UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
Minutes of the EPSRC Council
Date: 24/25 September 2025
Location: London

Attendees
Members of EPSRC Council
>   Professor Charlotte Deane (EPSRC Executive Chair)
>   Professor Jeremy Baumberg (Senior Independent Member)
>   Dr Joe de Sousa
>   Professor Alison Etheridge
>   Professor Deborah Greaves
>   Professor Jane Hillston
>   Professor Dames Jane Jiang
>   Ms Siân John
>   Dr Simon King
>   Mr Alan Newby
>   Professor Martin Schröder
>   Professor Ian White
>   Professor Andy Wright

UKRI/EPSRC attendees
>   Andrew Bourne (EPSRC Executive Director, Partnerships)
>   Nicola Goldberg (EPSRC Chief Operating Officer)
>   Jane Nicholson (EPSRC Executive Director, Research Base)
>   Kedar Pandya (EPSRC Executive Director, Strategy)
>   **Day 1 only**
>   Ian Chapman (UKRI CEO)
>   Gary Cutts (Innovate UK)
>   **Day 2 only**
>   David Stiles (UKRI Senior Finance Business Partner)
>   Ruth Kelman (EPSRC Deputy Director, Resilience and Security)
>   Kate Bowman (EPSRC Head of Resilience and Security)
>   Richard Meadows (UKRI Senior Strategy Advisor)
>   Alison Wall (EPSRC Deputy Director, Talent and Skills)
>   Nick Cooper (EPSRC Joint Head of Talent and Skills)
>   Paula Bailey (EPSRC Joint Head of Talent and Skills) - virtual
>   Frances Burstow (UKRI Director Talent and Skills)
>   Hugh Harris (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning & Strategy job share)
>   Liam Blackwell (EPSRC Deputy Direct, Information and Communication Technologies)
>   Neil Robinson (EPSRC Joint Head of Research Infrastructure) - virtual
>   Sophie Liddell (EPSRC Joint Head of Research Infrastructure) - virtual

Guests
>   Garth Wells (Incoming Deputy Executive Chair, EPSRC)
>   David N (Office of the CSA for National Security) - Virtual
>   **Day 1 only**
>   Tim Dafforn (CSA, MOD)
>   Professor Dominic O'Brien (University of Oxford)
>   Professor Douglas Paul (University of Glasgow)

Day 2 only
Paul K (Director Science, GCHQ)

Secretariat/Observers
Cerianne Whitehead (Head of Private Office, Secretary to Council)
Gillian Bartoszewska (Senior Governance and Operations Manager)
Megan Maycock (Executive Assistant and Governance Manager)

Apologies
Dr Dave Smith (National Technology Adviser)
Professor Julia Sutcliffe (Department for Business and Trade Chief Scientific Advisor)
Professor Michael Holynski (University of Birmingham)

1. **Welcome, introductions and declaration of interests**

1.1. Jeremy Baumberg welcomed attendees, confirmed quoracy and noted apologies.

1.2. Members were reminded to update their declaration of interests during the year. Members were asked to raise any conflicts arising during the course of the meeting. No new declarations were raised.

2. **Minutes and actions**

2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

2.2. Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.

3. **Executive Report**

3.1. Council received updates from the EPSRC executive:

3.1.1. Spending Review (SR) – Council were updated on the allocations process and initial messaging from Ian Chapman. Council considered UKRI's role in delivering Patrick Vallance's (Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation) priorities and the balance between them:

- Guardian for curiosity-driven, investigator-led discovery research
- Research and innovation to address government's priorities, with a focus on economic growth through the industrial strategy sectors
- Helping innovative UK companies to grow and scale to contribute to GDP

3.1.2. Place – Council were updated on the timeline for the Local Innovation Partnership Funds and Council noted an update on EPSRC's Place portfolio would be provided at the December Council meeting. Council discussed ongoing conversations to enable regions to build on current strengths.

3.1.3. Missions - Council were updated on the Research & Development Mission Accelerator Programme (RDMAP) governance and noted Garth Wells would sit on the internal board. Council noted work between RDMAP and existing investments to support the government's missions and support delivery of the milestones in the government's Plan for Change. Council said they would welcome opportunities to connect with Chief Scientific Advisors and Mission Challenge Directors and noted synergies between Missions and Place opportunities. Council reflected on limitations within the timeline, programme mechanics and OpEx constraints.

3.1.4. Critical Tech and AI – Council were updated on work to review what EPSRC's portfolio should look like across Lord Vallance's priority buckets and that DSIT was working well with UKRI themes on published government strategies in all tech areas.

3.1.5.   EPSRC PhD Studentships - Council considered, following declining doctoral student numbers and budgetary pressures on stipends, a proposal. Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Council discussed the importance of ensuring student experience and safeguarding measures.

3.2.   Council noted written updates on the Strategic Delivery Plan update 2025-2027, The Funding Service including updated functionality and planned work on data collection, Senior appointments and the finance update.

4.   **Council discussion ahead of UKRI CEO session**

4.1.   Council agreed on topics that would merit discussion with UKRI's CEO Ian Chapman.

5.   **Discussion with UKRI CEO**

5.1.   Council was pleased to welcome Ian Chapman to the meeting who briefly introduced himself and spoke on his evolving thoughts about UKRI. Ian provided clarity about:
- UKRI's mission and a focus on delivering outcomes for taxpayers
- developing UKRI's people and giving us the tools needed to work effectively
- representing UKRI externally and establishing strong relations with our partners

5.2.   Ian spoke further on cultural change, aligning our purpose, strengthening connections, making choices and helping those we invest in to deliver the government's priorities.

5.3.   Council greatly appreciated the time spent discussing these topics and reflected on: Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

6.   **Reflections on discussion with UKRI CEO**

6.1.   The directness of the messaging was welcomed by Council, along with the opportunity it provided for a wide-ranging discussion. Council expressed a strong commitment to working proactively with EPSRC to support and advance UKRI's strategic agenda.

6.2.   Council appreciated the recognition of EPSRC's leanness and the positive remarks regarding its current performance and leadership.

6.3.   Council welcomed EPSRC's initiatives to strengthen engagement with DSIT's technology teams, particularly in areas such as compute, artificial intelligence, and quantum technologies, which are contributing to the collaborative ethos.

6.4.   Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

6.5.   Council welcomed recognition of the importance of curiosity-driven research and its symbiotic relationship with the wider portfolio.

6.6.   Overall, Council expressed strong support for the strategic direction and ideas presented and reflected on the challenges that might arise during the implementation phase. Council expressed interest in providing support in communicating strategic direction more broadly across the research and innovation community, and was keen to understand how best to support EPSRC and its executive team through this transition.

7.   **Closed Council session**

7.1.   A closed session was held with Council.

8.   **Council closed session feedback**

8.1.   Council provided feedback on the key discussion points from its closed session. Council discussed how they could support EPSRC to continue to build on its good research culture, remain agile and adopt opportunities for positive change. Council offered support through their expertise to monitor change and act as a sounding board.

9.   **Quantum Hubs**

9.1.   Council welcomed two of EPSRC's five Quantum Hub leaders Professor Dominic O'Brien (Quantum Computing via Integrated & Interconnected Implementations [QCI3]) and Professor Douglas Paul (Quantum Enabled Position, Navigation and Timing [QEPNT]). They spoke on the impact, strategic value and future potential of this flagship National Quantum Technology Programme to ensure the UK benefits from the potential of quantum technologies. The presentations demonstrated the role of hubs as platforms for cross-discipline coordinated conversations and building communities, the benefits of demonstrators and field trials, opportunities to derisk innovative projects and to catalyse the adoption of frontier technologies.

9.2.   Council discussed Minute not included as contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

10.   **Update on National Security and Defence activities**

10.1. Council were updated on recent developments in the National Security and Defence (NS&D) landscape and data on EPSRC's NS&D relevant research. Council noted UKRI were publishing a statement on National Security and Defence research.

10.2. UKRI's National Security Liaison Officer spoke on similarities between UKRI and the Office of the CSA for National Security, the need to work in partnership with early discussions to ensure effort is not duplicated in the system and the challenge of complex funding mechanisms for rapidly developing technologies.

10.3. Council advised on EPSRC's approach to NS&D and on aligning the EPSRC portfolio to better meet the needs of NS&D stakeholders and support economic growth, including how EPSRC could effectively demonstrate its contribution to government priorities in this area.

10.4. Council discussed funding dual use innovation for economic growth and supported the development of impact case studies and working with trusted academies to better demonstrate potential for research.

11.   **Diversifying the doctoral model**

11.1. Council were updated on ideas to diversify routes to a doctoral qualification to enhance our existing offering.

11.2. Council discussed how to better demonstrate:
   - where issues lie and where interventions are needed to impact change
   - how to better articulate the flexibility of the current offer including EngD
   - the attractiveness of the offer to those in employment.

12.   **Developing the new EPSRC EDI Action Plan 2026 to 2028**

12.1. Council reviewed the initial draft of the EPSRC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) action plan for the three-year period 2026 to 2028 and the engagement and data that fed into the development of the plan.

12.2. Council discussed what good would look like for EDI in the engineering and physical sciences landscape, EPSRC's role in engagement to widen participation and how EDI could

be included in the range of grants EPSRC funds. Council supported working with partners on early engagement and intervention to support the research trajectory towards target levels and that EPSRC could show leadership in the system.

12.3. Council discussed opportunities to support early access to research experience at various life stages though EPSRC's current offering and how to connect to science communication and public engagement activities. Council supported the proposed approach to assessment of EDI in grants, with the approach varying according to the type of grant.

13. Large facilities and infrastructure needs discussion

13.1. Council were updated on how the engineering and physical sciences (EPS) research community makes use of UKRI funded large-scale facilities and work being undertaken to better understand the EPS research communities' research infrastructure needs. Council discussed the importance in managing UKRI's portfolio to achieve both the ambitions of government and those of the EPS research community.

13.2. Council discussed the initial findings on the usage of UKRI-funded large-scale facilities by the EPSRC portfolio, how to measure their value for the themes and community, and how they deliver on Lord Vallance's priorities. Council advised consideration as a sovereign national capability, and ways to prioritise by better understanding their agility for the needs of future users and of the international landscape.

14. Information papers

14.1. Council noted the information paper on EPSRC Communications and Impact Stories update.

15. Any other business

15.1. Council thanked EPSRC colleagues who contributed to the meeting, networking session, logistical and admin support, and who provided contributions to the wide range of briefing materials.

15.2. The next meeting will be held on 4 December 2025.