Responses to consultation on conference policy

Comment/question	Response
Who is on the Committee?	The Terms of Reference (which define the membership) are at http://briggs.myweb.port.ac.uk/research/ctte/tor.html
Will particular research areas/groups be prioritised?	No, however at some point in the future we might have an explicit policy to do so based on strategic goals.
Are only REF-level requests considered?	The policy doesn't mention the REF explicitly, but it should be regarded as implicit that a request should be contributing towards something that is either REF-able or which meets other strategic targets (e.g. related to innovation).
Timing. When to apply? What is meant by "urgent"?	If people apply when or before they submit a paper then very few cases should be "urgent". The implicit assumption may be that the Committee will have to "meet" in order to make decisions. We make lots of other collective decisions by email and will do so here when necessary.
Why can't we continue with the status quo (Nick approving things on an ad hoc basis)?	Nick doesn't always have the time. He anticipates that in the future he won't always have the money to support the majority of requests, so we need to formalise our priorities.
There were a couple of suggestions of radically different ways of doing things.	It is not obvious that any of the suggested ways would be any better than the proposed one.
I'd be in favour of a basic per-annum budget for research (including conferences) that can be rolled over if it's not spent. A clear allocation of money for each member of staff and PhD student would be more practical; everyone would than know what they can definitely count on.	We don't have enough money to be able to do that. If we doled it out equally, each share would be too small to go very far and therefore much would be unspent. What money we have, we need to show is spent productively and in the financial year in which it is allocated. The University doesn't "do" rollover budgets.
Issues about the subjectivity of some of the criteria. Issues about the complexity of the system. Some of the criteria are a bit arbitrary or finger in the air.	These might be the case, but we won't know for sure until we try it. The system will be kept under review and adjusted as necessary.

It is easy to add another author just to increase the chances to get the funding - but why is this a criterion?	It is in the University's marginal interest to have more than one author listed on a paper. It reduces the risk that when an author leaves the institution, that paper cannot be submitted by UoP to the next REF.
Anyone can argue that the work can lead to a journal.	True, but some will lose credibility over time if their predictions continually fail to materialise. This aspect of credibility should be reflected in the policy and has been added.
The criterion "conferences where there is evidence of prestige, low-acceptance rates or other "good" characteristics (3, 2, 1)" has rather low weight.	Revised to 5, 3, 1.
If the current system isn't broke don't fix it!	The view is that the current system is close to breaking and doesn't encourage staff to think about things strategically.

Jim Briggs / June 2015