

## Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 59<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held on 1 June 2017 at Apex 1, 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

**Present:** Professor Albert Rodger (Chair)  
Professor Anne Anderson  
Professor Tim Bedford  
Ms Audrey Cumberland (left after College Innovation item)  
Professor Susan Craw  
Professor David Cumming  
Dr Alicia Greated  
Dr Jano van Hemert  
Professor Tom Inns  
Dr Siobhan Jordan  
Mr Douglas Mundie  
Dr Keith Nicholson  
Professor Sir Tim O'Shea

**Officers:** Dr Stuart Fancey  
Jenny Jamieson (Clerk)  
Gary Bannon  
David Beards  
Morag Campbell  
Fiona Bates  
Hazel McCartney  
Keith McDonald (arriving around 11.10 am)  
Hazel McGraw  
Morven Pritchard  
Helen Raftopoulos

**Observers:** Ms Morven Cameron  
Dr Andrew Howie  
Dr Teresa Martin  
Nicola Mellis (see email from Stuart to Teresa)  
Clive Reeves

**Apologies:** Ms Alex Vincent  
Professor Jonathan Seckl  
Mr Ian Reid  
Dr Carolyn Reeves

## **17/23 Chair's business**

The Committee agreed that in future minutes, apologies would be recorded alongside those who attended (see above). The Chair welcomed Nicola Mellis from Scottish Government who was attending with Teresa Martin. The Chair also welcomed Clive Reeves from Scottish Enterprise. The Chair advised the Committee that agenda item 6 (College innovation action plan update) would be the first item of discussion as Audrey Cumberford had to leave the meeting early due to a business commitment.

The Chair updated the meeting on the resolution of the IT problem which had caused a significant number of meeting papers not to be delivered. This had now been resolved at SFC. The Chair provided an update to members on the Joint RKEC meeting with Universities Scotland on 9 May. Universities Scotland made reference to a paper that outlined how Scottish University research strengths map onto the industrial strategy. The Committee **agreed** that the Clerk would contact Universities Scotland to ask whether the Committee could have sight of this paper. Following this, the Committee noted that Scotland is currently very dependent on UK investment but that activity in Scotland was not well understood at UK government level. The Committee **agreed** to have a discussion at the September meeting about how the Committee can address this issue.

## **17/24 Director's update**

The Director of Research and Innovation provided members with the following update:

- The final reports from the Enterprise and Skills review were due to be published at the end of June 2017.
- The Director had attended a variety of meetings with organisations including RCUK on the Industrial Strategy.
- UKRI had received a large investment from the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund.

- The SFC building is in the process of going through a refurbishment and all future meetings would be held in the Scottish Enterprise building in Apex 1 due to a shared services agreement.

**17/25 Minutes of previous meeting 5 May 2017 (RKEC/17/Min2)**

The minute of the 5 May 2017 meeting was agreed as a true record of the meeting.

**17/26 College innovation action plan update (RKEC/17/16)**

Audrey Cumberland introduced this paper that provided an update to the Committee on the College Innovation Working Group's Action Plan and informed the Committee of the activities to date and those planned.

The Committee noted the support and enthusiasm from the Scottish Government to the college innovation agenda. Recent Ministerial Guidance had focussed on the role that colleges can play in business innovation and the sector was encouraged to align their thinking with the Scottish Government's industrial strategy. The RSE had also expressed interest in the agenda by developing their own strategy paper.

A Vision Scotland paper was due to be published on 22 June 2017 which focused on the integration of the colleges into the innovation and enterprise ecosystem. There was also an event being held on 15 June 2017 to address the barriers around the Innovation Voucher scheme. The launch of the college innovation programme incorporating the Working Group's thinking will be launched at the CSIC event in September 2017.

The Working Group has now established an action plan which is anticipated to serve as the recommended model for how the college sector engages with business. The Innovation Centres would be considering an appropriate support model to help the college sector leverage the capacity identified in the action plan. The Committee discussed the sector's capacity, including its structure, in applying funds that will maximise flexibility and the concept of a pilot project to trial this capacity was in early discussion.

Gary Bannon introduced the paper that provided the Committee with further details on progress as well as feedback received thus far from the Innovation Centre (IC) community on the partners' plans for phase two of the Innovation Centre programme.

The Chair noted the challenges of separating project funding from centre/institutional costs. The Committee also made the following points:

- Recognition that the programme is a Scottish asset and must be aligned to SG's priorities.
- Green Book/5 case model is a very good approach. It ensures that the very best strategic case and leadership is supported.
- While connectivity with academic base is very important it is crucial that ICs remain industry-led and flexible enough to innovate within sector. SFC funding alone may not allow for this flexibility but phase two multi-partner model should, particularly around B2B collaborations.
- Other project funding processes have the potential to slow ICs down operationally but may result in more impactful projects.
- Maintaining alignment through a joined-up approach is crucial.
- A multi partner appraisal process should ensure an understanding of the market challenges in which each IC operates.
- ICs need to continue to deliver value and risk assessments should be carried out on an individual basis.
- Careful periodic review on each IC's progress would allow for reflection on the direction of resources to maximise impact and return.
- The SFC Board would be updated in June 2017 on the ICs progress.

The Chair affirmed the importance of the work of the ICs and their prominent place in our forward strategy. The ICs are industry-led and the right leadership and strategy will identify points of entry into the industry and ensure a return on investment of our strategic funds.

The Committee agreed that the Council executive would provide members with key documents as background to the IC programme including the funding history from all partners (outstanding action from the May meeting).

**17/28 Proposals for SFC's participation in the Research Excellence Framework (RKEC/17/15)**

Morag Campbell introduced this paper that updated RKEC on the development of the next Research Excellence Framework (REF 2021) following the closure of the recent UK-wide consultation. The paper asked RKEC to note that the SFC Board would be asked to agree SFC's participation in REF2021 at its meeting on 23 June and invited comments or feedback to support the drafting of the Board paper.

The Committee acknowledged that non-portability of outputs would become a key issue in the REF2021 and that Scotland was vulnerable to the causality of this. The Committee noted the value of the REF and the value gained institutionally from engaging in the process and agreed that joint submissions and their assessment should be given consideration in the next exercise. It was noted that the paper did not cover the HESA unit of assessment changes.

**17/29 Creative industries: mid-term update on the programme of work (Oral)**

David Beards provided an oral update to the meeting on the programme of work for creative industries. The work on *Enhanced Innovation Support for the Creative Industries* by EKOS was progressing well with institutions engaged in the process. There was a continuing challenge to secure meaningful quantitative data. The Council executive are to meet with EKOS on 2 June and preliminary research would take place over the summer. The Committee would receive a final report at the September meeting.

**17/30 Strategic Development:**

**a) Industrial Strategy**

Purdah restricted this item to an oral item, provided by Stuart Fancey. Developing a clear industrial strategy will provide SFC with a better idea of what their role is. The Royal Society of Edinburgh was expected to play a key part in informing these discussions.

**b) Research Strategy (RKEC/17/17)**

Morag Campbell introduced this paper which presented a draft SFC

Research Strategy for consideration. This draft expands on the research elements of SFC's Strategic Plan (2015-18) and is therefore focussed on 2017-18.

The paper also highlighted, for comment, issues suggested by SFC RKEC's Research Excellence Working Group (RExWG) for consideration in the development of SFC's next Strategic Plan for 2018 onwards and any associated Research Strategy.

The Committee agreed going forward that SFC must be able to contribute to and more importantly, influence debate. A commitment to world leading research, particularly in the context of Brexit, UKRI and Industrial Strategy, should be clearly articulated. Continuing to position Scotland so that international opportunities are not missed will require continuous appraisal.

The Committee noted that in terms of PhD funding (page 12), there should be an acknowledgement of the mismatch between Scottish and English funding.

**17/31**

#### **Research Excellence Grant subject weightings (RKEC/17/18)**

Hazel McGraw introduced this paper. The paper invited the Committee to consider the subject weightings used in allocation of Research Excellence Grant (REG) and Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) and to advise the Council executive on whether these should be reviewed and the scope of that review.

The Committee discussed the current weights and comparisons with the weights applied by the other funding bodies, noting that five UoAs received a lower weighting in Scotland than rUK.

The Committee also noted that for certain UoAs, for example UoA 4, the cost of carrying out research may have changed over time as the nature of the research has changed. The Committee noted that institutions were free to allocate REG internally as they wished and that some institutions distributed funding as per the REG allocation while others compensated for cost differences in some UoAs.

The Committee recognised that a comprehensive review would require substantial resources that were not available and **agreed** that a review should not be carried out at this time. It was also recognised that as there was no additional funding available, increases in weighting and

therefore funding allocated via some UoAs would lead to reductions in others. The Committee requested detailed information on the specific UoAs affected and the level of funding involved.

The Council executive **agreed** to provide further information at the next meeting.

**17/32 Evaluation of Research Pooling Initiative (RKEC/17/19)**

Hazel McGraw introduced this paper which invited RKEC to consider the Council executive's proposal for an evaluation of the research pooling initiative and, if appropriate, advise the Council executive on the scope and design of any such review.

The Committee **agreed** to recommend an evaluation of the pooling initiative, that this should be high level and forward looking, allowing lessons to be learnt as well as informing future development.

The Committee recommended that an external individual should lead the review to provide independence and credibility.

The Council executive **agreed** to provide the Committee with a scope document for the evaluation at the September meeting.

**17/33 Enterprise and entrepreneurship education (*preparation for policy paper in September*) (RKEC/17/20)**

Hazel McCartney introduced this paper that provided background on SFC's activities in the whole area of enterprise and entrepreneurship education with a request of the Committee to agree the scale and scope of a fuller September policy paper. That paper will, in turn, explore the enterprise and entrepreneurship education landscape and where the colleges and universities currently contribute and could, potentially, contribute further. The Committee noted that it would be important to discuss the paper in the context of the recently published enterprise and skills review report phase 2.

The Committee **agreed** that the Council executive should draw up a diagram showing the user journey with references to what could be considered an 'optimal journey'. The Committee also **agreed** that the Council executive could consider potential overlaps, opportunities for efficiencies and for sharing. Gaps in provision in the Highlands and Islands would need to be taken into account and there would be a need

to factor in RSE fellowships.

The Council executive would consider how this work can be joined up with the Joint Skills Committee of SFC and SDS and it was **agreed** that a further paper will be brought to the September meeting, with input from others, including the Enterprise agencies.

**17/34 Committee's Annual Report: draft (RKEC/17/21)**

The Chair introduced this paper that reported on the outcomes of the recent review of effectiveness of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for the period 1 January 2016 to 31 December 2016.

The Committee was invited to note this paper and provide comments as appropriate prior to the report being submitted to the next Council meeting on 23 June 2017.

The Chair highlighted two key areas within the annual report:

- a) Section 1 on developing a record on the progress of the working groups relevant to the Committee's remit.
- b) Section 7 on acknowledging the improvement of transparency of decision making from Committee to Council.

The Director thanked the Committee for their work during the period covering the evaluation.

**17/35 Forward agenda (RKEC/17/22)**

The Committee noted the forward agenda and **agreed** the following:

- a) That the UK industrial Strategy should come back to the Committee for a fuller discussion post-election, with a focus on the differences in Scotland and the rest of UK in relation to research policy.
- b) The Committee should consider how they respond to the 'Place' agenda.

The Chair noted that there was a need to prioritise work over the summer and that the proposed key issues listed in the Committee's annual report would provide a source of reference for this process.