

MINUTES OF THE FIFTH MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2019 AT MARY WARD HOUSE, 5-7 TAVISTOCK SQUARE, LONDON

Present:	Professor Jennifer Rubin (<i>Executive Chair</i>)
	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Senior Independent Member; Chair</i>)
	Professor John Aston
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Matthew Flinders
	Professor Nigel Gilbert
	Professor Rachel Griffith
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Professor James Smith
	Professor Anna Vignoles
	Sir Chris Wormald
Apologies:	Mr Mike Emmerich
Office:	Mr Andy Gibbs (<i>Head of Governance and Secretariat; Secretary to Council</i>)
	Mr Simon Crine (<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>)
	Professor Alison Park (<i>Director of Research</i>)
	Ms Melanie Knetsch (<i>Deputy Director of Impact and Innovation</i>)
	Mr Jeremy Neathey (<i>Deputy Director of Policy and International</i>)
	Dr Jacqui Karn (<i>Strategic Lead for Knowledge Mobilisation and Impact</i>)
	Dr Tom Roberts (<i>Assistant Secretary to Council</i>)
	Mr Doug German (<i>Governance and Secretariat</i>)
	Mr Thomas Goodsir (<i>Governance and Secretariat</i>)
Guests:	Ms Ruth Elliot (<i>Finance and Commercial Director, UKRI</i>)

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

I.	Welcome and Apologies	Oral
I.1	Professor Diane Coyle, Chair and Senior Independent Member of Council, welcomed Council members to the fifth meeting of Council.	
I.2	Apologies were noted from Mr Mike Emmerich.	
I.3	The Chair welcomed Ms Ruth Elliot, who joins from UKRI as the designated UKRI observer for ESRC Council meetings. Ruth is Finance and Commercial Director at UKRI and previously served as Chief Financial Officer at Innovate UK. The Chair congratulated Ms Melanie Knetsch on her promotion as Interim Deputy Director for Innovation and Impact at ESRC.	

2.	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	ESRC 2019-02
2.1	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the previous meeting subject to a clarification to the list of attendees reflecting Professor Aston's attendance and Professor Mills' apologies.	
3.	Matters Arising	Oral
3.1	Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting. Members noted all items were complete.	
4.	Executive Chair's Business	Oral
4.1	Professor Rubin informed Council of progress with the UKRI reorganization including some functions centralizing within UKRI and plans for the deepening of social science expertise within ESRC.	
4.2	Council were updated on Equality, Diversity & Inclusion (ED&I) activity and how bullying and harassment, peer review and research integrity would now be brought together as part of a new central team that reports to Professor Rubin. Evidence reviews are coming to a close, and the next phase will be for UKRI to begin policy development.	
4.3	Council noted progress on recruitment of additional members for the Strategic Advisory Network and on plans to recruit up to three further Council members.	
4.4	The success of recent regional visits, how the key messages had been well received and enjoyed a good breadth of attendance was welcomed. Professor Rubin thanked Council for their continuing engagement in making these a success.	
4.4	Council suggested that it would be important to build on the success of these visits by trying to engage those social science communities who are not traditional recipients of ESRC funds. Council discussed a number of issues that the visits highlighted including the requirement to ensure funding incentives were appropriately aligned with ESRC's strategic goals in maintaining the talent pipeline. It would be important to nurture an ecosystem beyond PhD training and academia that continued to encourage the brightest and best academics to stay within academia or to remain open to those who may have previously left. This was important given ED&I ambitions, the compatibility of an academic career with family life and the pressures and reported experiences of early	

	<p>career researchers who currently typically can hold multiple short-term roles before enjoying a secure position.</p> <p>Council also suggested that ESRC Fellowship awards could benefit from emulating EPSRC awards which proactively stipulated and monitored that research fellowships were not used for teaching.</p>	
5.	Strategic Delivery Plan	ESRC 2019-04
5.1	<p>Professor Rubin updated Council with progress since the last meeting. Members discussed the draft, identifying potential opportunities for future Council activity and endorsed the Strategic Delivery Plan.</p> <p>Professor Rubin outlined ESRC's communications plans for when the Plan was published, which complemented central UKRI activity with targeted briefing and outreach to specific stakeholders.</p>	
6.	Next Steps in supporting impact for the social sciences	ESRC 2019-05
6.1	<p>Ms Knetsch introduced this item for discussion outlining UKRI's appetite for increasing the supply of impact and the increased staff resource within ESRC to assist with this. Ms Knetsch described the range of existing supply side activities supported by ESRC from What Works, support of a social science section within POST, and IAA support. She emphasised that while the supply side had been strong, there was further activity needed to better understand and stimulate the demand pull for impact.</p>	
6.2	<p>Council welcomed the paper and noted the critical importance of continuing to demonstrate impact for research especially given the government commitment for a 2.4% of GDP to be research and development expenditure by 2027. Council noted the approach and range of knowledge exchange activities ESRC has been supporting.</p>	
6.3	<p>There was recognition of the very distinct requirements and approaches needed for knowledge exchange and impact realisation within policy and parliamentary contexts versus business and industry contexts, and it was suggested that ESRC's next steps in supporting impact needed to clearly distinguish between these as they depended upon distinct skillsets.</p>	
6.4	<p>Council discussed the vital role of interlocutor bodies such as networks and research units (such as the Centre for Science and Policy) in helping to unpack, reframe and address demand side questions and requirements and in linking and brokering appropriate</p>	

	researcher activity. Council acknowledged that establishing such networks takes time and resource, but recommended that ESRC's offer and role within this space should be made clearer going forward.	
6.5	<p>Council made the following observations and suggestions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public policy value of synthetic research activity was noted and it was suggested that ESRC through UKRI could better recognise and reward such work. • The success of the POST social science section was welcomed and it was suggested that there may be scope for holding competitions designed to encourage researchers to articulate their research activities within the POST Note format. • It was suggested that it could be helpful to convene sessions with Pro Vice Chancellors and equivalents from a range of institutions who have a social science background and to instigate conversations about how universities are working to improve social science impact. 	
6.6	<p>Council expressed a strong appetite to engage further in this agenda and gain access to metrics that would help inform a clearer understanding of where to best spend the marginal pound.</p> <p>It was agreed that a working group of Council members and office staff would be established to take forward this agenda. Expressions of interest were received from Mr Emmerich and Professors Aston, Falkingham, Flinders, Gilbert, Griffith, and Mills.</p>	ACTION Ms Knetsch to set up impact group and invite members
7.	Governance After Brexit	Oral
7.1	Professor Rubin and her private office recused themselves for this item.	
7.2	<p>Mr Neathey informed Council that the re-commissioned UK in a Changing Europe (UKICE) hub is to get underway from May 2019 and that recruitment to fill a deputy director post was also well underway. This, in conjunction with the senior fellowship positions also being recruited, will provide strong senior support to the initiative.</p> <p>Mr Neathey also outlined progress with phase two of the sister initiative, Governance after Brexit (GAB), its key themes and how it would be launched in June 2019 once the position on EU exit had become more clear.</p>	

7.3	<p>Council noted the update and welcomed the progress and extra capacity. It was noted that UKICE remains a flagship project which continues to demonstrate the value of the social sciences. It was suggested that data on migration of workers and families should feature as an additional cross cutting topic.</p> <p>Council suggested that ESRC should be proactive in identifying future grant applicants' interest and approach to data and resource requirements given well documented time lags in securing such access.</p> <p>It was agreed that the office would work with its existing data and longitudinal investments and update Council at the next meeting on progress and details of how GAB could best exploit these and what if any, new sources of data may be required.</p>	<p>ACTION Professor Park to provide update to Council at a future meeting on GAB data needs.</p>
8.	EU Exit	Oral
8.1	Mr Neathey updated members on current planning within UKRI for EU Exit.	
8.2	Members noted the update.	
9.	UKRI Cross-Cutting funds Update	ESRC 2019-07
9.1	Professor Park updated Council on recent funding allocations made under a number of the UKRI crossing-cutting funds, how there continued to be a strong emphasis on interdisciplinarity and that ESRC had to date secured an additional £250 million funding for research through these funds.	
9.2	Council noted the funding allocations made under UKRI cross-cutting funds and the alignment of the allocations with the objectives of the Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP).	
9.3	Council observed that both the SPF and the ISCF remained major opportunities for the social sciences to take a leadership role especially given the extent of social science coverage (approx. 60%) within departmental Areas of Research Interest (ARI) statements, and encouraged the ESRC to facilitate this. The ISCF remained a huge opportunity for the ESRC and particularly for leading economists.	
9.4	Council noted the varied internal approaches used to date by UKRI and ESRC for each wave of the funds, and advised that ESRC and UKRI make best use of their and others expertise to ensure the effectiveness of internal bids. It was also suggested that this internal process may also benefit from someone with Treasury expertise. In addition Council suggested that ESRC should continue to	

	<p>demonstrate the integral role of social science research within the funds and identify really good case studies.</p> <p>Council also suggested that ESRC make best use of its strategic level engagements with partner bodies such as the Academy of Social Science to ensure they are familiar with the opportunities of the cross cutting funds and the social science content of the ARIs.</p>	
10.	Update on Risk Management	ESRC 2019-08
10.1	Mr Crine introduced this item to update Council on the status of risk management and clarified Council's role in this.	
10.2	<p>Council endorsed the risk register. The Chair emphasised the need for risks to be focused, granular and mitigatable.</p> <p>Council expressed concern over the size of ESRC's commitment to GCRF and concomitant risk exposure in this area given that large projects in developing countries are not always led by experienced academics. Concern was also expressed over capacity and the size and constraints of the talent pool and possible displacement effects – given the size of the ODA research commitment – and how it would be important to ensure that any displacement of talent did not impede research quality in other key areas.</p> <p>It was agreed that GCRF had specificity which requires ESRC and UKRI level mitigation. Potential mitigations could include running training workshops for administrative and research staff in offices both in the UK and with research partners abroad.</p> <p>Council also noted how well cited the European Social Survey was as a data investment and endorsed the view to continue to closely monitor this risk.</p>	
11.	Council Forward Look	ESRC 2019-09
11.1	<p>Mr Gibbs introduced this item updating Council on the recruitment of new members and forward look at agendas.</p> <p>Professor Rubin advised Council that as a constituent of UKRI, councils would no longer be required to submit an annual report, and that the detail of any future requirement was still being worked out but that it could serve as an important role for ESRC.</p>	
11.2	Council noted new members would be recruited with appointments commencing from June 2019.	

	<p>It was suggested that a future item should examine how to address the pipeline of research talent from universities.</p> <p>Council requested an informed helicopter view of what ESRC is funding and how this has changed over time and how the SDP maps onto this.</p>	
12.	Any Other Business	Oral
12.1	Council requested a matrix detailing membership of the working groups.	Action Secretariat to produce matrix for working groups
13.	Close of Meeting	Oral
13.1	The Executive Chair thanked members for attending and reminded members that the sixth meeting of Council is scheduled for 10 May 2019.	