



**Council Meeting
Thursday, 7 July 2022
MEETING SUMMARY**

Welcome and Introductions	
1.	The Chair welcomed Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser, attending in her capacity as UKRI Chief Executive Officer; and Karen Watt, Chief Executive of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), attending as an observer. The Chair also welcomed Dr Carolyn Reeve, Head of Policy for University Research and Knowledge Exchange; Science, Research and Innovation Directorate at BEIS, attending in advance of her leaving her post at BEIS. The Chair noted that Carolyn has been a key contact for Research England (RE) and that her departure represents an enormous loss both to RE and to UKRI.
2.	Congratulations were noted for Professor McMillan on having been awarded an OBE for services to Higher Education.
UKRI CEO	
3.	<p>Ottoline included the following remarks in her address to Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• RE enables capitalisation of opportunities for improving university ecosystems, and RE drives positive change across the UK, which is fundamental to the aims of UKRI.• Regarding UKRI's overarching strategy, this was needed when she came into post, and she is pleased that there is now one in place.• The strategy, underpinned by four principles for change (diversity, connectivity, resilience, and engagement), provides UKRI with a framework for steering the organisation.• The four principles are well represented by RE's activities: supporting a diverse range of universities, joining up the work of institutions, and catalysing communities.• RE can pull unique levers for change, particularly with regard to strengthening the civic role of universities and building local communities.• Incentives are needed to drive UKRI's principles for change within universities.• Universities should be encouraged to play to their strengths rather than to compete with each another with collaboration allowing their strengths to emerge.• During the last spending review period, UKRI provided a clear narrative of greater achievement through increased collaboration.• The issues of diversity and inclusion are critical, and it is important to build a language around excellence that is inclusive rather than exclusive.• Fragmentation of the HE system does exist at different levels, but UKRI continues to work with government departments and other key players to try to address this.• RE Council members' broader activities will contribute to a more joined-up approach.• Competition will always exist, but strategies are being developed to drive the values of diversity, harmonisation, and efficiency.• Quality-related (QR) funding and the Future Research Assessment Programme (FRAP) will be critical to ensuring that funds are allocated in a way that aligns with the UKRI and wider government agenda.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lessons learnt from the Strength in Places Fund (SIPF) should be embedded into other programmes.
4.	The SFC Chief Executive thanked Ottoline for her update and highlighted how, from a Scottish perspective, it had resonated with her across three key themes: co-investment; connectedness; and sustainability. Ottoline acknowledged that much good practice is taking place across the devolved nations and that it is key for all parties to identify areas where they can operate overall as a community.
5.	Council was asked to note that Professor Dame Jessica Corner has been identified as the preferred candidate for the role of RE's next Executive Chair, with a provisional start date of 1 October. Ottoline stated that this is an excellent appointment. It will, nonetheless, be an extraordinary change for RE and the end of an era under David's leadership. Ottoline stated that she has enjoyed working with David, and she believes that the nation owes him a huge debt of gratitude for his work supporting the UK university system.
Executive Chair's Report	
	<u>Strategic Issues Emerging in the HE Sector</u>
6.	Council noted the usefulness of the document and that the 'International' section of the paper, in particular, sets out one of the big strategic issues facing RE. The Chair stated that it will be difficult to fully address this issue until there is clarity regarding Horizon Europe, which is a Cabinet decision and, therefore, beyond UKRI's control. The Chair advised that UKRI is working in lockstep with BEIS colleagues on this issue and as soon as more information becomes available, it will be shared with Council.
7.	Council discussed Levelling Up noting that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> while the government may wish to drive the agenda, incentives for increasing activity are predominantly non-financial universities tend to be enthusiastic about Levelling up, particularly with regard to their role within communities REF2021 may lead to a wider distribution of funding
Terms & Conditions (T&Cs) of RE Funding	
8.	Council was provided with an update to the T&Cs of RE funding. The amendments reflect new national legislation and UKRI policy changes to ensure continued accountability for RE funding beyond 31 July 2022. Through the Higher Education and Research Act (HERA) 2017, RE is required to consult on changes to T&Cs of grant: Council was asked to note that the consultation process did not give rise to any concerns about the proposed changes.
Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) Update	
9.	Council was provided with an update on the development of the RE SDP for the period 2022-25. The RE SDP must be underpinned by the direction set by BEIS and, therefore, aligns with this. Council met on 28 June 2022 to discuss the RE budget and funding proposals and, following their endorsement of the allocation approach, RE can now detail how they intend on



delivering the objectives specified in the BEIS Funding & Priorities letter in the SDP. The RE SDP is structured around the same pillars as UKRI.

UKRPIF

10. The Director of Research outlined the design of the new round of UKRPIF in preparation for immediate launch. He explained that UKRPIF visibly demonstrates to government increased private investment in higher education and that the scheme continues to focus on excellent research. Council acknowledged UKRPIF as being a distinctive funding stream not seen elsewhere at the same level or with the same clarity of purpose.

Risk, Assurance and Governance Report

11. Council was provided with an update on risk, assurance and governance activity within RE during the period April–July 2022.

CLOSED SESSION

12. RE Council members met in closed session led by the RE Council SIM.