



Council Meeting
Thursday, 23 November 2023
12:30 – 15:30
Hybrid Meeting

Minutes

Attendees	
Council Members:	Professor Dame Jessica Corner (JC), (Chair) Dr Carol Bell (CB) Dr Phil Clare (PC) Ms Sharon Ellis (SE) Dame Janet Finch (JF) Professor Cathy Gormley-Heenan (CGH) Professor Ian Greer (IG) Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon (AMI) Professor Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad (CRP) Mr Mike Rees (MR) (SIM) Professor Colin Riordan (CR)
Observers:	Ms Helen Cross (HC), SFC Mr Paul Murphy (PM), DfE NI
UKRI:	Dame Ottoline Leyser (OL), UKRI CEO (for Items 1 and 2) Mr Dan Shah (DSH), Director of Investment Strategy & System Insight
Officers:	Ms Jacqui Dovey (JD) Ms Alice Frost (AF) Dr Steven Hill (SH) Associate Director of Insight & Engagement
RE Staff:	Associate Director of Strategy and Planning
Apologies:	<u>Council Members</u> Ms Bronwen Maddox (BM) Professor Graeme Reid (GR) <u>Observers</u> Dr David Blaney (DB), HEFCW Ms Susan Lapworth (SL), OfS Professor Trevor McMillan (TM), KE Champion
Secretariat:	Associate Director of Governance and Risk
Item	
1.	Welcome and Introductions
1.1	JC welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from David Blaney, Susan Lapworth, Bronwen Maddox, Trevor McMillan and Graeme Reid. No conflicts of interests were raised beyond those already declared.

Minutes and Actions of the meeting held on 23 September 2023	
1.2	Minor amendments to the minutes were received from SE and AMI. With the incorporation of these changes, the minutes were accepted as being an accurate record of the previous meeting. There were no outstanding actions from the previous meeting. There were no matters arising.
2.	UKRI CEO Update
2.1	<p>JC welcomed OL to the meeting. OL's remarks to Council included the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKRI is halfway through a spending review (SR) period with a rising budget. • Council strategic delivery plans (SDPs) and ongoing iterative activity have been well received by communities and the HE sector. • There is widespread consensus that R&I is crucial to the UK in dealing with economic challenges. • The UK Science and Technology Framework sets out the 10 elements that must be considered for any policy involving Science & Technology. • The Autumn Statement evidenced attention being paid to these goals.
2.2	<withheld from publication>.
2.3	<withheld from publication>.
2.4	CRP stated that his university has been working with different groups of students and staff on how to have a secure campus in the context of very different views.
2.5	Council discussed RE's overall approach to EDI and the need for consistency of approach. They discussed the issue of culture in the REF. They also discussed the importance of a diverse environment that supports research excellence, the importance of creating a space to listen well to differences, and the importance of an overall environment that welcomes difference. The Associate Director of Strategy and Planning stated that it would be useful to hear how the Office for Students (OfS) are tackling the Freedom of Speech issue.
3.	UKRI Strategy Update
3.1	<p>DSH provided an update from the UKRI Strategy Directorate as follows:</p> <p><u>Autumn Statement</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is uncertainty around the timing of election. • UKRI welcomes the government's renewed commitment to R&I, including a £145m investment to support the business innovation ecosystem; £500m for AI compute; and £20m for a Dementia Accelerator to speed up the development of promising new treatments and clinical trials. • Some spending announcements have been based on unspent Horizon Europe funding; negotiations are still ongoing with the EU on changing the UK contribution to Horizon Europe. <p><u>Wider Context</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UKRI continues to build relationships with the new department (DSIT) to increase understanding of the system and to identify how UKRI can help in this context.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> UKRI is building relationships with other government departments ahead of the next SR. The government response to the Nurse Landscape Review has been published; including an emphasis on sustainability of the HE system and an emphasis on data and understanding of the system, which speaks well to work on increasing understanding of KE metrics. Many elections are likely to be held across the world over the next year, which may change the way in which certain countries work together, and which may pose an interesting challenge for UKRI and its communities as well as the sector.
4.	Executive Chair's Report
	<withheld from publication>
4.1	<withheld from publication>.
4.2	<withheld from publication>.
	<withheld from publication>
4.3	<withheld from publication>.
	<u>Spinouts</u>
4.4	The team has been discussing funding options with the KE Champion, particularly in the context of addressing regional issues. Funding of shared TTOs will be addressed via CCF. One of the actions outlined in the Government response to the independent review of university spinout companies (published 22 November) is that RE and HESA will collaborate to produce better data on spinouts, including a database of spinout companies.
5.	Review of and Funding for the School of Advanced Study, University of London
5.1	SH provided an overview of the review of the School of Advanced Study (SAS), conducted by JF, noting that Council is being asked to endorse the proposed resource funding for SAS for AY2024/25 and the proposed approach to funding for AY2025/26 until AY2028/29 (noting the dependency on future government spending rounds). Council is also being asked to endorse the proposed approach to capital funding for SAS for AY2024/25 to AY2028/29.
5.2	During its history, SAS has been subject to periodic review, most recently in 2018. In November 2022, Council agreed that a light-touch review of SAS's progress since 2018 should be conducted in late 2023.
5.3	<p>JF provided an overview of the review as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SAS was founded in 1994 and has received special funding from HEFCE and now RE since its inception to promote and facilitate research in the Humanities. The School does not receive any QR funding, and staff are not submitted to the REF. The School undertakes a range of activities, and their remit is UK wide. Their advocacy role is very important due to their neutrality in the sector. They work in close collaboration with AHRC and the British Academy. Over the last five years, their focus has been on making a more coherent whole (whole greater than the sum of its parts); undertaking significant organisational restructure; making the school more viable; and increasing the UK strength and international reputation in the activities that they undertake.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Their plan for the future is based on expansion: to revise their mission statement; for impact to play a more prominent role; to expand the number of partnerships they have with arts organisations; to expand their international activities; and to ensure greater financial sustainability.
5.4	The paper includes funding projections for the next five years tied to strategic projections (resource and capital) and proposes continuation of funding for SAS for the next financial year with the Research team returning to Council when additional information has been provided on resource funding and when RE knows the outcome of the next SR. In terms of capital, it has been proposed to award funding for the first year, to give an indicative level of funding for the second year, and then to review the final amount of funding in 2024/25. JF stated that SAS have been remarkably impressive their achievements, and she was highly supportive of continuing their funding.
5.5	The challenge of considering five years of funding with an impending SR was acknowledged. It was also agreed that SAS also need to do some work in firming up spending plans in years 2 to 5.
5.6	During the discussion, Council queried whether resources need to be more strategically targeted to enable SAS's representation to be more national. JF responded that the pandemic had provided challenges and opportunities, resulting in SAS expanding their online presence and in their involvement in planning of events around the country.
5.7	Council suggested that SAS conduct a survey of universities around the country to assess the level of support they provide; this would be useful evidence to support their UKRI-wide role. JF stated that, in the course of the review, SAS did get feedback from key partnership organisations.
5.8	Council queried the relationship with AHRC. SH stated that this has expanded and that AHRC are having discussions with SAS about having a strategic framework agreement that would enable them to support SAS more dynamically with RE and AHRC working with SAS in a complementary way.
5.9	HC noted that the SFC fund the Language Sciences Institute of the University of the Highlands and Islands (comparator activity) and that there are other comparator activities in the UK. JF stated that SAS are open to working with other comparators.
5.10	As per the discussion above, Council endorsed the proposed resource funding for SAS for AY2024/25 and the proposed approach to funding for AY2025/26 until AY2028/29 (noting the dependency on future government spending rounds). Council also endorsed the proposed approach to capital funding for SAS for AY2024/25 to AY2028/29.
6.	OD Update
6.1	JD's presentation to Council included a high level overview of the Organisational Design (OD) work and project timelines. She acknowledged the many change programmes across UKRI. She explained that the OD work is attempting to carry out an assessment of capability and identification of gaps in resource and expertise across the organisation. Of key concern is addressing resilience with issues including single points of failure, reliance on the corporate memory of individuals, operating with an extremely lean workforce, and resource constraints.

6.2	Actions being considered include automisation of processes, prioritisation of activities, review of resources, succession planning for senior roles, consideration of how to best utilise other parts of UKRI, and provision of wellbeing support for RE staff. Each directorate has considered their resource requirements. There are ongoing staff comms, engagement and input; an Executive Group planning session is due to take place in November (during which some aspects of this work will be discussed); and there will be a planning day for all staff in February 2024. A cross-UKRI activity mapping exercise is also currently underway.
6.3	Other activities specific to RE include a review of RE governance; development and implementation of an RE operational framework; and consideration of RE's Data and Evidence function with consideration of strategic development of capabilities, including a national centre for KE metrics and evidence, and effective use of data and evidence to further support robust decision making.
6.4	The UKRI FTE distribution is due to be resolved by the end of January 2024, and the resourcing capability work is due to be completed by the end March 2024. DSH added that UKRI is managing to work towards achieving headcount targets; however, the volume of work across the organisation has not reduced. The challenge is, therefore, to retain talented people and to prioritise work.
7.	Risk Assurance and Governance Report
7.1	<withheld from publication>.
7.2	MR noted that the major areas of risk highlighted in the report <withheld from publication> have all being addressed under earlier agenda items. He noted no issues of concern with the data audits.
7.3	Staffing issues have been covered under Risk 1 (Resourcing). Currently, stress and sickness levels are the main areas of concern, as well as the need for line managers to have time to manage their teams.
7.4	The RE Executive Group will discuss some of the areas of concern during an upcoming planning day (to be held on 27 November).
8.	AOB
8.1	No additional business was raised.

Date and Time of next Meeting: Thursday, 1 February 2023, 12:30 – 15:30
Venue of next Meeting: Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA