

The Centre for Social and Environmental Accounting Research
CSEAR Council
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CSEAR COUNCIL
14 May 2015

1. Council Members Present:
<i>In person:</i> John Ferguson, Colin Dey, Massimo Contrafatto, Ian Thomson, Lorna Stevenson <i>via WebEx:</i> Charles Cho, Robin Roberts, Nola Buhr, Jesse Dillard <i>Also present:</i> Lynn Christie
2. Apologies for Absence:
Jeffrey Unerman, Jan Bebbington, Matias Laine and Carmen Correa
3. Minutes of Previous Meetings
Everyone was thanked for being at the meeting after it's rearrangement from 5 May to 14 May. The minutes from the March meeting of Council were approved with no amendments.
4. Matters Arising from above minutes (not on main agenda)
There were no matters arising.
5. Number of Council Meetings and forward planning
It was agreed that the number of meetings would be reduced from 6 to 4 effective next session. Forward planning was held over to the next meeting.
ACTION
6. Outstanding Items Relating to the By-Laws [Standing Item]
CSEAR Council Evaluation timetable and process. This item was not discussed at the meeting but will be discussed via email instead, as the evaluation must take place in time for the results to be presented at the AGM in August.
ACTION
7. Request for partner Institution Status Approval from Institute for Sustainability Africa (INSAF) via Rodney Ndamba
Council agreed to the link being added to the satellite/partner institution page of the website, with all council members asked to undertake a more thorough look at the Institute before the next meeting. Any issues identified should be raised at the next meeting.
ACTION
8. SEAJ Update [Standing item]
8.1 Appointment of new Joint Editor from December 2015 The SEAJ Board were delighted to inform Council that Matias Laine will be the new joint editor of SEAJ from January 2016. The Board and Council minuted their congratulations to Matias and their sincere thanks to John Ferguson (as the outgoing joint editor) for all he had done over his three-year term.
9. Website: Review [Standing Item]
There was nothing new to report.
10. Grant Applications: ESRC Centre Grant Update [Standing Item]
There was nothing new to report.
11. CSEAR UK 2015 Update [standing item]

The number of abstract submissions for this year's conference is looking healthy and decisions on inclusion will be made by 3 rd June.
12. Mentoring [Standing item]
The ESC has had 24 student submissions and all have been accepted. All other matters are in hand. A grant for CIMA sponsorship for the 2016 ESC will be submitted in July 2015.
ACTION
13. Vision/Mission/Values Statement [Standing Item]
There was nothing new to report.
14. Teaching case study Update [standing item]
There was nothing new to report. No submissions have been received to date.
15. CSEAR Financial update/Future of CSEAR:
<p>The University of St Andrews has declined the application made to allow the School to support CSEAR's administrator/research fellow role as previously held by Sue Gray. When Sue Gray retired CSEAR and the School decided to wait and see how the combined workload previously undertaken by Sue and Lynn was able to be managed by Lynn alone and how the Centre developed for a period of 12-18 months. Following this period of consideration, all involved felt confident that Lynn could cover the combined load, in the 25 hours that Lynn works. As a result an application was made in September 2014 to the University's HR and Work force Planning Committee. This process went through 3 rounds of information flowing back and forth, until 6 weeks ago we were told that there would be no University support for the School to fund the position and that CSEAR should continue to fund the position itself. Jan and Lorna have identified potential procedural issues around the University management of this process and will be taking these further, but this appears to be the last chance to challenge the University's decision. The University's decision has financial implications for CSEAR. To our knowledge the current level of support provided by the University ie the library and office space and IT systems provision is not being withdrawn, and so there is still University support for CSEAR, but support does not extend to official remission/administration allowance for academic staff (ie the Co-Directors) associated with CSEAR.</p> <p>At present Lynn's contract and working conditions remain the same as before Sue Gray's retirement with the exception of an increase in hours from 20 to 25 hours per week. She continues to be employed on one-year contracts, renewable annually if sufficient funds exist to cover her salary.</p> <p>This judgement, plus the decision to host the CSEAR UK conference away from St Andrews this year, have highlighted that CSEAR has previously considered accounting information prepared on a cash flow basis only. This means that the UK conference income is largely received in one financial year whilst the associated expenses are paid for in the subsequent financial year. As the UK conference will not be held in St Andrews this year then CSEAR's cash account shows the expenditure from the 2014 conference but has no 2015 income to set it against.</p> <p>As a result of this University decision, CSEAR will have to fully fund the administrator's salary at a cost of £24,000 (including pension etc.) in the 2014 – 2015 financial year (which ends 31 July). This coupled with no expected income from the 2015 ICSEAR Conference (being held at RHUL) means that the balance of CSEAR accounts at the end of the FY 2014-2015 in July 2015 will be circa £37,000. This is only sufficient to support the administrator's role and pay the SEAJ subscription fees (payable to Routledge) for one more year. At the end of the FY 2015-2016 the projected balance in the CEAR accounts will only be circa £15000, insufficient to continue to fund the administrator for a year. This balance does not include any income from the provision 2016 ICSEAR conference due to be held in August 2016. Income from this conference will not be forthcoming until the FY 2016-2017.</p> <p>The potential closure of CSEAR in July 2016 may in itself have financial implications for the University: income from the conference being held back in St Andrews from 2016 onwards (approximately £35k per conference) will be lost; membership fees paid in advance would have to be refunded, we may have to buy out the Routledge contract for</p>

SEAJ at an approximate cost of £21k for 3 years (if closes in 2016) sliding pro rata down to £14k and then £7k for the final year of the 3 year extension, as well as the reputational costs.

The Council discussed the situation at length and the main points of the discussion were:

- This is now a revenue issue to help make CSEAR work as long as the in kind support from the University continues, as it is a substantive amount of support i.e. the membership and grant income should financially support CSEAR and the University should only provide practical support (space etc.)
- CSEAR is still accredited as a University of St Andrews Research Centre and CSEAR was named as part of the School's REF submission.
- In kind support should remain but don't assume that we can continue like this so £25k could increase to a requirement of £50k with FEC
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- Moving CSEAR from St Andrews is not a real option as it will not be cost effective and the University will not be forced to change its decision if we move
- Fundraising is now the only priority – increase memberships, conference delegate fees, and ask donors to pay into CSEAR, ask institutional partners to contribute a set amount each year (£500, £1000?), look at others (CIMA, KPMG, E&Y, ACCA etc.) that could be co-sponsors/donors, to allow CSEAR to become self-sustaining
- Stop giving away good-will, make money off the other CSEAR conferences world wide (revenue sharing)
- Identify co-funders
- Enforce memberships of all CSEAR conference delegates world-wide and have all conferences build in costs so that they can give money to CSEAR after conferences have been held (10-20% as a suggested amount), and have a conference registration fee and then add on the cost of accommodation and conference facilities
- CSEAR is very very cheap (too cheap) for what you get
- Increase the membership fee (currently £25 per year) bit quite a bit as again it is very cheap for what you get
- CSEAR is a membership based community so members and conference delegates and international conferences should pay for it
- If we can do all of the above then CSEAR could be mid-term sustainable
- No option should be taken off the table as there has been a shift in the make up of CSEAR from it's entrepreneurial beginnings to a professional managed organisation, and this is just part of the transition
- Fees must be raised across the board and CSEAR become revenue generating
- Re-approach the University to see if position would be reconsidered if the post is not exclusively a CSEAR post, and also to see if they would consider providing short (2 years) financial assistance rather than funding the post, or funding the post short term for a maximum of 2 years. This would be a final attempt at additional support from the University
- If CSEAR was forced to move the School would be greatly disappointed at the loss
- An income of £25k - £30k per annum is required to ensure CSEAR's future
- Sell our expertise and time, charge for mentorship
- Must be wary of potential critical negative effect of raising fees across the board – if the increase is too high we will lose membership and will end up in a potentially worse position
- Can no longer afford to rotate location of conference, and this will come back to St Andrews for as long as CSEAR exists and is housed at St Andrews
- Do not look at reducing the activities that we do, in fact consider increasing them, this in turn may lead to an increase in hours (and therefore costs) for the administrator

- £37k in the accounts gives us 1 year to sort this out or at very least run down cash surplus if we have to get out, or run down reserves to give us a chance to move on

Actions arising from discussion:

- set up a working group to look at things in more detail to work up proposals for next council meeting, which will now take place during the conference and
- take firm decision re fees etc. with specific proposals, making final decision at Conference Council meeting
- there are sufficient funds to cover the administrator role for one more year, so look to extend contract if possible
- Postpone next meeting scheduled for June, and have a closed discussion off line in its place at the end of July, with working group reporting back at this time. Send round doodle poll to identify suitable date.
- Working group will consist of Ian, Jesse, John, Matias (or Carmen), Lorna, Colin and Massimo
- Need different financial figures – Lorna will rework income and expenditure cash implications

Ian thanked everyone for tackling this very difficult problem in such a positive way.

ACTIONS

16. Date of next meeting:

Scheduled for 23 June but this has been delayed until July (date still to be confirmed).

ACTION

17. AOB

As the meeting scheduled for June has now been cancelled this was the final meeting that Nola would attend as she retires at the end of June.

The Council thanked Nola for everything that she has done for and with the Council and for all her work with CSEAR over the years. She would be greatly missed.

Lynn Christie, 16 May 2015