



22<sup>nd</sup> January 2019

Ms Hazel McGraw  
Policy Officer  
Scottish Funding Council  
Apex 2  
97 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
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Dear Ms McGraw

### **Response to the Independent Review of SFC's Research Pooling Initiatives**

The University of Glasgow's College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences has a strategic focus on collaborative, interdisciplinary research and is home to excellence across a broad range of disciplines focussed on every level of biological organisation, from genes, to cells, organs, individuals, populations, and ecosystems. The College is also committed to research-driven curricula and an innovative approach to teaching, offering a dynamic learning environment for our students, with access to state-of-the-art resources, world-renowned lecturers, and programs that prepare our graduates for exciting careers across the whole spectrum of the medical, veterinary and life sciences.

The Research Pools that have most relevance to the College are SULSA and SINAPSE. Both of these have made a significant difference to the collaborative research environment within Scotland and have furthered the College's ambitions to develop our partnership approaches to research and teaching. Examples of this are provided below.

#### **SINAPSE:**

- Development of an active research imaging network across Scotland, providing opportunities to share best practice and shape public perception of novel imaging techniques.
- Providing a supportive collaborative environment which has helped to build the development of partnerships around the University of Glasgow's Imaging Centre of Excellence and particularly the UK's first 7T MRI scanner in a clinical setting.
- Providing a nationally recognised presence for Scottish imaging research. This continues to benefit Scotland through, for example supporting the recent award of the £15.6M Pan-Scotland industrial-Centre for AI Research in Digital Diagnostics (iCAIRD).

#### **SULSA:**

- In the earlier phase, SULSA attracted substantial levels of new blood and excellence to Scotland.
- Significant levels of funding have been attracted from e.g. EU, for national infrastructure which is now invaluable for Scottish life sciences.
- Development of life sciences within Scotland, with support from SULSA, has created and maintained a high level of quality graduate employment in life science areas. Indeed, SULSA was an early adopter of a partnership approach to PhD studentships with industry.

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- Small pots of useful funds to support researchers to extend their networks to Europe (e.g. Peer Funding Scheme) have led to the extension of Scotland's collaborative life science networks and reputation within Europe.
- SULSA remains a vibrant and well recognised Scottish brand that has driven interest globally from smaller countries and economies in the 'pooling' concept.

Looking to the future, the College is supportive of the University of Glasgow's position. We believe that the subject-based research pools will continue to support collaboration and information exchange. Consequently, we recommend that they continue to be funded at an administrative level, i.e. through the continued funding of an academic lead with executive support and a modest operational budget for networking activities. Further, given the important of the state of the health of the Nation more explicit inclusion of biomedicine in SULSA should be a priority.

Finally, initiatives such as Scotland's Innovation Centres (ICs) which are focused on partnership with industry to drive forwards the translation of ambitious thematic research areas have somewhat superseded the Pools in their capacity to drive forwards Scotland's research and economic priorities. Stratified Medicine Scotland – Innovation Centre, for example, is building capability, capacity and expertise around precision medicine and aligning training and R&D strategies across HEIs, NHS and industry – this model of partnership is highly relevant to future science and the good practice developed within the ICs should be considered when determining the future direction for the Research Pools.

Yours sincerely



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