



Minutes of the UKRI Board Meeting

Date: Wednesday 17 September 2025
Location: Edgbaston Park Hotel, University of Birmingham
Time: 10:00am – 5:00pm

| Board Members and Observers | |
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| Sir Andrew Mackenzie (UKRI Chair) | Professor Sir Ian Chapman (UKRI CEO) |
| Siobhan Peters CMG (UKRI CFO) | Russell Schofield-Bezer |
| The Baroness Bull CBE | Nigel Toon |
| Annie Callanan | Priya Guha MBE |
| Rita Dhut | Alexandra Jones (Director General for Science, Innovation and Growth, DSIT) |
| Professor Nola Hewitt-Dundas | |

| Executive Committee Attendees | |
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| Christopher Smith (AHRC Exec Chair) | Jessica Corner (RE Exec Chair) – for items 7-12 |
| Hugh Harris (UKRI Chief of Investment Planning and Strategy) | Poli Stuart-Lacey (UKRI, Chief of External Affairs and Communications) |

| Attendees for items only | |
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| UKRI India, Acting Director - for item 6 | UKRI Director of International - for item 6 |
| UKRI Head of Risk & Assurance - for item 7 | UKRI Director of Risk and Assurance - for item 7 |
| UKRI Head of Performance and Planning - for item 8 and 9 | UKRI Planning and Performance Specialist - for item 8 |
| UKRI Performance Lead - for item 8 | UKRI Head of Appraisal and Evaluation (for item 8) |
| UKRI Evaluation and Performance Lead - for item 8 | UKRI Senior Evaluation and Performance Analyst - for item 8 |
| UKRI Corporate Planning Lead - for item 9 | UKRI Corporate Planning Lead - for item 9 |
| UKRI Deputy Director for Investment Strategy - for item 10 | UKRI Head of Investment Planning - for item 10 |
| UKRI Head of Allocations and Thematic Investment Strategy - for item 10 | |

| Apologies | |
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| Jane Norman (Board Member) | Ruwan Weerasekera (Board member) |

| Secretariat | |
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| UKRI Integrative Secretariat Function – Strategic Lead | UKRI Integrative Secretariat Function – Strategic Manager |
| Senior Private Secretary to Sir Andrew Mackenzie | |



1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1. Andrew Mackenzie welcomed members to the Board meeting and noted apologies. He reflected on the valuable and interesting visit to University of Birmingham the previous day, showcasing some of their research, and thanked the University for their time and effort in arranging the tours.
- 1.2. He welcomed Gemma Bailey, Chief People Officer to her first UKRI Board meeting.

2. a) Minutes of 16 July 2025 UKRI Board meeting; b) Action Log; and c) Forward Schedule

- 2.1. The Board approved the minutes of the 16 July 2025 meeting.

DECISION: The Board approved the minutes of 16 July 2025 meeting.

- 2.2. The Board noted the action log. They were satisfied with those proposed to close and progress on open actions.
- 2.3. The Board discussed the forward schedule. Stakeholder management and organisational culture were suggested as future items. Ian Chapman will also work with the Secretariat team to refine the schedule moving forward.

ACTION: the CEO and Secretariat will have jointly reviewed the UKRI Board forward schedule.

3. Board Committee Updates

a) Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NomCo)

- 3.1. Andrew Mackenzie updated the Board, following the NomCo meeting earlier the same day, on a busy agenda including:
 - appointments and diversity considerations for Councils' Councils
 - positive progress in terms of integration of the UKRI Research Council Pension Scheme with the Civil Service Pension Scheme
 - Board and Executive Committee succession planning
 - consideration of senior performance related pay
 - noting the UKRI Equal Pay Audit report
- 3.2. The Board noted the importance of considering a range of approaches to Council member appointments to ensure diverse membership.

b) Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC)

- 3.3. Rita Dhut, Deputy Chair of ARAC, provided an update to the Board. Although ARAC have not met since the last Board, she noted their recent reviews of the UKRI Risk Appetite Statement and revised GIAA Audit Plan. The ARAC Chair continues to work closely with the UK SBS Audit Chair to support a strong relationship.

c) Board Investment Committee (BIC)

- 3.4. Priya Guha, Chair of BIC also noted that the BIC have not met since the last Board meeting, but that their October 2025 meeting will be an outreach visit to the UK Astronomy Technology Centre in Edinburgh. The Committee will also be scrutinising the Local Partnership Investment Fund (LPIF) and Next National Supercomputer Service (NNS) business cases.



3.5. Priya also highlighted that the National Audit Office (NAO) are due to complete a value for money report on Infrastructure Investment, with focus on the DSIT/UKRI working relationship.

3.6. There was a question about the Artificial Intelligence Opportunities Plan, with the Board keen to understand what they should be scrutinising in relation to this. Alexandra Jones noted that DSIT will provide greater clarity on this in the near future.

d) Growth Committee

3.7. Nigel Toon, Chair of the Growth Committee, reported that the Committee are meeting next week, with a focus on the new Innovate UK strategic vision and the UKRI commercialisation impact dashboard.

DECISION: The UKRI Board formally delegated approval of the Innovate UK Strategic Vision to the Growth Committee.

3.8. Nigel noted that any Board members with a particular interest in this agenda are very welcome to observe the meeting, and details were shared.

4. CEO (Accounting Officer) Update

4.1. Ian Chapman presented his first CEO update to the Board. He welcomed feedback on the written format, and highlighted four key areas:

- progress with zero-based review ahead of budget allocations
- ongoing positive engagement with DSIT on a new approach to partnering with UKRI
- *<withheld from publication>* Ian will report back more fully on the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) Air Bridge to a future Board
- his first all-staff hybrid event/webinar last week. To encourage attendance, Board members were asked to present at a future meeting

ACTION: the CEO will report back to a future Board meeting on BAS Air Bridge progress.

ACTION: the CEO will have shared details of future all-staff events and agendas with the Board for their guidance on contributions.

4.2. In response to questions to both Ian and Alexandra Jones, a number of points were clarified:

- delivery of the updated UKRI framework document and Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) have been slightly delayed by the appointment of the new Secretary of State, but the OKRs should be available by the end of September 2025. The framework will take longer
- the STFC future strategy will be discussed in more detail at the next Board meeting
- there are lessons to be learned from the recent Global Talent Fund announcement, in terms of stakeholder management, but the Board noted that this was a properly run process that does not represent major risk to UKRI

ACTION: the Secretariat will have added STFC Future Strategy to the November 2025 agenda.

5. CFO Update

5.1. Siobhan Peters updated the Board that:



UK Research and Innovation

- UKRI entered the new financial year with a broadly balanced budget, and is no longer managing a central overcommitment. The financial focus in this year will be to actively manage the risk of underspend
- the most recent National Audit Office management letter recognises the progress that UKRI has made in the last year
- work is ongoing in relation to UKRI's future London presence
- Gemma Bailey, the new Chief People Officer, is now in post and working swiftly on a forward plan to strengthen communication and cross-team working, re-prioritise resources across HR, develop a clearer delivery framework with defined roles and responsibilities, and review governance arrangements.
- Oracle Fusion issues in relation to supplier invoicing are being worked on at pace, and the backlog is reducing steadily. UKRI continue to develop the relationship with UK SBS
- a recent Funding Service issue affected users, but the speed of identifying and addressing the issue is testament to a strong team and process
- there are senior staff changes in the Security and Resilience team, and the focus will be to ensure that momentum is maintained
- detailed work on Higher Education financial sustainability is live and ongoing

5.2. The Board supported the focus on cyber-security and asked for regular updates.

6. UKRI India Strategic Direction

- 6.1. Priya Guha noted a potential conflict of interest, highlighting her role as the Chair of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the UK.
- 6.2. Christopher Smith outlined the current programme of work with India, who are becoming an increasingly significant partner for UKRI and the UK. UKRI are currently well-placed in terms of their relationships and leadership to move forward more ambitiously. *<Withheld from publication.>*
- 6.3. The interim Director of the UKRI India office outlined some key partnership opportunities around telecoms and critical technology. *<Withheld from publication.>*
- 6.4. *<Withheld from publication.>*
- 6.5. The Board supported continuing to explore the approach, in line with both UKRI's objectives and the overall political pace and appetite.



7. UKRI Board Risk Update

- 7.1. Siobhan Peters presented the item. There was in-depth discussion in relation to the risk deep dive on *financial sustainability of the UK research system*. There is sector concern about the loss of traditional discipline areas, but the evidence does not support this being a major issue. There are real difficulties over complex and wide-ranging funding models that do not give clear direction on who has licence to do what. The Board felt that there might be a convening role that they could take to support the conversations that are required. The Board agreed that the risk is probably scored correctly, but that they wished to continue to monitor it.
- 7.2. In terms of the second deep dive, *failure to influence and respond to changes in the policy landscape*, the Board were keen to see a faster forward trajectory.
- 7.3. The Board noted it would been keen to discuss cyber-security at a future board meeting, building on the earlier discussion during the CFO update.

ACTION: the Risk and Assurance team will have scheduled a deep dive into Security and Resilience to be reported to Board in November 2025.

8. UKRI Framework for Performance: Progress and Performance report Q4

- 8.1. Hugh Harris introduced the item, highlighting four areas for the Board's attention:
 - 4% decrease in the number of students supported, for reasons which include decreasing stipends
 - the jobs created enabled by Innovate UK awards has reduced (noting that the data is self-reported so not fully robust)
 - grant processing times are still problematic
 - external user satisfaction is also below target
- 8.2. There was a general discussion about the need to mature the performance reporting to a more strategic focus on outputs and outcomes; and to ensure measures remain in line with strategic objectives. There was support for a move to monthly performance reporting in line with Executive committee reporting.
- 8.3. A Board member also queried that there has been no increase in Innovate UK spin outs, which will be investigated and reported back.

ACTION: Hugh Harris will have provided greater context in terms of the number of Innovate UK spin outs

9. UKRI Strategic Planning Suite 2025-7

- 9.1. Hugh Harris introduced the item, noting previous Board sight of the Strategic Delivery plans and Corporate Plan documents. He reiterated that these are a cohesive planning suite for UKRI and the individual Councils which will support the transition to the new UKRI framework and relationship with government. As the DSIT Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) are due to be published imminently, there will be a final review and light adjustment before UKRI publish these documents, with a planned further review next year to ensure continued alignment with government direction.
- 9.2. The Board agreed that they would like to see the documents published as soon as possible and that future review would be important.



DECISION: the UKRI Board approved the UKRI Strategic Planning Suite 2025-7.

10. Spending Review Allocations update

- 10.1. Hugh Harris and Alexandra Jones updated the Board on the allocations process, noting that time is being given for Ian Chapman to complete his zero-based review before UKRI's allocation is finalised. The aim is for a final position by end of November, although this may need to be flexible. Hugh asked for the Board's steer on a number of strategic issues.
- 10.2. In relation to the three ministerial priority areas for allocation: curiosity-driven research, delivering government priorities and helping companies scale and grow, there was a wide-ranging discussion about curiosity-driven research. This resulted in a steer to retain the ability to re-balance allocations in future in relation to performance, but the Board advised greatest focus into the second priority area in terms of the change that UKRI wishes to drive within the "delivering government priorities" allocation.
- 10.3. Within this priority area, there was broad agreement that it was right to heavily focus on the Industrial Strategy growth-driving sectors in the first instance. The expectation is that these would ultimately represent about 80% of allocations within this priority, with opportunities to understand and refine what is included in each sector. It was acknowledged that UKRI will still need to deliver on other priorities, such as the missions through the R&D Missions Accelerator Programme and be able to tell compelling stories about its portfolio, for example, making the links to citizen outcomes.
- 10.4. There was a discussion around cross-cutting areas such as infrastructure, and whether these would need to be mapped to one of the three priority areas, which Alexandra Jones will clarify.
- 10.5. Once allocations are agreed with DSIT and HM Treasury, UKRI will work closely with other government departments as more detailed delivery plans are developed.

ACTION: Ian Chapman will return to the Board in November with allocations advice for the Board's approval, which will include proposed investment by each of UKRI's nine councils.

11. Research Excellence Framework

- 11.1. Jessica Corner updated Board on recent developments concerning the 2029 Research Excellence Framework (REF) and associated work programme, including the recently announced three-month pause. She emphasised the continuing careful work and conversations that are ongoing to maintain sector confidence in the process. The pilot assessment of the novel aspects of the proposed new assessment of People, Culture and Environment (PCE) also needs to be evaluated to confirm how this will move forward.
- 11.2. There was discussion about the cost to institutions of REF submissions, which is not insignificant, but it was recognised that they use this established process as part of their general management approach.



11.3. The Board agreed that the risks in terms of sector confidence and stability need to be carefully managed.

12. AOB

12.1. Poli Stuart-Lacey provided a short reflection on communications and external affairs, with reference to the Audience Report in the Corporate Reading Room. She outlined the different approaches the team are taking to engagement with UKRI's workforce and leaders, as well as government colleagues and new external stakeholders who are less familiar with UKRI. This includes a local campaign to raise UKRI's profile in Swindon.

12.2. The Board supported the approach and were keen for a wider discussion in November 2025, when an update on the Marketing Strategy is formally presented.

12.3. The Board approved the following:

- UKRI Modern Slavery Statement

12.4. The Board noted the following:

- UKRI Finance Update
- Audit and Risk Assurance Committee minutes – 2 June 2025
- Board Investment Committee minutes – 1 July 2025
- Executive Committee minutes – 23 June 2025

13. Non-Executive Session