

**MINUTES OF THE 19th MEETING OF COUNCIL  
HELD ON 21 JULY 2022, POLARIS HOUSE, SWINDON AND ON ZOOM**

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Present:	Professor Diane Coyle (Chair, Senior Independent Member)
	Professor Rachel Brooks
	Professor Jane Duckett
	Mr Mike Emmerich
	Professor Dame Rachel Griffith
	Professor Sir Bernard Silverman
	Professor Todd Landman
	Sir Chris Wormald
	Professor Alan Penn
Apologies:	Professor Lasana Harris
	Ms Desirée Lopez
	Mr Ben Page
	Professor Jackline Wahba
	Professor Sir Simon Wessely
	Dr Claire Graves (Chief Operating Officer)
Office:	Alison Park (Interim Executive Chair)
	Jeremy Neathey (Director of Strategy)
	Jen Gold (Director of Research)
	Emma Gordon (Director ADR UK)
	Peter Ethelston (Associate Director for Governance and Policy)
	Oliver Hill-Andrews (Social Science Fellow)
	Doug German (Private Secretary to Executive Chair)
	Gillian Bartoszewaska ( <i>Secretariat</i> )
Guests:	Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (UKRI CEO)
	Mr Tim Bianek (UKRI COO)

These minutes do not necessarily reflect the precise order in which items were discussed.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b>
1.1	Diane Coyle, Chair, welcomed members to the 19th meeting of Council.

1.2	Diane welcomed Ottoline Leyser (UKRI CEO) and Tim Bianek (UKRI COO).
1.3	Council noted apologies from Lasana Harris, Desirée Lopez, Ben Page and Simon Wessely.
<b>2.</b>	<b>Minutes of the Previous Meeting (ESRC 2022-14)</b>
2.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were <b>agreed</b> as an accurate record.
<b>3.</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b>
3.1	Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.
<b>4.</b>	<b>Interim Executive Chair's business and update on context</b>
4.1	Alison Park gave an update on recent activities and noted that a full report had been circulated in advance of the meeting.
4.2	<p>Alison flagged key highlights from the Executive Chair's report circulated prior to the meeting, many illustrating areas where ESRC was leading on convening and catalysing cross-UKRI and government activity. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Productivity Institute's annual conference in June on the theme of 'Digital Transformation, technology diffusion and Net Zero transition: what does it mean for productivity?'</li> <li>• On Monkeypox, ESRC would be commissioning the International Public Policy Observatory (IPPO) to convene a roundtable to discuss evidence gaps, agree priorities and, where necessary, form consortia to address priorities through synthesis or small-scale research. ESRC was also intending to fund work on behavioural drivers in West Africa by the Institute for Development Studies.</li> <li>• There had been significant developments in improving the linkage of administrative data to longitudinal study data, with ADR UK playing a key role in brokering relationships between the Office for National Statistics and government departments. Departments could now engage in a single set of UK Longitudinal Linkage Collaboration (UK LLC) negotiations representing many studies, underpinned by a unified governance framework. This work was being supported as a pilot study funded by ESRC.</li> <li>• ESRC had been successful in its collaboration with government departments on two bids to the Evaluation Accelerator Fund. These included a major programme of research trials in the UK food system targeted at reducing place-based inequalities in healthy and environmentally sustainable diets.</li> <li>• ESRC was leading the Local Policy Innovation Partnerships (LPIPs) initiative with interest from a number of other research councils, including Innovate UK and AHRC. A call for applications would be launched in autumn 2022.</li> <li>• Research councils were being asked to reduce the number of opportunities launching in 2023 to allow for the transition to the new Funding Service. Council asked what this would mean for ESRC. Alison noted that it</li> </ul>

	could be managed and that ESRC was not anticipating any problems. She would update Council in her future reports.
<b>5.</b>	<b>Update from UKRI CEO</b>
5.1	Ottoline Leyser updated Council members on the ESRC Executive Chair recruitment, Grant Review, Horizon Europe association and alternatives, and UKRI culture.
5.2	Council welcomed the launch of the Executive Chair appointment process, including the agreed job specification and assessment panel. Ottoline noted that a small group had been convened, led by Professor Julia Black, to assist with outreach to potential candidates. (Update since Council meeting: the deadline for applications had been changed to 12 September 2022.)
5.3	The <a href="#">Independent Review of UK Research and Innovation</a> (the Grant Review) contained recommendations which gave momentum and energy to ongoing programmes underway in UKRI. It also highlighted the challenge of defining to our communities what UKRI did and allowed people to see the exciting opportunities of the organisation's work by giving a clear direction of travel and vision. The Grant Review would be complemented by the more all-encompassing independent Tickell review of research bureaucracy. (Update: the <a href="#">Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy</a> was published on 28 July 2022.)
5.4	BEIS had <a href="#">published a policy paper</a> on Horizon Europe association and alternatives which clarified transition arrangements if the UK did not associate. The policy paper would support conversations with UKRI's communities to help develop longer-term alternatives.
<b>6</b>	<b>Update from UKRI Chief Operating Officer</b>
6.1	Tim Bianek spoke on ongoing culture change activity to optimise both strategy and delivery across central UKRI. The new Operating Model aimed to encourage collaboration and coordination across the organisation, promoting multidisciplinary work with clarity on delegations and reducing bureaucracy. There was dynamism in the design of the model to enable flexibility to emerging priorities.
6.2	Council cautioned on overcentralisation, which could remove employees from granular knowledge of research council remits. Members welcomed reassurance on the commitment to differentiate between what worked better centrally and what was better embedded within research councils.
<b>7.</b>	<b>Progress update on ADR UK: ADR England data and training</b>
7.1	Emma Gordon updated Council on how ADR UK was working to generate interest in, awareness of, and training to access the linked data ADR UK had made available in collaboration with government and academic partners.

7.2	Council welcomed the significant advances in flagship research-ready data call linkages, which built on existing investments, developed established themes, and made major in-roads into far less developed themes, with all ADR UK research themes now covered by at least one major investment.
7.3	<p>Council discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The benefits and drawbacks of using low fidelity synthetic data to help train researchers and allow them to write code before they gained access to original data.</li> <li>• The PhD studentships call and whether more could be done to reach economists (for example through internships). Data accessibility was noted to be an issue for university teachers who wanted to engage and inspire students to answer policy questions.</li> <li>• Whether certain parts of government were more amenable than others to opening their data to researchers, and how Council members might be able to help.</li> <li>• How ADR could be supported by champions or ambassadors, able to articulate their work and its value.</li> <li>• The need to ensure that researchers were aware of and consciously reflected on ethical issues.</li> </ul>
<b>8.</b>	<b>ESRC's cross-UKRI investment plans</b>
8.1	<p>Jen Gold asked Council members to advise on the criteria ESRC should use when pursuing co-funded collaborations with UKRI partners, and on areas of the portfolio where ESRC could explore further collaboration opportunities.</p> <p>Breakout groups suggested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The challenges posed by not engaging, if that might result in lower quality social science research.</li> <li>• Adopting a principles approach to collaboration, for example considering when to talk to other councils and whether an opportunity would lead to long-term development.</li> <li>• There was still a predominant tendency within social science on trying to explain 'how the world is' rather than 'how to change it'. This was an area where interdisciplinary collaborations between social science and engineering (with engineers' approach to problem solving) would be valuable. This would enable a greater focus on testing interventions and measuring impact.</li> <li>• It would be beneficial for all councils to adopt common criteria for considering cross-UKRI work (not only to collaborate across disciplines, but also to consider how government departments and commercial partners might be brought in).</li> <li>• That risk and resilience, infrastructure, and energy dependence were potential areas of collaboration.</li> </ul>
<b>9.</b>	<b>Overview of ESRC's portfolio and key facts</b>
9.1	Peter Ethelston presented the second annual report to Council and highlighted the peer review training toolkit.

9.2	Council welcomed the helpful pack of statistics and asked for more information on output quality. Council also advised ESRC to keep an eye on success rates by ethnicity and gender of applicant.
<b>10.</b>	<b>Papers for discussion by exception and any other business</b>
10.1	None submitted.
<b>11.</b>	<b>Close of Meeting</b>