

Vision / Purpose

“Using scientific and technological insight to identify and champion bold new research challenges at the cutting edge of engineering and physical sciences for future investment”

Scope

The SETB is intended to:

- Provide advice and scientific guidance to EPSRC regarding identification of priority areas and positioning of areas for future critical mass investments as well as research needed to address societal challenges
- Develop and maintain an overview of a pipeline of ideas to identify strategic opportunities for additional funding streams
- Assess and prioritise ideas for Council consideration, providing scientific assurance
- Enable the Executive to make informed recommendations to Council on scientific priorities
- Understand the benefits and scientific outputs of our large investments by, for example, interacting with EPSRC researchers to identify exciting science stories and breakthroughs and using this to inform future priorities
- Provide independent advisory oversight of UKRI funding of the EPSRC Institutes
- Champion multi-disciplinary and emerging scientific research challenges
- Work with EPSRC and its other advisory bodies, including the Theme Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs) to make the case for fundamental, discovery research, helping to identify and publicise scientific breakthroughs in the EPS domain
- Work across UKRI councils to identify cross-council opportunities and priorities
- Help with two-way communication between EPSRC and the research community

Membership

Members are drawn from across EPSRC’s stakeholder groups, reflecting a diverse mix of characteristics and backgrounds. They are expected to bring a broad strategic view and to act as ‘generous generalists’, advising EPSRC on the scientific, engineering, and technology aspects of our portfolio. Members should not act as representatives of their own organisation, research area or sector and are expected to adhere to the [Seven Principles of Public Life](#). Representatives from EPSRC Council serve on the board on a rotating basis.

All members are required to declare any personal, private, or commercial interests that might conflict with their ability to provide impartial advice. Once declared, appropriate action will be agreed with the Theme Lead and Chair. This may include withdrawal from any discussion of topics in which they have such an interest.

The names of all SETB members are published on the EPSRC [website](#).

There will be a maximum of 15 SETB members including both external and Council members.

Declarations of interest

Members are required to declare any personal, private or commercial interests that might conflict with the interests of the EPSRC, and must withdraw from any discussion of topics in which they have such an interest.

Nominations and Recruitment

Recruitment for the SETB is carried out every two years through an open call for nominations, including self-nominations and invited nominations from key stakeholder groupings. Based on the competencies and characteristics required for the role, detailed in the SETB Person Specification, the Executive identifies those whom it might wish to appoint. The [Appointments Assurance Committee \(AAC\)](#) acts in an oversight capacity for all appointments of EPSRC's strategic advisers including the SETB. This committee considers and reviews the Executive's proposals and the rationale for these recommendations, challenging as appropriate, and reviews the appropriateness of the recruitment process. The Executive Chair is ultimately responsible for confirming and ratifying appointments, taking advice as appropriate from the AAC.

Term

Membership of the SETB is usually for four years, with extensions at the discretion of EPSRC. In order to ensure the maximum flexibility and to ensure long-term continuity across the membership of the SETB, EPSRC ensures there is staggering of terms. Some members may therefore serve for less than four years. If a SETB member's circumstances should change which may affect their membership, the Executive should be informed as soon as possible.

Operation

Formal SETB meetings take place up to four times a year. In addition, the SETB works flexibly with EPSRC throughout the year to provide advice as requested by the Executive. It is expected that SETB members will need to commit up to 10 days to SETB work per year. Every effort will be made to support remote participation to SETB activities, if this is appropriate, and to take into account part-time working. EPSRC has developed [guidelines to highlight the support available to researchers with caring responsibilities](#). Members are paid a fee for each activity they are involved with and, when attending meetings in person, are reimbursed for travel and subsistence expenses in line with the [UKRI Travel Policy](#).

Quality Assurance

EPSRC relies on the quality of the strategic advice it receives. This provides an external check on the development of EPSRC's direction and plans. A member of EPSRC's Executive Board chairs the SETB to ensure that the reported outcomes accurately reflect the nature of the advice received and that all present at the meeting discharge their roles appropriately. EPSRC and this board are committed to acting according to the principles of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion. The advisory function of the SETB is separate from the:

- Responsibility for decisions made by the Executive and by Council;
- Independent peer review processes managed by EPSRC.

Expectations

The Executive will endeavour to:

- Provide the appropriate information so that SETB members are adequately briefed and able to contribute meaningfully.
- Provide an appropriate forum and tools for members to provide appropriate, high-quality strategic advice.
- Maintain members' knowledge of EPSRC strategic thinking and direction. We will facilitate information flows between the SETB and EPSRC Council, and SETB and the other EPSRC advisory streams including Theme SATs.
- Be clear about the information SETB members can share more widely and that which is provided in confidence.
- Inform members about the use made of the advice and subsequent outcomes and in particular to explain the rationale where the advice has not been followed.
- Make public a note of meetings.

The Members of the SETB will endeavour to:

- Act within the 'Seven Principles of Public Life', in particular to provide independent, informed advice avoiding actual or perceived conflicts of interest and taking a collegiate approach to policy and strategy development;
- Bring a broad strategic view to bear and acting as 'generous generalists', advising across the breadth of EPSRC's portfolio;
- Participate in wider task and finish groups with EPSRC's other advisory bodies, including SATs and Council, as appropriate;
- Participate in cross-UKRI advisory task and finish groups on policy and on science and technology areas where appropriate and relevant opportunities exist;
- Challenge constructively and/or validate EPSRC's perspectives drawing on the available evidence and their own experiences;
- Take individual and collective ownership of the advice they provide whilst recognising the separation of that advice from responsibility for the decisions made, which rests with the Executive;
- Work as a team with other SETB members, and EPSRC and be proactive in bringing issues and opportunities to the attention of the Executive;
- Be prepared to work flexibly with EPSRC – including, for example, assisting with consideration of scientific opportunities on fast timescales between formal meetings;
- Use their profile as SETB members in order to sustain excellent two-way communications within their respective stakeholder communities and, where appropriate, with decision-makers. This includes:
 - Gathering intelligence that can be brought to bear in policy development;
 - Explaining EPSRC policies to the community;
 - Advocating, where relevant, on specific issues on behalf of Engineering and Physical Sciences;
- Attend meetings of the SETB.

Success Features / Outcomes

- Exciting and well evidenced science, engineering and technology priorities
- Improved evidence and assurance to support decision making by the Executive and by Council
- A cross-cutting and multi-disciplinary view, working with other advisory groups and integrating information flow to maximise the potential of all of our advisory streams
- Membership that best reflects the level and type of expertise and insights that we require to develop science, engineering and technology priorities in the changing funding landscape
- Enhanced credibility of our science, engineering and technology priorities across our stakeholder communities
- Flexible and adaptable operations which allow the Executive to dynamically respond to opportunities
- Better linkage between emerging research challenges and capital / infrastructure and skills needs
- Examples of excellent science that can be used to make the case for fundamental research.