



**Council Meeting  
Thursday, 11 November 2021  
MEETING SUMMARY**

<b>Welcome and Introductions</b>	
1.	The Chair welcomed Bryony Butland (UKRI Deputy Director of Research Sustainability and Infrastructure); Heidi Fraser-Krauss (new Chief Executive Officer of Jisc); Joe Marshall (Chief Executive of NCUB); and Rachel Tyrrell (RE's Associate Director of Knowledge Exchange).
<b>UKRI Performance Framework</b>	
2.	The UKRI Performance Framework, which provides BEIS with a quarterly report on the performance of UKRI investments, was shared with Council in advance of the meeting. The Chair explained that medium to long-term objectives for RE are set out in the letter of guidance from BEIS and indicate the expectations of universities and of the engagement between universities and external actors. The RE Council, through the risk framework and reports it receives, monitors the performance of RE in delivering against the Government's objectives, in terms of operational effectiveness, success of RE's investments in delivering government objectives, and engagement with national and international stakeholders to ensure that RE policies and investments are contributing positively to the success of the wider research and knowledge exchange system.
<b>UKRI Sustainability Work</b>	
3.	Bryony Butland provided an update on the UKRI sustainability work, stating that a preliminary analysis of various data sources has been carried out to try to determine what information is available about financial sustainability of the sector. That information is being triangulated with other evidence sources, and her team is also consulting with devolved administration colleagues and with other stakeholders, including staff at various levels within universities, to gain a better understanding of things having an impact on the sector. Issues for universities include level of cross subsidies, changes in HE policy, and trends in international and EU student numbers.
<b>UKRI Strategy and Spending Review Update</b>	
4.	Dan Shah provided an update on the UKRI strategy and on SR21, stating that advice provided by RE Council, and the evidence base obtained through engagement with the university sector and with bodies such as NCUB and nCASE, had contributed to a positive SR outcome. The full detail of UKRI's allocation is not yet available. UKRI is, at the same time, developing its five-year strategy, which will be framed to suit different audiences.
<b>Executive Chair's Report</b>	
5.	The Executive Chair noted a few highlights from his report, to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The next RE engagement forum will be held on 16 November 2021. The focus will be on Enhancing Research Culture, and the Minister will speak at the event.</li></ul>



- A specialist data visualisation agency has been engaged to undertake user testing of the KEF dashboards, including accessibility, and will suggest improvements to the design of the dashboards based on the results of these tests.
- The information circulated to members on 10 November 2021 about the UKRI Strategy provided the most up-to-date picture of its development.
- Shortlisting for new Council members took place on 22 October 2021 with interviews planned for 26 November 2021. There has been a good selection of candidates.

#### **Jisc Update**

6. Heidi Fraser-Krauss provided an overview of Jisc services and RE priorities for delivery. RE provides a grant to Jisc for operating the Janet network and associated services, for supporting the Jisc collections, and for supporting the HE sector through the use of digital technologies. Heidi stated that the sector has become the target of increased cyber-attacks over the last few years and that senior leaders need to appreciate the role they play (in conjunction with technical experts) in the management of their response to these attacks.

#### **National Centre for Universities and Business (NCUB) Update**

7. NCUB has been awarded a multi-year grant from RE starting from April 2021. Joe Marshall provided an overview of NCUB's Forward Plan for the period of the grant as well as arrangements for governance and accountability. In the context of the Government's overarching ambitions for R&D, NCUB is seeking to unite and connect the university research and KE base with industry. As much of the R&D landscape is changing, policy responses are required that address these changes. NCUB is working to understand the changes and to develop policy responses, changing practice and new approaches.

#### **Specialist Institution Funding**

8. Council endorsed the approaches proposed to identify specialist providers and for the allocation of funding for 2021/22 to 2024/25.

#### **Risk and Assurance Report**

9. The Director of Research provided an update on Risk 1 (REF): the scoring of this risk remains high due to the potential impact of UCU strike action. The Director of Insight & Engagement provided an update on Risk 5 (Collaboration): the overall score of this risk has decreased since last reported on, largely as a function of the passing of time and increased experience of remote engagement but also due to greater clarity regarding government policy and funding.
10. RE's Chief Operating Officer provided an update on the GIAA Audit of RE's Governance Framework: a report on findings will be provided for the February 2022 RE Council meeting. She also provided an overview of RE's assurance work, a summary of which was provided in the Risk and Assurance Report.

**Date of the next Meeting:** Thursday, 3 February 2022