

Imaging Advisory Group (IAG)

25.09.23
Minutes

Present:

Ambaliki Batra-Penny	ABP	Head of Enterprise, Innovation and Contracts (JRES)
Ariel Poliandri	AP	Interim Director of Research Operations
Aurora Campagna	AC	PhD Student Forum Representative
Carly Lightfoot	CL	Library and Learning Technology Services
Daniel Osborn	DO	Senior Lecturer in Genetics - MCS
Deborah Chong	DC	Lecturer in Infection and Immunity - I&I
Jenay Thomas	JT	Minute Taker
Nikita Demchenko	ND	Cell Biology Manager – IRF
Odunola Akinyemi	OA	Management Accounts – Research Operations
Paris Ataliotis	PA	Reader in Developmental Genetics - IMBE
Sandra Ashton	SA	Head of Facility - IRF (Chair)

Apologies received from:

Daniel Meijles	DM	Senior Lecturer in Cardiovascular Biology - MCS
Kirsty Allen	KA	Head of Outreach and Widening Participation - ECRM
Jose Saldana Fabregat	JSF	Senior Lecturer in Biomedical Science - IMBE
Florencia Cavodeassi	FC	Senior Lecturer in Development Biology

Item 1

a). Previous Minutes and Action Points

To receive and approve: The minutes of the meeting held on 26.06.2023 were approved no amendments.

Actions from Previous IAG Meeting (26.06.23):

Action Point 1 from 26.06.23 meeting: *“To identify members for a potential working group to continue this discussion re histology data tissue -bank”*

Status: In Progress

No update. SA agrees this is a good idea but noted at the moment it is a low priority.

Action Point 2 from 26.06.23 meeting: *“To discuss a tour/ Research Awareness Day for Year 1 biomedical science students”.*

Status: Complete

DO, AE and FC discussed this outside of the meeting.

Action Point 3 from 26.06.23 meeting: *“To discuss the review of the IRF staff and student’s handbook the next IRF Lab Meeting”*

Status: Complete

SA also announced the IRF will begin their drop-ins’ sessions every fortnight, 2nd floor in the open plan areas to ensure they are as visible as possible within the Research Institutes. Comms will be circulated via the RIMs.

Action Point 4 from 26.06.23 meeting: *“To discuss the Staff and Student IRF usage handbooks”.*

Status: Complete

Reviewed and accessible on the website. The IRF hope to address any problems that people have with accessing the facility during the drop-in sessions.

Action Point 4 from 26.06.23 meeting: “SA to review the Facility Access Policy draft in line with feedback, decide the format and bring back to the next IAG meeting”.

Status: Complete

SA sent final policy to JT. JT circulated it to the IAG.

Action Point 5 from 26.06.23 meeting: “To meet with AC, AE and DO briefly to discuss charges for overnight imaging.”

Status: Complete

AE has had a meeting AC to clarify and agreed calculations are correct. SA has updated policy to reflect overnight imaging. AC expressed that she feels the cost is high. SA also urged all to apply for the equipment IRF Research Excellence fund to maximise use of the facility equipment at low-cost and encouraged her to send this message out to the community.

Action Point 6 from 26.06.23 meeting: “To devise a formal agreement with other Universities/ Institutes allowing our Researchers access to their microscopy equipment”

Status: Ongoing

AE was leading on this prior to maternity leave. DO also highlighted a hub managed by facility managers throughout London that could be useful but is unsure of status currently. SA asked Emily Woodcock to pick up on this and will bring back to the next meeting.

b). Introductions

Ambiliki Batra- Penny was introduced as a new member of the group. Ambi is Head of Enterprise, Innovation and Contracts (JRES). ABP highlighted that team undertake various projects and initiatives that would be of interest to the group including the Concept Development Awards (a great opportunity for researchers) and the SME Innovation Voucher program, allow a small company to access £5000 - £10,000 worth of academic time, facilities and equipment.

Odunola Akinyemi was also introduced to the group as Management Accounts for Research Operations.

Item 2: Updates on research, teaching /student support, strategic or commercial activities

a. Lecturers

I&I: DC noted it has been a quiet summer in regard to research but anticipates things will become busier now that term has started with new students requiring use of the facility. The IRF Excellence Award email has been circulated amongst I&I Institute. In support of this initiative, SA informed group in part, it has brought in 2 grants £999, 971 of which £788,00 will be received by St Georges. Also, please note, collaborators can be involved as well. Any London universities can participate as long as there is clear excellence and benefit to St Georges.

MCS:

No new updates

IMBE:

No new update. Representatives unable to attend meeting.

Population Health:

b. Post-Doctoral Scientists

KO has received IRF grant from last round. Generated some data which will be shared on 24th Jan, some of the data will be presented on 11th Oct at Royal Vet College (part of the London Vascular Biology form) and hopes to attract interest from this.

New Action Point 1 – KO to send SA a brief email with details surrounding the work he will be speaking about in October (evidence of the effectiveness of the IRF)

In relation to the overnight charges, KO raised two concerns. He queried if the charge had been increased twice in the last 4 months. He also has notice that the cell type he uses grow slower than the incubator which extends the time of the experiment. Possibly may need to look in to whether the correct regulators or carbon dioxide nitrogen mixes. SA commented that they should discuss this outside of the group and thanked KO for his comments, it is useful for the IRF to receive feedback.

c. PhD students

AC reported no complaints and has raised awareness regarding IRF Research Award within PhD student community. The funds discussed previously have expired in July, but AC managed to organise the post-graduate symposium taking place in October and used the opportunity to sponsor it. It will be held in Embankment and all are more than welcome to join.

New Action Point 2 - AC to send details to JT and SA to circulate to encourage IRF members and other members of staff to attend.

d. i. Professional Services –Library

CL commented that the review of Library systems that support research still ongoing (CRIS or Figshare). Sarah Stuart is now in post as Research Data support manager and can be contacted at researchdata@sgul.ac.uk. There are improvements to physical space in the library including installation of new power sockets.

ii. Professional Services – Finance

iii. Professional Services – OWP (ERCM)

No update as Kirsty Allen (KA) was not able to attend.

iii. Professional Services – JRES

ABP informed group that the 1st issue of their newsletter will be launching, aimed at both external (businesses, other universities and collaborators) and internal staff and students. Email enterprise@sgul.ac.uk to submit any information for the newsletter. SME innovation voucher awards (mentioned above) and will be highlighted in the first issue.

DO queried how this initiative works. AMP explained some companies approach their team with a problem and request a space or ask to be connected to an academic to help them. Alternatively, academics may express interest in working with industry and Enterprise team will identify a suitable company to pair them with. Also, potential to run specific SME voucher programs for specific areas, for example one specific to access to the IRF. The project may start off small, but aim is to build a long-lasting partnership with the company (referenced Ferran Valderrama's project as an example).

Beth Richards, IP Officer, can meet with anyone interested in industry to do a scoping exercise. Office is located at back of JRES office, ground floor, Jenner Wing (near HR). The group agreed this is an exciting program. ABP also suggested featuring a piece on the facility within the newsletter.

An event is being held 15th November at 2:30pm - Cancer Tools (subsidiary of cancer research UK), a huge biorepository which can be used for Cancer Research. They provide access to commercial companies and a percentage comes back to University and is passed on to the academic that produce the cell line/ animal model. More information circulated via St George's and Newsletter.

e. Academic Lead

DO commented Nikon workshop was a huge success and commended AE for hard work. Researchers are keen to attend the IRF drop-in sessions. SA and DO agreed that going forward, it will be mandatory Research Excellence Award recipients to attend and share outcomes during the annual IRF Symposium.

Item 3: Report from IRF staff

To receive and consider:

a). Equipment Failures/ misuse

b) Active/ ongoing projects that require update

Histology – the Piko series red stain has been introduced, allowing you to detect collagen. Microscopes are also being upgraded to have polarisation effects available, to allow not measure collagen presence in your sections but also see them highlighted by polarised microscopy when only collagen is visible.

Flow cytometry – Jose and Daniel Meijles and himself are introducing accuri C6, small flow cytometer used mostly for training but also for research.

c). Spending requirements

ND in process of creating draft business cases for new flow cytometry equipment. For example, if anyone has ideas for experiment where you would benefit from laser with more than 20 colours or be interested in imaginary cytometer to image thousands of cells per second. If any ideas for such cases, please contact ND to gain idea of what interests users and what doesn't. Equipment to bring in to the IRF.

Item 4 Discussion

a). IRF Inaugural Symposium 2024

Encouraged all to spread the word as some of the best in microscopy in the country will be attending, speaking offering support, guidance and information with aim of starting collaborations. Speakers will be attending from 4 institutions – CRIC, National History Museum., Institute of Child Health and UCL. Will offer support, guidance and information and speak about what equipment and services are available within their facilities with the aim to start collaborations. Event will also show case St Georges and provide information on how to boost microscopy within the University. SA will invite 20 -25 members of public, 2 students per educational program. More updates to come.

b). Letter of Support Draft 1

SA explained academics often ask for letter of support for grants. SA idea was to produce a letter of support, reviewed annually, placed on website for academic to download, change name and insert equipment needed as a standard template. This allows grant applications to be completed more efficiently. This would go to Research Committee and then uploaded to webpages.

GW raised an issue that apparently grant awarding bodies prefer personalised letters of support. It may need to be adjusted but is a good place to start. GW also raised concerns that there is a danger of it being edited and changed. ABP also agreed but mentioned that they currently use a template for similar letters but after academics make the changes, JRES then review, amend where necessary and sign. This is another potential step to ensure letter is accurate. The group agreed that it is useful as it provides access to vital information that is not currently accessible but how it will be rolled out needs some reviewing.

SA are aiming to do something similar with CL and JS in the Library, producing standardised fixed text to insert into publications.

Item 5: Any other business

Meeting Closed

Dates of Meetings for 2024

To be confirmed

All meetings commence at 11:00 am in Microsoft Teams unless otherwise specified.