

Summary of FRAME Meeting

Saturday, 12 March 2005

Spinifex Boardroom, Alice Springs Resort

10.30am

Attendees: Jonathon Newbury, Daryl Pedler, Lizette Burke-Holder, Geoff Solarsh, Campbell Murdoch, Paul Worley, Judi Walker, Steve Margolis, Lucy Walters, Rick McLean (Chair).
Via teleconference: Dawn DeWitt, Sandy Reid.
By invitation via teleconference: Katy Balmaks

1. Welcome and Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Notes of Previous Meeting

These were accepted as a true record.

3. Items

a. Common Questionnaire – Update

Dawn DeWitt provided an update. Following the previous meeting in Burnie, she had had some discussions with Sue Shannon but the next version of the questionnaire had not yet been finalised. She pointed out however that the draft CDAMS questionnaire which is to be piloted by a number of universities has been finalised and she has a copy. She proposed that the RCS questionnaire should be finalised in the near future taking into consideration the CDAMS questionnaire and that a paper about the development of the questionnaire be submitted to the electronic journal. Paul Worley agreed with this suggestion but commented that the CDAMS questionnaire was an entry not an exit questionnaire and that prospective data about student cohorts would not be available for several years.

In relation to the need for ethics committee approvals by the individual universities to use the rural questionnaire, Paul offered to circulate the Flinders University questionnaire that had been submitted to their ethics committee and which had been approved so that issues about tracking had been addressed could be addressed in individual universities' new submissions.

Jonathon Newbury queried if the CDAMS questionnaire would be compulsory and Dawn answered that it would not.

Campbell Murdoch raised the issue of ownership of data which will be important, as there are a number of levels at which this ownership needed to be considered. After some discussion it was agreed that it would be appropriate for the rural questionnaire that the individual universities owned their data and that agreement would be gained on each occasion if pooled data were to be required. Dawn suggested that it would be handy if the data could be managed in the same way as CDAMS will be managing the pooled data.

Action:

- Dawn, Jonathon and Suzanne will meet in the near future to progress the next draft of the questionnaire and circulate it to all members prior to a finalization in April.
- Paul Worley will circulate all members copies of the previous successful Flinders University ethics committee application.
- Dawn DeWitt will circulate the CDAMS draft questionnaire.

b. Review Article – Update

Steve Margolis and Geoff Solarsh updated the group. Previous correspondence had not received a uniformly positive response, partly relating to the difference styles of assessment and individual student data available within the universities. After some discussion it was determined that three universities are not able to access either specific data about pre-existing student performance or quantitative data about performance during time in the Rural Clinical Schools. These are the University of Adelaide, the University of Tasmania and the University of Sydney.

Geoff Solarsh commented that it would be valuable to be able to put something into the public domain and mentioned that there is some resistance from metropolitan faculty about rural activities. Paul Worley suggested it would be valuable to submit something that shows that students are at least doing no worse than their metropolitan colleagues. There was general agreement that this was a worthwhile process. Several commented that it is apparent that rural students are doing better than their peers. It was commented that it might be valuable to have a second article relating to the difficulties of instituting metropolitan curricula in rural environments.

Action:

- Steve Margolis and Geoff Solarsh will make progress on the article following discussion and will circulate a draft to members for comment sometime in the near future.

c. Correspondence from DoHA*Integration of RUSC*

Initial comment came from Campbell Murdoch, Paul Worley and Judi Walker who are members of the RUSC reference group. Campbell commented that he felt reassured after the RUSC reference group meeting that the program would not be scraped as there was no real duplication at this stage.

There was considerable discussion about the reduction of the RUSC requirement to 2 weeks, some feeling that it is too little while others feeling that it is satisfactory and fits in well with their programs. Paul Worley commented that the proposed 2 weeks came largely from the Rural Doctors Associations and rural workforce agencies because of concerns by practicing clinicians about being overburdened. It was commented that universities may be able to use the RUSC funding flexibly to augment existing rural clinical school programs in a range of ways. In relation to budgeting, it was commented that the medical schools' Deans have final say over the allocation of the RUSC funding.

25% parameter

There was some discussion about the 25% parameter and what constitutes full time student units. It was agreed that the previously agreed discussion paper needs to be developed in the near future so this matter can be progressed with the Commonwealth.

d. RRH and Agreement - Update

Rick McLean commented on a letter from ARHEN asking that rural clinical schools contribute the money for two years if they are not prepared to sign the formal joint venture agreement. There was unanimous support for this concept. Campbell Murdoch indicated that his university's solicitor had suggested a simple letter of agreement or support would be adequate.

Action:

The Chair will communicate with AHREN asking that invoices be sent to the individual rural clinical schools for payment.

Campbell Murdoch will explore the form of a letter of agreement and circulate it to members for their individual use.

e. Katy Balmaks joined the meeting

Katy Balmaks asked for feedback from both the universities and the rural clinical schools about the RUSC program.

She mentioned that student networks are being evaluated and asked for a representative from the rural clinical schools on this steering group evaluation. Jonathon Newbury agreed to represent FRAME.

The question of the reporting framework was raised by Katy Balmaks. She said that the current framework does not allow individual rural clinical schools to indicate where they excel in relation to the parameters.

The question of the revised parameters was raised. Katy Balmaks indicated that the revised parameters will not come into effect until a new contract for funding has been finalised and signed. There was general feeling that the existing framework should be used in the short term.

Campbell Murdoch commented that the current reporting framework is disconnected from the work plan. Katy Balmaks asked if FRAME wished to develop a new reporting framework and the general consensus was in favour of this approach.

Daryl Pedler asked what was the minimum length of rotation considered appropriate. Katy Balmaks suggested 6 months or 1 semester. Campbell Murdoch asked why students should spend more than the 25% time in the rural environment if it does not count. Katy Balmaks indicated that performing above the parameter would be viewed positively by the Department and suggested that in subsequent submissions for funding longer stays would be necessary to justify requests for additional funding. Similarly, she commented that for those universities for which the reduction from 50% of clinical time to one year meant a reduction in the required stay by students, maintenance for the current level of funding would require justification that students are spending longer than the minimum period required.

Paul Worley raised the question of rural exposure in the rural clinical school in the pre-clinical years. Katy Balmaks said the Department would consider this on its merit for individual cases.

Action:

FRAME will draft a revised reporting framework before the second half of the year.

Jonathon Newbury asked about dates for reporting and frequency. Katy Balmaks indicated that as the schools are not yet fully established it is probably better that 6 monthly reports remain. There are problems in relation to the times for reporting, some being better academically while others being better financially. Generally it was agreed that the current reporting times of February and August/September are satisfactory.

Katy Balmaks reminded the meeting that the universities are taking over the running of the Community Advisory Boards. She suggested that it would be possible to integrate RSC and UDRH Community Advisory Board meetings if feasible in individual universities.

Katy Balmaks left the meeting at this time.

f. Printed Materials

The Chair thanked Geoff Solarsh and Dawn DeWitt for producing materials for the meeting at short notice. It was agreed that the rural clinical schools would equally share the cost of any printed materials thus far and that brochures which had not arrived could be circulated by the organisers post-conference.

It was also agreed that electronic copy of posters and brochures would be sent to the individual schools for their use.

4. Other Business

a. Membership of NRHA

The Chair asked if FRAME felt it would like to become a supporting member of NRHA. There was general agreement although it was agreed this would require some justification.

Action:

The Chair to progress.

b. The Role of FRAME

Campbell Murdoch attempted to start a spirited debate about the purpose of FRAME particularly in the context of a preceding plenary session which stressed inter-professional learning over uni-dimensional learning. Others agree that this issue needed further debate and it was decided that this would be an agenda item for the next FRAME meeting.

5. Date for Next Meeting

It was decided that this needed to occur within the next 4 months given the items that need action in the near future. Campbell Murdoch undertook to explore the possibility of a meeting in Broome in July.

Meeting ended at 1pm

Rick McLean
15 March 2005