



Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 18th January 2023

Location: Polaris House

Time: 09:00 – 14:00

Board Members and Observers	
Sir Andrew Mackenzie (Chair)	Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas
Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser (UKRI, CEO)	Nigel Toon
Professor Julia Black	Ruwan Weerasekera
Professor Sir Ian Boyd	Lord David Willetts
Dr John Fingleton	Siobhan Peters (UKRI, CFO)
Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein	Jo Shanmugalingam (BEIS)
Priya Guha	Ruth Elliot (UKRI, Deputy CFO)

Attendees	
Emma Lindsell (UKRI, Exec Director of Strategy, Comms, Analysis and Governance)	Tim Bianek (UKRI, COO)
Professor Rachael Goberman-Hill (Co-Chair UK Committee on Research Integrity) – for item 3	Professor Andrew George MBE (Co-Chair UK Committee on Research Integrity) – for item 3
Rebecca Veitch (UKRI Head of Research Integrity) – for item 3	Gillian Rendle (UK Committee on Research Integrity Secretariat Lead) – for item 3
Jo Allison (UKRI Deputy Director, Strategy, Governance and Performance) – for item 8	Louise Chambers (Senior Governance Manager, UKRI Secretariat) – for item 8

Secretariat	
Hannah Berriman (Board Secretariat Lead)	Tim Russell (UKRI Head of Governance & Secretariat)
Samantha Richardson (Board Secretariat)	Callum Kennedy (Senior Private Secretary to Sir Andrew Mackenzie)

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the meeting. Andrew thanked members for the individual and collective feedback he had received as part of his annual appraisal, noting the request to understand more about his activities as Chair in between meetings. Andrew noted he will provide a verbal update at each board on any activities or developments that have happened between meetings. Andrew also noted the Board's desire to focus on a more strategic agenda.
- 1.2. Andrew noted that since the November meeting he has visited the British Antarctic Survey Rothera Research Station in Antarctica with Ottoline, Duncan Wingham (NERC Executive Chair) and Patrick Valance (Government Chief Scientific Advisor) and has also had an introductory meeting with Secretary of State for BEIS, Grant Shapps.

- 1.3. Andrew noted that the tender exercise for the Formal Board and Executive Committee Effectiveness Review has started, with an announcement on a consultancy firm expected in February.

2. a) Minutes of November 2022 UKRI Board meeting b) Action Log and c) Forward Schedule

- 2.1. The Board approved the minutes of 9th November 2022 meeting.
- 2.2. Andrew noted that following the update on semiconductors in the September 2022 meeting, he had spent some time at the compound semiconductor cluster in South Wales. **<withheld from publication>** Andrew noted the complex issues in this space and has raised them with Minister Freeman.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of the 9th November 2022 meeting.

- 2.3. The Board noted the action log and forward schedule. Board members provided some suggestions for future agenda items, including;
 - ESRC landscape review
 - The Nurse Research Landscape Review as a possible dinner discussion once the review has been published
 - Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund – reflections and lessons learned
 - Public Engagement
- 2.4. The Board were keen to receive one-page updates on key high-level issues in the future, to enable them to act as a responsive asset for UKRI. Ottoline noted the need to be more disciplined across the organisation in producing shorter succinct updates but highlighted the resource implications of creating and maintaining briefing updates outside the Board meetings.

3. UK Committee on Research Integrity

- 3.1. As Chair of UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), Professor Sir Ian Boyd felt he would be conflicted if he remained in the room for the discussion on the UK Committee on Research Integrity and therefore stepped out of the room for the item.
- 3.2. Ottoline Leyser introduced the item, welcoming UK Committee on Research Integrity Co-Chairs Professor Rachael Goberman-Hill and Professor Andrew George to the meeting. Ottoline noted that she gave evidence to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee on the establishment of the Committee on Research Integrity, prior to taking up the role of UKRI CEO. Ottoline highlighted that the priority is to create high integrity cultures to prevent breaches. Ottoline noted that it is our role to support the initiation of the committee and to help develop a clear plan for how this agenda should be taken forward by the research and innovation community.
- 3.1. Professor Rachael Goberman-Hill introduced the committee, noting that she and Professor Andrew George co-chair the committee, which has 7 members and there is currently a recruitment drive ongoing for new members. Professor Goberman-Hill noted that the committee's role is to include everyone as their work will benefit everyone, including the other major players in the research integrity space, such as UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO), Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), and UK Reproducibility Network (UKRN).

- 3.2. Professor Andrew George updated the Board on the committee's draft strategic plan, noting that research integrity was about much more than research misconduct. The strategic plan focuses on the importance of honesty, rigour, transparency, care, respect, accountability and the principles in the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. He highlighted the committee is keen to ensure they work across all disciplines and research organisations, noting that research integrity was important whether research was funded by government or industry etc.
- 3.3. Professor Gooberman-Hill noted that the strategic plan has been developed at pace through a fully open consultation process. They have held a number of 1:1s and workshops across the research community. The strategic plan remains draft and will be published once amendments had been made reflecting comments received.
- 3.4. The Board were keen to ensure the research community were able to have open discussions about research integrity without fear of repercussions. Professor Gooberman-Hill highlighted that all evidence points to the research integrity picture across the whole system being generally very good. Professor George highlighted the need to learn from different disciplines but also from across the system. The Board noted the need for UKRI as an employer of researchers to position itself as excellent, but with humility.
- 3.5. Rebecca Veitch, Head of Research Integrity, noted that UKRI has updated its policy on good research practice, which is included in our funding terms and conditions.-Rebecca explained how the team has run workshops across UKRI (both within councils and centres, institutes, and units) to highlight what UKRI is already doing to support the community, and identify how we can recognise and share best practice. Rebecca noted there is an internal group that brings together research integrity leads from across UKRI to share best practice and ensure consistency.
- 3.6. The Board thanked the Co-Chairs and UKRI team. The Board would welcome a further discussion on the Committee on Research Integrity once it had been fully established and the strategic plan agreed.

4. Board Committee updates

a) Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)

- 4.1. Andrew Mackenzie noted that the Nominations and Remuneration Committee meeting was taking place immediately following the Board and therefore an update was unavailable. Andrew noted that a summary of key issues raised in NomCo will be shared with the Board.

b) Audit Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 4.2. Ruwan Weerasekera (Chair of ARAC) provided an update on the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee. Ruwan noted that since the last board meeting, ARAC have discussed the following;
 - Reviewed the audit of the MRC legacy entity, which still holds some intellectual property and other assets. These are being transferred over the course of the next year.
 - Reviewed audit recommendations, noting there are three recommendations that are overdue, but all are in hand.
 - Reviewed an audit on UK SBS and how it links into the SHARP programme.
 - Considered UKRI's response to the Independent Review of Research Bureaucracy.

- 4.3. Ruwan noted that ARAC had received an update from Chris Ball regarding the strategic workforce planning committee. Outside of committee, Ruwan noted they had reviewed a deep dive on funding assurance and felt it was a moving and evolving activity.
- 4.4. Andrew noted that he hopes to increase the number of board members who serve as non-executive members on ARAC, highlighting that this will be explicit in the next recruitment round. Andrew requested that any Board members interested in joining ARAC should contact him directly.

c) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

- 4.5. Priya Guha (Chair of BIC) provided an update on the committee, noting that BIC met in December 2023 and were able to look at both historical spend and committed future spend against the spending review settlement. Priya noted that this was an insightful and timely discussion. Priya stated that at the January BIC meeting they are due to discuss 3 business cases and will look at UKRI's plan for a potential spring fiscal event.
- 4.6. Priya explained that the committee is in the process of defining how it should work going forward, hoping to have some clarity by summer 2023. Priya noted this is an opportunity for the committee to consider how it links to the Infrastructure Advisory Committee, and also how it provides assurances to BEIS. Priya noted the revised terms of reference will come to Board in the summer.

d) Organisational Change Committee (OCC)

- 4.7. Nigel Toon, chair of the Organisation Change Committee (OCC) updated the Board on progress since the last Board meeting in November. Nigel noted that the committee was happy with the progress of the organisational change programme and thanked Siobhan Peters and Tim Bianek for their leadership in this area. The Committee did raise concerns regarding how the organisational change agenda was being filtered down through the organisation but were pleased that progress was being made.
- 4.8. Nigel noted that the committee were aware of the stresses on key people within the organisation as UKRI moves towards meeting headcount and financial targets, noting that a broader readout on organisational change will be on the agenda in March 2023.
- 4.9. The Board noted the need to consider and address the recommendations from the Independent Review of UKRI by the summer, linking into the Operating Model.

5. CEO Priorities

- 5.1. Ottoline introduced the CEO update highlighting that 2022 had been an exciting and challenging year for UKRI, in particular noting the critical publication of the UKRI Strategy and the Strategic Delivery Plans and securing a three-year spending review settlement. Ottoline noted that the publication of the Strategy has been transformative in UKRI's ability to engage clearly with stakeholders.
- 5.2. Ottoline highlighted the ongoing work to build a high-quality research and innovation culture across the UK, acknowledging the opportunity for UKRI to lead in this space.
- 5.3. Ottoline explained that the JES system is often the source of complaints, about UKRI. Ottoline reassured the board that the Simple and Better Funding Programme should significantly improve this key point of interaction with the community.

- 5.4. Ottoline noted that there is a lot of anxiety across the organisation regarding the operating model, explaining the need for better communication to help alleviate stress in the workforce.
- 5.5. The Board noted the excellent work that is ongoing in UKRI, noting the need to begin planning for the next spending review, ensuring UKRI are in the right position to advocate for ourselves across government. Ottoline noted the need to raise awareness of what we can do as an organisation, including encouraging other government departments to use our funding mechanisms rather than setting up their own.
- 5.6. Ottoline confirmed that the ESRC Executive Chair appointment had been approved by Ministers and an announcement was due shortly. Andrew Mackenzie noted that he is still waiting to hear when we can start the Board member recruitment.

6. a) CFO Update

- 6.1. Ruth Elliot introduced the item, including highlighting the Finance Update paper which provides an update of UKRI's financial position at Period 8. Ruth thanked Board members for attending the risk workshop held the day before, noting that an update will be included at the next Board meeting.
- 6.2. Ruth highlighted that UKRI started the year over-profiled, and to ensure a balanced budget underspends are starting to be identified and a series of 1:1 meetings between finance managers and Executive Chairs and the Corporate Hub Leadership are ongoing. The finance team continues to work with BEIS to manage the Horizon Europe underspend. Ruth noted that discussions with ExCo regarding the impact of inflation are ongoing, explaining that we will seek to manage any pressures at a council level in the first instance.
- 6.3. Ruth noted that there was planned strike action for the PCS union, which UKRI staff are entitled to join. While there are contingency plans in place, all noted that the impact was likely to be limited. Concerns were raised about the impact of the teachers' strike across the organisation.
- 6.4. Ruth noted that the Quarter 2 Health and Safety report had been shared with the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee and that no major incidents had been identified.
- 6.5. Tim Bianek confirmed that UKRI is now out of 58 Victoria Embankment and has successfully moved into Caxton House. The Board noted that the meeting in May is due to be held in Caxton House. Tim also noted that a new Operating Model programme director has been appointed, bringing welcome leadership and supporting Tim. Tim noted we are moving toward the implementation phase of the Operating Model.

b) 2022 Autumn Statement reforms to R&D tax reliefs

- 6.6. Ruth introduced the item, highlighting the potential implications of the reforms to R&D tax relief. Ruth noted that a HMT consultation to merge the two existing schemes was open until March 2023.
- 6.7. All agreed the importance of ensuring HMT were as well informed as possible about the significant implications across the wider community, particularly noting the impact on SMEs. Further discussion regarding how best to engage with HMT in this area will come to ExCo.

7. Advanced Research and Invention Agency (ARIA)

- 7.1. The Board noted that the discussion held over dinner with Matt Clifford (Chair of the Advanced Research and Invention Agency) was interesting and engaging. The Board were keen that a further discussion should be held in 18 months' time.
- 7.2. The Board highlighted the need to crystallise the UKRI brand across the diverse communities and sectors. The Board welcomed opportunities to work collaboratively with ARIA going forward.

8. Councils' Councils: enhancing engagement

- 8.1. Siobhan Peters introduced the item, which provided an overview of the current approach to engagement with councils' Councils and highlighted the changes underway. Siobhan noted that the councils' Councils are happy to be designated as advisory and are keen for revised Terms of Reference to be shared across UKRI.
- 8.2. The Board raised concerns that the paper focused on the practical elements of enhancing engagement with councils' Councils, whereas there is a need for a significant cultural shift across the organisation. The Board agreed the importance of setting our vision and expectations for councils' Councils and communicating them quickly to Executive Chairs, council members and staff within UKRI. The Board recognised that the role of Executive Chairs in setting the agenda and expectations, particularly of the desired culture change, was pivotal.
- 8.3. Siobhan noted there is a recruitment campaign for new council members ongoing, which is overseen by Nominations and Remuneration Committee, providing opportunities to consider tenure and expertise across the councils.
- 8.4. The Board agreed that a draft version of the councils' Councils Terms of Reference will be shared with the Senior Independent Members (SIMs) at their meeting with the Chair on 16 May 2023, accompanied by a covering paper outlining any proposed changes. The final Terms of Reference will then come to the Board for approval at the July meeting. Tim Bianek noted the importance of ensuring the terms of reference are aligned with our Operating Model, demonstrating the same principles and behaviours that join us up as an organisation.

9. AOB

- 9.1. The Board approved the interim Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee (ARAC) terms of reference, noting they remain interim so that the committee can accommodate the operating model in the future.
- 9.2. The Board noted the following;
 - UKRI Finance Update
 - Senior Appointments Update
 - Audit, Risk, Assurance and Performance Committee Annual Report
 - Summaries of Council Meetings (September 2022 – November 2022)
 - Board Committee meetings minutes;
 - Executive Committee (25th October 2022, 22nd November 2022)

10. Non-Executive Session