

Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee

The 66th meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee of the Scottish Funding Council was held on 11th October 2018 in Carnegie Room, Apex 1, 99 Haymarket Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 5HD.

Present: Professor Lesley Yellowlees (Chair)
Professor Anne Anderson
Professor Tim Bedford
Professor Susan Craw
Dr Alicia Greated
Mhairi Harrington
Professor Tom Inns
Dr Siobhan Jordan
Douglas Mundie
Professor Sir Anton Muscatelli (via Skype)
Professor Jonathan Seckl
Professor Wayne Powell, Convener, US RKEC

Observers attending:
Alison Munro, Scottish Enterprise

Officers: Dr Stuart Fancey/Keith McDonald/Jenny Jamieson(Clerk)/
Morag Campbell

Guests: Professor Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland
Professor Paul Boyle, Chair of the Scottish Science Advisory
Council
Alex Marsh, UKRI
Lucy Law, SSAC
Aileen McKechnie, SG
Claire Woodward-Nutt, SG

Apologies: Helen Cross/Dr Jano van Hemert/Dr Pieter van de Graaf/Hazel
McGraw/Carolyn Reeve/ Morven Cameron

18/53 Chair's business

The Chair welcomed Professor Powell to the meeting as the new Convenor of Universities Scotland's RKEC. Professor Muscatelli would be joining the meeting as a new member by Skype.

Director's update

Stuart described to the Committee his concern, shared with Universities Scotland RKEC, that the review of balanced funding in England being carried out by UKRI has potential impacts on dual support in Scotland that should be watched closely. Stuart and Professor Powell agreed to keep in contact on this topic and to keep both RKECs aware of developments.

18/54 Minutes of previous meeting 20 August 2018 (RKEC/18/min4)

The minute from the previous meeting was approved.

18/55 Innovation Centres (Oral)

Keith McDonald provided the Committee with a brief update. IBioIC had held a launch event in Glasgow to mark their transition to Phase 2 on 13th September 2018. Data Lab has secured £13.5m Scottish Government funding, announced on 21st September. The funding package exists of up to £9.5 million from the Scottish Funding Council, £2.5 million from Scottish Enterprise, £1 million from the Scottish Government's Digital Directorate and £0.5 million from Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The Executive would provide a further update at the December meeting.

18/56 Evaluation of Research Pooling Programme

Morag Campbell provided an update to the Committee on the Research Excellence Framework (REF2021). The assembled REVIEW panel will produce a written call for evidence at the end of the year and hold evidence sessions in the spring. Early findings were due in June and it is anticipated that government colleagues as well as academic colleagues will also be interested in the outcome of these findings.

18/57

**Professor Sheila Rowan, Chief Scientific Adviser for Scotland
Presentation: 'CSA Scotland – making connections and promoting
science excellence'**

Professor Rowan gave a presentation to the Committee describing her role and responsibilities as Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) to the Scottish Government. The following is a summary of the key points:

- a) Professor Rowan remains an active member of the science community. The role of Chief Scientific Adviser is to add the value that scientific advice can offer to any sector or policy relevant to the Scottish Government. In addition, the CSA gives a voice to the science community in Scotland by championing the sector, articulating the value of Scotland's place in the European science community and working with the Science and Innovation Network.
- b) The creation of UKRI as a new organisation brings an opportunity for the Chief Scientific Adviser to articulate Scotland's strengths nationally and internationally. The structures that have been set up as a result of UKRI's establishment will be the scaffolding for this liaison.
- c) Research is about more than just science. Social research when applied can make a significant impact on health and wealth in Scotland.

18/58

**Professor Paul Boyle, Chair of the Scottish Science Advisory Council
Presentation: A Bibliometric Assessment of the Scientific Landscape
of Scotland**

Professor Boyle gave a presentation to the Committee on the performance of Scotland's scientific research base over a 10 year period 2007-2016. The report is in draft and therefore cannot be published at this point. However, the following key observations were made:

- a) The data have allowed us to look at collaborative research internationally.
- b) Whilst Scotland's share of publications has slightly declined across the UK nations over the period, it still has the highest number of publications per researcher compared with other UK nations and EU comparators.

- c) Scotland has the highest share of top 1% of “most-cited” publications.
- d) Physical sciences are growing in Scotland but are declining elsewhere.
- e) Collaboration between EU researchers and researchers in Scotland is very strong.
- f) In conversation, the Committee remarked that collaboration with business is more challenging in Scotland than in the rest of UK due to geographic location of business.

18/59 SFC Research Strategy (RKEC/18/20)

Morag Campbell introduced this paper that revisits the Research Strategy agreed by SFC in June 2017, and sought guidance on further statements of research strategy.

The Committee was asked to note the context of the Enterprise and Skills Strategic Board’s Strategic Plan, to review the priorities and associated actions within the Research Strategy; provide guidance on areas for development for the next Research Strategy and advice on enhanced actions to deliver the Research Strategy.

The Committee noted that Scottish universities are often successful in bids for competitive research funding from UKRI but that we see fewer successful outcomes when Scottish-based businesses apply. It was important for Scotland and its research community to be aware of gaps in terms of its research activity, particularly when a specific research output was not delivering the intended impact. There were levers available to maximise resources at a macro and micro economic level and this included established networks and large communities of researchers who were ‘market ready’. The Committee acknowledged that the majority of investment being made from Innovate UK was business-led. There were lower levels of research and development investment in Scotland which was Scotland-focused in terms of its impact.

The Committee discussed the type of steer that should be given to the SFC board. Specifically:

- a) SFC should champion the research community in Scotland and

have one clear succinct message that can be used to positively influence the research agenda.

- b) We should identify and understand our strengths in research – where does our expertise lie?
- c) Research in Scotland and its community needs to be joined up
- d) Ensure that our research and innovation centres are efficiently managed within a functioning streamlined research landscape
- e) There should be clarity of core purpose across relevant organisations
- f) We need to understand Scotland’s research capabilities and how it creates value and deliver impacts. This will involve tackling difficult challenges

The Committee agreed to extend an invitation to the new minister, Richard Lochhead, to a future meeting. The Executive will organise this on behalf of the Committee.

The Chair noted that the steer from members was helpful and feedback from the Council on this discussion would be brought to a later meeting.

18/60 Subject weights (RKEC/18/21)

Morag Campbell introduced this paper that set out the proposed approach to the focussed review of subject weightings agreed by RKEC in 2017 for discussion and agreement. The Committee was invited to discuss and agree proposed approach.

The Executive has established a small working group and Morag Campbell will lead on the work on behalf of the Committee. The Committee noted that at this point the outcome of the review was not certain and it was important to communicate this message to the research communities. The working group remit will be published.

**18/61 Alex Marsh, Deputy Director of Research and Innovation, UKRI
Presentation: ‘Working together towards 2.4%’**

Alex Marsh gave a presentation to the Committee on the delivery of

UKRI's vision and the UK Government target of increasing national investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP. The following is a summary of the key points:

- a) In May 2018, UKRI published a strategic prospectus that represents the beginning of the process to develop a detailed UK Research and Innovation Strategy through conducting research and consultation.
- b) The values embedded in the prospectus promote a 'talent-blended' approach.
- c) The evidence shows that the UK underinvests in research and development.
- d) UKRI will be holding a series of workshops based around the pillars of the Government's industrial strategy where business leaders, academics and thought leaders will be brought together in one place.
- e) Scotland was expected to play a key role in early priorities.

The Committee provided the following observations on the presentation:

- a) Capital investment and R & D are linked.
- b) Brexit may inhibit UK's ability to access talent from Europe and will create risks as a result
- c) The current structure of the innovation landscape in Scotland may inhibit this further
- d) What is Scotland's unique value proposition?
- e) Transparency is key for decision making
- f) A homogeneous approach for the nine individual bodies that comprise UKRI will be essential for success, given that historically much of the work has been done with Research Councils.

18/62 Forward agenda (RKEC/18/22)

The Chair noted the forward agenda. The Chair acknowledged, given today's discussions at Committee, that there are 'exciting times' ahead.

18/63 Any other business

There was no other business.

Future meetings:

5th December 2018

6th March 2019

5th June 2019

4th September 2019