UK RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

ENGINEERING AND PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

NOTE OF THE 7ᵗʰ EPSRC SCIENCE ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGY BOARD (SETB) MEETING, HELD ON 12 MAY 2021, HELD REMOTELY VIA ZOOM

In attendance:	Professor Charlotte Deane (EPSRC) (SETB Chair)
	Professor Cameron Alexander (University of Nottingham)
	Mr Jonathan Legh-Smith (BT)
	Professor Paul French (Imperial College London)
	Professor Dame Jane Jiang (University of Huddersfield)
	Dr Leigh Lapworth (Rolls-Royce)
	Professor Adrian Mulholland (University of Bristol)
	Professor Graham Niblo (University of Southampton)
	Professor Susan Rosser (University of Edinburgh)
	Dr Mike Sutton (Lubrizol)
	Professor Phillip Taylor (University of Bristol)
	Professor Su Taylor (Queen's University Belfast)
Apologies	Professor m.c. schraefel (University of Southampton)
Council Members:	Professor Nick Jennings (Imperial College London)
	Dr Joe de Sousa (Melhor Consulting)
EPSRC Staff:	Andrew Bourne (EPSRC Director, Partnerships)
	Jane Nicholson (EPSRC Director, Research Base)
	Kedar Pandya (EPSRC Director, Cross Council Programmes)
	Lucy Martin (EPSRC Deputy Director, Cross-Council Programmes)
	Kathryn Magnay (EPSRC Deputy Director, Cross-Council Programmes)
	Rachel Bishop (EPSRC Deputy Director, Research Base)
	Claire Spooner (EPSRC Head of Decarbonising Transport)
	Jennifer Channel (EPSRC Senior Portfolio Manager)
	Anna Angus-Smyth (EPSRC Head of AI and Robotics)
	Anne Toft (EPSRC Senior Portfolio Manager, AI and Robotics)
Secretary:	Jessica Bonham (EPSRC, Senior Manager, Governance and Planning)

1. Welcome, briefing and discussion of interview questions (SETB Chair)

1.1. The SETB chair (CD) welcomed everyone to the meeting and formally opened the meeting, Apologies had been received from Professor m.c. schraefel.

1.2. CD introduced the meeting and explained that each institute took a slightly different approach to the ask and that EPSRC staff have worked with both institutes on their submissions and are satisfised with the resulting product. The SETB Secretary (JB) gave an overview of the process for the interviews, which is the same as was used for the Institutes Evaluation meeting in September, when the three other institutes were interviewed (The Royce Institute, UKCRIC and the Rosalind Franklin Institute (RFI)).

1.3.   SETB members raised concerns about the challenges of assessing the institutes at such an early stage in their lifespan and also amongst a large amount of uncertainty regarding both future funding and governmental priorities.

1.4.   SETB members discussed and agreed the key questions they would ask each institute. It was suggested that we should produce a paper on top tips for setting up an institute and encourage institutes to learn from each other, including those in other councils.

2.   Faraday Institution and Alan Turing Institute Interviews

2.1.   Interviews were carried out with both the Faraday Institute (FI) and the Alan Turing Institute (ATI). Feedback on the institutes was collected by EPSRC colleagues working with each institute directly. This will be approved by the SETB chair and the lead introducers from each interview before being shared with the institutes.

2.2.   A key message the SETB wanted to highlight to Council is that the level of independence we can give institutes depends on the financial stability we can provide them and that the regional diversity of the institutes is not yet where we would like it to be.

3.   Update on Royce, RFI and UKCRIC since the previous Institutes Meeting

3.1.   SETB were sent additional KPIs from the 3 other institutes ahead of the meeting and Rachel Bishop (RB) led a discussion on these KPIs.

3.2.   SETB felt that the KPIs still didn't answer some of their previous questions such as IP of students at the RFI, data sharing policies and how industry is incentivised to work with the institutes. SETB felt that it was difficult for the institutes to quantify and measure engagement and collaborations.

4.   Future Institutes Framework

4.1.   RB led a discussion on a potential future institutes framework and what critical success factors should be used. Key points raised were:

- SETB felt we need to be more transparent about how we measure the output of an institute and what benefits might have been achieved without the institute present. Some outcomes might be indirect which is valid, but still need to be captured.

- SETB discussed that long-term strategic impact for the UK and EDI, including inclusivity were important for a future institutes framework and that the scale of the institute needed to be considered for any future monitoring and evaluation. We should also replace the national regional impact with capability sharing.

- Some SETB members were concerned that this framework would not work well in practice as all the institutes would rate themselves highly in all categories and it might be better to focus on how the ecosystem has changed over time and measure change over time.

- If we were to introduce new institutes in the future we could look to use big ideas as a way to develop the institute and decide which topics should lead to an institute. We should also consider virtual institutes as they are cheaper and more agile.

4.2.   SETB moved on the discuss critical success factors that should be used. Key points raised were:

- Added value, Open science and reproducibility, the future roadmap, geographical reach and agility were all missing from the list of success factors and should be factored in.
- SETB members approved of the idea of an independent quality assessment
- Return on investment should cover both progress for vision and value for money
- SETB discussed the origin of the institutes we currently have and if we expect them to change in the near to medium future. Ideally institutes need at least 15 years to demonstrate the impacts we are looking for.

5. AOB and Close

5.1. SETB approved the updated terms of reference, though it was felt that we could still be more proactive in terms of EDI.

5.2. SETB discussed the forward look of items to be brought to future meetings. The following topics were raised as topics SETB members would like to see discussed.

- Regional big ideas
- National security
- Discussion about government strategies / opportunity to see Government strategies in the reading room
- Future funding scenarios (September meeting)
- Update on priorities of EPSRC
- Data sharing – this is being covered in UKRI but we might be able to update SETB on this

ACTION: SETB secretary

The next meeting of the EPSRC Science, Engineering and Technology Board will be held on the 14 September 2021.

Summary of actions:

Action	Description	Owner
07-01	EPSRC colleagues to produce institutes feedback, get it approved by SETB chair and lead introducers and share with Institutes team	EPSRC colleagues
07-02	EPSRC to produce a paper on top tips for setting up an institute and encourage institutes to learn from each other, including those in other councils.	Rachel Bishop
07-03	SETB secretary to plan a schedule for future SETB meetings based on the suggestions	SETB Secretary