

## Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 58<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held on 5 May 2017 at 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

**Present:** Professor Albert Rodger (Chair)  
Professor Anne Anderson  
Audrey Cumberland  
Professor Susan Craw  
Professor David Cumming  
Dr Alicia Greated  
Professor Tom Inns  
Dr Siobhan Jordan  
Mr Ian Reid  
Professor Jonathan Seckl  
Clive Reeves, Scottish Enterprise (non-member) for item 3

**Officers:** Dr Stuart Fancey  
Jenny Jamieson (Clerk)  
Gary Bannon  
Morag Campbell  
Fiona Bates  
Sophie Lowry  
Hazel McCartney  
Keith McDonald  
Morven Pritchard

**Observers:** Morven Cameron, Highlands and Islands Enterprise  
Dr Andrew Howie, Scottish Enterprise  
Dr Teresa Martin, Scottish Government  
Dr Carolyn Reeve, DBEIS

### 17/13 Chair's business

Apologies had been received from Professor Tim Bedford - University of Strathclyde, Douglas Mundie - Council member, Dr Keith Nicholson – Council member, Alex Vincent - Research Councils UK, Professor Tim O'Shea – Convenor of US RKEC and Dr Jano van I. Hemert – Optos. The

Chair reminded the Committee that they were encouraged to submit comments if they couldn't attend.

The Chair welcomed Professor Anne Anderson who had accepted an invitation to join the Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> February 2017. Professor Jonathan Seckl was also welcomed to the meeting having been unable to attend his first meeting as a new member in February 2017.

The Chair also welcomed Clive Reeves from Scottish Enterprise who was attending the meeting for item 3. The Chair apologised to the Committee for the papers arriving late. This had been due to an IT issue and the Council executive was working with their IT department to rectify this. The Chair noted that the self-assessment documentation for committee effectiveness had been sent to members with a return date of 19 May 2017.

The Chair advised the Committee that Gillian Docherty of The Data Lab was awarded CEO of the Year for her leadership "...of an ambitious team that has delivered 45 data science projects with a total estimated impact on the economy of over £66 million since the innovation centre was established in 2015."

The Committee **agreed** that the Chair would write a letter to Gillian Docherty on behalf of the Committee congratulating her on this award.

17/14

### **Director's update**

The Director of Research and Innovation also welcomed Professor Anne Anderson to the meeting.

The Director provided members with the following update:

- On 27 April 2017, the Higher Education and Research Bill received Royal Assent and became an Act. Rebekah Widdowfield had been appointed as the new CEO of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.
- The Minister had met with Research Pool Directors to consider the opportunities and challenges associated with Brexit.
- The Committee would consider subject cost weightings (Research Excellence Grant) at its meeting in June.
- SFC is now a signatory to the Concordat on open research data and would be encouraging HEIs to consider the principles of the Concordat when delivering their respective research strategies as part of the outcome agreement process.

**17/15 Minutes of previous meeting 9 February 2017 (RKEC/17/Min1)**

The minute from the previous meeting was agreed subject to two amendments. Professor Tim Bedford had issued his apologies and the minute will be edited to reflect this. Also, Mr Johnny Mone had attended for the item on the University Innovation Fund (UIF) and not UWS as stated. The minute will be edited to correct this.

**17/16 Innovation Centres: next steps (RKEC/17/09)**

Ian Reid left the meeting for the item due to a conflict of interest in his role at CEO of CENSIS.

Sophie Lowry introduced the paper. The paper invited the Committee to note progress with the consideration and implementation of the recommendations from the 'Independent Review of the Innovation Centres (IC) Programme' chaired by Professor Graeme Reid and to provide feedback on the phase two implementation plan in advance of the final report to SFC's Board on 23 June 2017.

The Committee welcomed the enhanced partnership model described in the paper and agreed with the underpinning principles for phase two of the programme. It was noted that a revised memorandum of understanding would be agreed by the partners soon and that this would form the basis for guidance and other documentation.

The Committee discussed the detailed implementation plan (annex A) and the Council executive was able to help address areas requiring clarity.

It was noted that the partners would be meeting the chairs and CEOs of the ICs on 16 May to describe the phase two model and that the Committee's feedback would be used to help prepare for this.

Points raised or noted during the discussion included:

- The Committee would value background on the funding the partners have invested in the programme to date.
- The level of burden and scrutiny involved in the appraisal of business plans for future funding and subsequent reviews for successful ICs must be proportionate.
- Colleges will be engaged in the programme and there is an opportunity to conduct some pilot work in 2017/18.

- Professor Reid recommended the development of a suite of business focussed case studies. It was suggested that the partners could action this now rather than waiting for the wider communications piece in the innovation action plan to be progressed.
- Are the ICs able to access all part of the Scottish economy in their present form or do they experience barriers in terms of their business model that precludes this engagement? How can this collaboration across sectors be increased and supported?
- The Committee noted the importance of examining where each IC currently leverages its funding from and how this influences their shape and capacity.

The Committee **agreed** that the Council executive would:

- Circulate to members key documents as background to the IC programme including the funding history.
- Share the college innovation action plan with members.

#### **17/17 Enterprise and Skills Review (Oral)**

The Director advised members that the Minister had confirmed in Parliament that the individual agencies would retain their current boards and that a new overarching board would be created to oversee the strategic direction of the agencies. The phase 2 report was due to be published in late May 2017.

#### **17/18 Scottish Entrepreneurship Activities in Scottish HEIs (RKEC/17/10)**

Ian Reid introduced the paper. The paper invited the Committee to discuss the issues raised in this paper and provide advice as appropriate to the SFC and the Innovation Centres on progressing this area.

The Committee made the following observations on the paper:

- Entrepreneurial skills for graduates were effectively creative thinking for students.
- Defining the landscape as a 'rich environment' would draw attention to graduate opportunity instead of describing the landscape experience as crowded or complex. Graduate routes could then be developed within an 'entrepreneurial eco-system'.

The Chair thanked Ian Reid for his paper which had stimulated discussion.

The Committee **agreed** that the Council executive would bring a policy paper to the September Committee meeting on this topic. The paper would require contributions from wider than SFC – including SE and HIE.

**17/19 SFC Board: Performance Report indicators (RKEC/17/11)**

Stuart Fancey provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to review the evidence used in the SFC Performance Report to assess progress against the Council's Strategic Plan outcomes and consider how we can further develop the measures and evidence base.

The Council executive stated that the themes provided a useful basis in which to proceed. Members were asked to note that 'highlighted text' as indicated in paragraph 13 actually referred to underlined text. The Committee noted that 50% of Scottish HEIs were listed in the top 500 world rankings and this was a fantastic achievement. The Committee made the following observations:

- Tracking graduate start-up companies still operating after five years would provide useful indicators on the outcomes of individual university investment in addition to tracking university spinouts.
- We currently measure the leverage of our research investment of further research funding into HEIs but could do more to measure HEI performance in leveraging funding into businesses.
- In terms of performance reporting, we should be cognisant of the overall funding environment and able to explain year on year fluctuations.
- Performance reporting should aim to also report on where we are underperforming to inform potential interventions.
- To maintain context, should the performance matrix link to Scottish Government overarching objectives?

The Committee **agreed** that Audrey Cumberland would feedback to the Council executive on measures in relation to colleges. The Council executive would share with members as appropriate.

**17/20 Outcome agreement remit for AY2018/19 (RKEC/17/12)**

Keith McDonald provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to note the Outcome Agreement (OA) remit and guidance process for AY2018/19 and provide feedback on the current

OA remit in terms of SFC's priorities on 'world-class research' and 'greater innovation in the economy' as input to the board paper regarding setting the remit for AY2018/19 which will be discussed on 23 June 2017.

The Committee noted that the UIF was a good example of how the outcome agreement process would require careful consideration throughout the cycle in order to measure performance and outcomes effectively. It was suggested that the OA remit include reference to 'international'. Measurement of leverage (research) must be proportionate with the funding environment. Guidance to colleges (innovation) should encourage colleges to work together to establish college innovation activity (baseline), both internally and how this innovation is articulated with external partners and stakeholders.

The Committee **agreed** that its members would feedback any further comments to Jenny Jamieson.

**17/21      Joint meeting with Universities Scotland RKEC, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2017**

The Chair encouraged members to attend this meeting which would take place at the University of Glasgow.

**17/22      Forward Agenda Plan (RKEC/17/13)**

The Chair introduced this paper which invited the Committee to consider whether these items are appropriate for future discussion, particularly bearing in mind SFC's priorities as outlined in the new Strategic Plan, suggest how the Committee can help to evaluate and assess the strategic implementation of the core outcomes, world leading research and greater innovation in the economy as part of SFC's strategic plan throughout the year; and propose additional agenda items.

The Committee noted that the forward agenda was primarily focussed on innovation and did not include wider considerations such as how Scotland performs as a nation. The Council executive stated that the Research Excellence Working Group was set up to look at this research aspect. The Committee also recommended that they consider the industrial strategy at a future meeting given its size and broad implications.