

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 83rd meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held virtually on MS Teams on 28 October 2021 at 10.00am.

Present

Chair

Professor Lesley Yellowlees

Board members

Mhairi Harrington, Professor Irene McAra-McWilliam, Caroline Stuart

Members

Dr Caroline Cantley, Professor Nicholas Fyfe, Dr Alicia Greated, Dr Jano van Hemert, Professor Julian Jones, Dr Helen Reddy, Ms Sara Rae, Professor Jonathan Seckl, Professor Andy Porter

Observers

Dr Ian Blewett (SE), Morven Cameron (HIE), Helen Cross (UKRI), Dr Pieter van de Graaf (SG), Laura Dougan (SG), Carolyn Reeve (BEIS)

Apologies received

Professor Anne Anderson, Professor Wayne Powell.

SFC Executive:

Dr Cat Ball, Gary Bannon, Alan Dunbar, Fiona Bates, David Beards, Morag Campbell, Hazel Dalgard, Dr Stuart Fancey, Jenny Jamieson, Dr Charlotte Matheson, Keith McDonald, Hazel McGraw, Morven Pritchard

21/29

Welcome from Chair

The Chair welcomed members to the 83rd meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Update from Director (RKEC/21/17)

The Director presented the update paper for the October meeting that provided a summary of recent developments of interest to members. This paper will be published on the website.

21/30 **Minutes of previous meetings: 18 August 2021 (RKEC/21/min4)**

The minute was agreed with the exception of two edits. Both Sara Rae and Helen Reddy had been in attendance but they were not listed on the minute. SFC Executive to edit.

21/31 **SFC Review: outcomes of relevance: update (Oral)**

Dr Stuart Fancey gave a short presentation outlining the main messages from the SG's response to SFC's Review and a summary of the key areas, with a particular focus on the response to the R & I recommendations.

The Committee noted the following:

- a) The Ministerial response to the SFC Review had been received on 26 October 2022 from Scottish Government.
- b) SFC was in the process of developing an implementation plan in response.

21/32 **Consultation on REG/RPG (RKEC/21/15)** **4 (a) Research Excellence Grant Review** **4 (b) Research Postgraduate Grant Review**

Dr Stuart Fancey introduced this paper that asked the Committee to consider proposals for a consultation with the sector on the principles and allocation of Research Excellence Grant (REG), including recommendations from RKEC's short life REG/RPG Review Working Group.

The Committee made the following general observations across both papers:

- a) Considering the principles of REG in light of the findings of the context of the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability would enable a fuller and more accurate picture to emerge;
- b) Institutional sustainability, rewarding research excellence and supporting future research potential should hold equal parity;

- c) We should continue to preserve the intentions of the RPG

Publication

This paper will be withheld from publication as it contains information which, if disclosed, is likely to prejudice substantially the free and frank provision of advice, the free and frank exchange of views for the purposes of deliberation, or would otherwise prejudice the effective conduit of public affairs. (Section 30: Prejudicial to effective conduct of public affairs)

21/33

Research Pools (RKEC/21/19)

Cat Ball introduced this item to provide an update on preparation to implement SFC's Review recommendation on the development of the next generation of Research Pools.

Recommendations

The Committee was invited to:

Comment on the proposed approach to develop the next generation of Research Pools, particularly the relationship with the current Research Pools.

The Committee made the following observations:

- a) The next phase represents an exciting new chapter that should be bold and ambitious;
- b) We should ensure the functionality of the Pools are a good fit within any new approach;
- c) Regional agendas of net zero and digital transformations will be relevant to the Pools
- d) Short timescales for transition will demand a dynamic management approach
- e) The diversity of the research pools should complement the national outcomes.

21/34

ODA Funding Update (RKEC/21/20)

David Beards introduced this agenda item that summarised the current position with ODA research funding and invited the Committee

to notes what has been achieved to date in terms of sector development.

Recommendations

- Note the position with ODA research funding
- Consider what is at risk from the funding cuts and how this might be mitigated
- Discuss what can be learned from the ODA work which might inform our thinking on thematic research funding

The Committee noted the following:

- a) ODA funding has showcased the purpose and passion achieved through this funding;
- b) SDGs continue to play their part in influencing the strategic direction of institutions;
- c) That the Committee should keep a watching brief on this piece.

21/35

RKEC terms of reference (RKEC/21/21)

The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee has standing orders to regulate the conduct of Committee meetings. They are published on our website.

Periodic reviews of the standing orders are essential to ensure that the Committee can deliver on its remit in support of the Board. The standing orders were last reviewed by the Committee in September 2016 when changes were made to the rules on how the Committee managed renewing terms of membership.

Recommendations

- The Committee was invited to comment on the recruitment of two new members as the current standing orders allow.
- The Committee was invited to agree that the Executive begin this recruitment process in early 2022 to maximise our reach in terms of finding the best candidates.
- The committee was invited to note that the executive will update the standing orders to changes in the external landscape.

- The Committee was invited to agree that the overall standing orders are still appropriate for the Committee or offer advice if not.

The Committee noted the following:

- a) The importance of formalising the role of observers on the Committee;
- b) That recruitment should proceed, prioritising the search for a new member with current business experience;
- c) Other new members should be recruited as the standing orders allow.

21/36

Forward agenda (RKEC/21/22)

At the meeting of 14 October 2020, RKEC agreed to revise the forward agenda to take account of the emergency years 2020-22 and consequential policy adjustments due to the impact of the pandemic. This paper notifies the Committee of proposed agenda items for the future business of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. These items take account of views expressed by Committee members. To enable alignment with the SFC Council, the attached forward agenda plan follows the same format as that used for the SFC Council, for easy mapping.

Recommendations

The Committee was invited to **note** the proposed agenda items and

suggest any further additions or

amendments to this list. The

Committee noted the following:

- That the KE Concordat will be scheduled to form part of discussions in 2022.

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Any other business

There was no other business.

Future meetings

15 December 2021

2 March 2022

1 June 2022

24 August 2022

12 October 2022

7 December 2022