

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 57th meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held on 9 February 2017 at 97 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh.

- Present:**
- Professor Albert Rodger (Chair)
 - Professor Susan Craw
 - Dr Alicia Greated
 - Dr Jano van Hemert
 - Professor Tom Inns
 - Dr Siobhan Jordan
 - Mr Douglas Mundie
 - Dr Keith Nicholson (by phone)
 - Professor Jill Pell
 - Mr Ian Reid
 - Dr Alexandra Vincent (prev. Saxon), RCUK (by phone)
 - Mr Johnny Mone (UWS item)
- Officers:**
- Dr Stuart Fancey
 - Jenny Jamieson (Clerk)
 - Gary Bannon
 - Fiona Bates
 - Deanne Holden (for item 17/06)
 - Sophie Lowry
 - Keith McDonald
 - Morven Pritchard
 - Andrew Youngson
- Observers:**
- Morven Cameron, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
 - Dr Andrew Howie, Scottish Enterprise
 - Dr Teresa Martin, Scottish Government
 - Dr Carolyn Reeve, DBEIS

17/01 Chair's business

Apologies had been received from Ms Audrey Cumberford, Professor David Cumming, Professor Jonathan Seckl, Mr Roddy Macdonald and Professor Sir Tim O'Shea.

The Chair welcomed Tom Inns, Director at Glasgow School of Art and Alicia Greated, Director of Research & Enterprise, Heriot-Watt University as new members of the Committee. The Committee congratulated Professor Jill Pell from the Institute of Health and Wellbeing at the University of Glasgow on her CBE for services to public health research in the 2017 honours list. The Chair noted the appointment of Sir Mark Walport as the first CEO of the new body UKRI with Sir John Kingman continuing as interim-Chair.

The Chair introduced Johnny Mone, Head of Enterprise Services from UWS who would speak to the UIF item.

The Chair advised the Committee that meeting papers would be sent out a week before the meeting and that the action tracker was to be reinserted for the next meeting.

17/02 Director's update

The Director provided the committee with a general update on executive business. The procurement phase had begun for the innovation support programme for the creative industries. The executive was intending to brief Council at their May meeting on progress from the Reid Review. The executive would report at the next meeting on progress on the concordat on open research data, which Universities Scotland have agreed SFC should be advised to sign.

17/03 Minutes of previous meeting 24 November 2016 (RKEC/16/Min4)

The minute from the previous meeting was agreed.

17/04 University Innovation Fund 2017/18 (RKEC/17/01)

Keith McDonald provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to consider the SFC executive's assessment of the AY2017-18 University Innovation Fund (UIF) submissions received in response to the outcomes set for AY2017-20 and agree recommendations to Council on the allocation of UIF funding in AY2017-18.

The Committee commended Keith McDonald in his approach to this piece of work over the last few months and described his work as exemplary. The Committee noted the collaborative nature of the project and how the Fund brings closer alignment between institutional objectives and national objectives. Achieving a balanced approach to how individual and sector progress was evaluated would be vital in producing a meaningful evaluation.

The Committee discussed how the evaluation could feedback into the process of informing the distribution of grant. There were potentially two feedback loops for the UIF: feedback from individual institutions and capturing the contribution that UIF is making at a national level. The Committee noted that whilst each institution's operational approach would be different, the concept of collaboration had been embraced by all institutions in their submissions and establishing milestones would support good governance.

The committee noted that the US RCDG was driving a collaborative approach that was expected to be robust in its delivery. However, it was suggested that additional resource may be required to support effective coordination and reporting at a national level.

The executive **agreed** to circulate the final versions of the submission documents to the Committee – noting these would be published following the final funding allocations in March/April 2017.

The Committee **agreed** the recommendations of the executive for the allocation of the UIF funding in AY2017/18.

17/05

College Innovation Action Plan (RKEC/17/02)

Douglas Mundie provided an introduction to the paper which included the college innovation paper that was presented to Council on 16 December 2016. The paper invited the Committee to:

- Endorse the College Innovation Action Plan developed by the College innovation Working Group (CIWG)
- Advise the executive as to what areas of work or specific actions should be prioritised if necessary
- Highlight further opportunities for development or other actions that might flow from the College Innovation Action plan

- Advise the executive as to how RKEC wish this work to continue, i.e. the continuation of the CIWG or further reporting to RKEC and Council.

An update would be provided to Council in November 2017.

It was noted that the Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science had expressed her support in Parliament for the college sector playing a bigger role in the innovation ecosystem. The Committee noted the deadlines contained within the report and the challenging timeframe for delivery of the action plan. The Working Group would be working with individual colleges on evidence gathering, including case studies, as part of this process. Some Innovation Centres would be able to feed into the process easier than others. The Committee discussed the need for both FE and HE to work collaboratively together to support a sustainable increase in business innovation activity.

The committee **agreed** to endorse the action plan and agreed that a further update would be provided to the committee in June 2017.

17/06

Phase 2 of Scottish Government’s review of the Enterprise and Skills agencies – innovation action plan and work stream (RKEC/17/03)

Stuart Fancey provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to:

- Discuss the potential for simplifying the provision of innovation support by the bodies SFC supports, as viewed by businesses
- Consider the extent to which it feels the activities of the Funding Council and academic institutions can deliver the aspirations in the Innovation Action Plan and to identify where SFC could contribute more, in partnership with the other enterprise and skills agencies
- Consider recommending that Scottish Government recognises the growing contribution of the college sector to innovation support, in SMEs in particular, and SFC’s developing work in supporting the colleges to do this even more.

The Committee noted that the Phase 1 report from the Scottish Government’s Enterprise and Skills Review had been published on 25 October 2016.

The committee discussed the potential for examining the operation and behaviour of the participant bodies in the innovation support landscape, recognising that the reduction of clutter might not be most effectively done by reducing the number of actors. It may be sufficient, and appropriate, to better organise access to the existing suite of support.

Drawing on the widest possible inputs in considering the possibility for improving the innovation support system will increase the chance of progress, the inputs should extend to the Can Do Innovation Forum and as many others as practical.

The system of support for entrepreneurial graduates seeking to develop business ideas is itself a complex one and merits its own examination to optimise it, in the interest of the entrepreneurs.

The Committee discussed the work beyond the action plan and that a strategy would need to be drafted that took thinking beyond current fora considering this activity such as the Can Do Innovation Action Plan.

17/07 UK Industrial Strategy (RKEC/17/04)

Keith McDonald provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to:

- To discuss the UK government's green paper 'Building our Industrial Strategy'
- To advise SFC on whether it should respond to the consultation and, if so, to advise on our response.

Carolyn Reeve gave a presentation on the main aims of the UK Industrial Society and the ten pillars that the strategy is structured around. The Committee noted the importance of prioritising and positioning Scotland on the landscape.

The committee **agreed** that SFC should respond formally to the report. The Executive would decide on next steps and advise the Committee.

17/08 HIE Research Strategy (RKEC/17/05)

Morven Cameron provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to note the desire to review and revise the agencies' existing relationship and engagement activities in relation to the Joint Strategic Framework.

The Committee noted that as a result of the Joint Strategic Framework, there was now an increase in university and interface presence at key sites and across activity. The Committee acknowledged that HIE should be congratulated for this exciting initiative and that the approach could be replicated elsewhere.

17/09 Supporting entrepreneurship activities in Scottish HEIs (oral)

Ian Reid gave a presentation to the Committee on this topic.

The Committee **agreed** that Ian Reid would bring a paper to the June meeting.

17/10 Impact review: Scottish Institute for Policing Research (RKEC/17/06)

Deanne Holden provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to:

- Consider the findings of the impact review
- Identify and discuss lessons for future policy developments.

The Committee noted the breadth and success of the initiative and asked that this be formally recorded in the minute. A communication strategy would be developed to promote research findings to a wider audience and to open resources to the public.

17/11 Joint meeting with Universities Scotland RKEC, 9th May 2017 (RKEC/17/07)

The Chair provided an introduction to the paper. The paper invited the Committee to:

- Note the minute from the joint meeting held in April 2016
- Discuss the proposed themes from Universities Scotland and propose items.

The Committee agreed the items proposed by Universities Scotland and agreed that the Committee propose 'Research Excellence' as an additional SFC item.

17/12 Forward agenda (RKEC/17/08)

The Chair provided an introduction to the paper. The paper 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
- Now, or at any time, propose additional agenda items.

The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting in April/May 2017.