

Approved by AHRC Council:

Author: Amy Smith

Minutes of the AHRC Council meeting of 05 March 2025

Date: Wednesday 05 March 2025

Time: 09:00 – 12:30

Location: Caxton House, London and via Zoom

Council Members and Observers	
Ms Monisha Shah (For item 1 & 2)	Dame Judith Macgregor
Professor Christopher Smith (Executive Chair, AHRC – Chair)	Dr Bridget McConnell
Ms Zeinab Badawi	Professor Sue Rigby
Professor Dame Janet Beer	Professor Adrienne Scullion
Professor Ambreena Manji	Professor Steven Spier
Attendees	
Dr Jaideep Gupte (Director of Research, Strategy and Innovation, AHRC)	Ms Emma Kane (Observer)
Dr Allan Sudlow (Director of Partnerships and Engagement, AHRC)	Ms Seetha Kumar (Observer)
Ms Stella Power (Chief Operating Officer, AHRC)	Dame Ottoline Leyser (CEO, UKRI – for item 2)
Ms Anita Bhalla (Observer)	Mrs Cathy Kerfoot (Associate Director for Major Programmes and Cross Council Partnership, AHRC – for item 9)
Mr Tim Gardam (Observer)	Mrs Audra Gill (Head of Creative Industries, AHRC – for item 9)
Secretariat	
Mrs Amy Smith (Senior Governance Manager, AHRC)	Mrs Katie Nandhra (Senior Governance Manager, AHRC)
Apologies	
Professor Russell Viner	

Introductory Items	
1.	Welcome, Apologies, and Declarations of Interest
The Chair welcomed all to the meeting particularly the observers and noted apologies from Professor Russell Viner.	
Council confirmed no new conflicts of interest needed to be declared.	
2.	Update from Dame Ottoline Leyser, UKRI CEO
Dame Ottoline Leyser (UKRI, CEO) joined for this item. The Chair noted that this would be Dame Ottoline's last meeting with AHRC Council and thanked her for her openness with Council during her tenure.	

Dame Ottoline discussed the Spending Review (SR), deliverability, the challenges in the university sector, and international collaboration, noting the importance of Arts and Humanities due to its reach across society.

Dame Ottoline thanked Professor Dame Janet Beer and Dame Judith Macgregor noting that this was their last Council meeting.

3. Minutes, Actions, and Matters Arising

Council approved the minutes of 4th December 2024.

The Chair provided an update on actions.

Updates and Operations

4. Executive Chair's Report

Professor Smith updated Council on SR, the 1 year settlement for FY_25/26, AHRC's bid for the next SR, the European research budget and partnerships and engagement.

5. Executive Chair's forward look

Professor Smith noted his priorities moving forward.

6. Update from Dr Allan Sudlow, Director of Partnerships and Engagement

Dr Sudlow updated Council on the AI Opportunities Action Plan which has recommendations relating to the future of the UK and its relationship with AI. Dr Sudlow noted that AHRC have positioned themselves within UKRI as the Council best suited to conversations about responsible AI and how it is developed, used and deployed.

Council discussed the use of AI within the higher education sector and applications for funding, and the BRAID programme who are looking to address some of these issues.

7. Update from Dr Jaideep Gupte, Director of Strategy, Research, and Innovation

Dr Gupte updated Council on StratCo, international including the Humanities and European Research Network, the gambling levy which AHRC are in the process of setting up an advisory structure for, and the AHRC Advisory Board recruitment which was recently completed.

Council discussed international relations, freedom of speech in universities and globally, responsive mode funding, discovery and curiosity research.

ACTION: JG to invite StratCo Chief of Strategy to Council.

8. Chief Operating Officer Update

Ms Stella Power updated Council on the AHRC dashboard.

Council discussed finance, Design Council, system implementations, assurance processes and risk appetite.

Professor Smith thanked all involved in the dashboard noting it will be of great benefit moving into the next SR.

ACTION: Design Council to come to a future Council to discuss their business model and financial sustainability. AS to add to forward plan.

ACTION: COSTAR assurance case study to come to a future Council. AS to add to forward plan.

ACTION: Risk deep dive to take place at next Council meeting. AS to add to forward plan.

ACTION: AS to share geographical and institute information of new Advisory Board members with Council after onboarding is complete.

Items for Discussion

9. Creative Industries Industrial Strategy

Mrs Cathy Kerfoot (Associate Director for Major Programmes and Cross Council Partnership, AHRC) and Mrs Audra Gill (Head of Creative Industries, AHRC) joined for this item.

Mrs Kerfoot and Mrs Gill updated Council on the CI industrial strategy noting the ongoing work both within and beyond UKRI to inform the priorities and delivery of the strategy.

Council discussed the hospitality sector and the opportunity for greater collaboration in this area, the Clusters including lessons learned, investing R&D in films and games and the opportunities within convergence, and business and industry partnering and challenges.

10. AOB

The Chair thanked Professor Dame Janet Beer and Dame Judith Macgregor for their time on AHRC Council, highlighting the expertise they have brought on international, assurance and the university sector.

The next meeting will take place on 10th June 2025.