Full Meeting

1. Apologies

1.1. Received and noted on list of attendees

2. Minutes of CHUDE Committee Meeting of 4th November 2006.

2.1. The minutes of the November meeting were accepted as a true and accurate record.

3. Matters arising and not covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

3.1. The issue of widening links beyond the established links with the GES and BoE will be left to the November meeting.

4. Minutes of CHUDE Steering Committee Meeting of 10th March 2007 (for information only).

4.1. The Steering Committee Minutes were received by the meeting without comment.

5. HEFCE – Teaching Funding Allocation Response – for report.

5.1. The response made by CHUDE to the HEFCE consultation on the teaching funding allocation had been distributed prior to the meeting. It was reported that the main issues raised in the CHUDE response were (i) that the use of historic and reported costs was likely to build in existing inefficiencies and give incentives for misreporting and (ii) that a strong case can be made for re-banding of the teaching funding of economics. It was reiterated at the meeting that a strong case had been made by John Beath and Steve Nickell in the past and that these arguments should be strongly repeated and developed wherever possible.

6. The Economics Network – John Sloman

6.1. John Sloman reported on the recent activities of the Economics Network, including the recent lecturers survey and addition of new films and blog on the whystudyeconomics website. He also reported on planned future activities including the Developments in Economics Education Conference 6-7 September which includes talks from Tim Harford (the undercover economist), Andy Ross and David Hendry, and the new lecturers and GTA workshops which are in addition also being held in Scotland this year. John reported on the appointment of Wyn Morgan and Rebecca Taylor as associate Directors of the Economics Network and wished to encourage applications for associate members of the Network. He also reminded the meeting of the use departments can make of the Network to arrange departmental visits and urged HoDs to encourage staff to showcase any of their effective/innovative use of learning, teaching or assessment methods so as to share best practice.

7. Report on graduate employability – Richard O'Doherty with Chris Webber and Deborah Street

7.1. Deborah Street reported on a survey of graduate employability looking at the economics benchmarking statement and the correspondence with employers needs. The survey consisted of interviews with a large number of employers. The report is timely given the increasing use being made of the employability aspects of curricula. It was generally found that there was evidence of good economics skills but some lack of general team working skills and written communication skills. This was particularly evident from application forms and cvs. The full report will go on the Economics Network and RES websites in the near future.

8. Report on FDTL project on classroom experiments – Dieter Balkenborg

8.1. Dieter Balkenborg reported on the progress made on the FDTL5 project on "Bringing Economic Experiments into the Classroom". He explained how information and games can be accessed from the website: <http://www.people.ex.ac.uk/dgbalken/FEELE/links.html> and the setting up of pages at the Wikiversity website to provide guidance on how to use simple games in the classroom or on open days etc.

9. CHUDE Issues

9.1. It was reported that Alan Carruth and David Blackaby had kindly agreed to extend their membership of the steering committee for another term. It was also reported that Rebecca Taylor had been approached and had accepted to become a member of the steering committee after Nancy Devlin had had to step down. However, new members of the steering group for 2008 would be required and it was agreed that a call for nominations would be sent around shortly.

9.2. It was agreed to set up a moderated CHUDE maillist which all members would be able to access and use.

10. Government Economic Service – Andy Ross

10.1. Andy reported on the working group looking at graduate employability at the GES. CHUDE is represented through Neil Rickman who sits on the working group. Andy reported that the general skills level of graduates was good but noted that for the majority of GES posts good familiarity with spreadsheets rather than econometric software. The report is likely to be completed by the end of the year. Andy also reported that many GES departments are developing an M-level syllabus for the general and specific economic skills they require.

10.2. Andy reported on the forthcoming GES/RES/BoE Open day and confirmed that a slot was available for the RES to highlight academic careers in economics.

10.3. Andy reported that the new Head(s) of the GES will be announced in mid-May.

11. RAE 2008

11.1. Questions about the RAE had been solicited from members before the meeting and a list distributed with the agenda. It was pointed out that most of these questions were of the type where a definitive answer could be expected. There was a discussion of the questions and the two panel members who were present provided useful guidance. A list with guidance on the answers will be produced and distributed as soon as possible following further consultations where necessary. It was agreed that further questions could be circulated and discussed via CHUDE, with the possibility of forwarding appropriate ones to the sub-panel if necessary.

12. RES Issues

12.1. John Sutton reported on RES matters. He reported on the RES job market event held at the LSE in January and the success in particular of the poster sessions. Around 180 students had participated and around 30 potential employers with 15 from the UK. It was confirmed that UCL had agreed to host the event next year.

12.2. There was a discussion of the RES annual public lecture which this year is to be given by Professor Nick Stern on climate change. Subject to appropriate geographical distribution in London, the Midlands/West and the North (broadly defined), the RES would welcome expressions of interest from enthusiastic potential hosts for future events. It was noted that that the lectures attracted a wide and broad audience and that hosts would need the capacity to organise and publicise these events appropriately.

12.3. Richard Portes was worried by the current low response rate to the RES gender and ethnicity survey and encouraged all HoDs to complete the survey if they hadn't already done so. It was pointed out that the requirement of the survey had been simplified so that completing it should not be too onerous. Any HoD who has received the survey can respond by contacting Alan Manning at the LSE.

13. ESRC Matters

13.1. The timetable for the ESRC International Benchmarking exercise was outlined. It was explained that the steering group to consider the appointment of the international assessors would meet at the conference on 13th April. It was reported that CHUDE had played an important role in nominating members and that the members of the steering group which would be chaired by John Vickers consisted of David Greenaway and Neil Rickman as ex officio members, Charles Bean, Nick Crafts, Chris Giles, Vicky Pryce, Carol Propper and David Ulph, with Tim Worrall as advisor to the group on bibliometric issues.

13.2. There was a brief report on the letter from Jeremy Neathey on PhD and postgraduate studentships in economics. Given the success in getting a dedicated pool for postgraduate fellows in economics and for the recycling of PhD studentships into economics, all HoDs were encouraged to make sure that as many good applications were made as possible. The point was reiterated by John Beath who is assessor for the postdoctoral fellowships.

13.3. David Blackaby reported on the role of the ESRC Resources Board in providing data and other resources. He noted that bids can be made to the Board to influence its medium/long term activity and that CHUDE should be aware of this. He reported on the UK Longitudinal Survey which will replace the BHPS, and that Datastream would soon be available through the ESRC website.

14. Any Other Business

14.1. Neil Rickman thanked John Sutton for his term as RES President and for his strong support of CHUDE. He welcomed John Vickers to CHUDE and wished him a successful Presidency of RES.

Date of next meetings:

Steering Committee Meeting:

Saturday 29th September 2007

Full CHUDE Meeting:

Saturday 3rd November 2007