

**MINUTES OF THE 17th MEETING OF COUNCIL
HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2022 VIRTUALLY VIA ZOOM**

Present:	Professor Diane Coyle (<i>Chair, Senior Independent Member</i>)
	Professor Jane Duckett
	Mr Mike Emmerich
	Professor Jane Falkingham
	Professor Dame Rachel Griffith
	Professor Lasana Harris
	Ms Desirée Lopez
	Professor Melinda Mills
	Mr Ben Page
	Professor Sir Bernard Silverman
	Professor Todd Landman
	Professor Sir Simon Wessely
	Sir Chris Wormald
	Professor Alan Penn
Apologies:	Ms Joanne Allison (<i>Nominated UKRI observer and Deputy Director of Corporate Strategy, Governance & Performance</i>)
Office:	Professor Alison Park (<i>Interim Executive Chair</i>)
	Dr Claire Graves (<i>Chief Operating Officer</i>)
	Mr Jeremy Neathey (<i>Director of Strategy</i>)
	Dr Jen Gold (<i>Director of Research</i>)
	Dr Emma Gordon (<i>Director ADR UK</i>)
	Dr Catherine Bromley (<i>Deputy Director Data Strategy and Infrastructure</i>)
	Ms Frances Burstow (<i>Deputy Director of Skills and Methods</i>)
	Dr James Canton (<i>Deputy Director of Public Policy Engagement</i>)
	Ms Melanie Knetsch (<i>Deputy Director of Innovation and Impact</i>)
	Mr Damien Smith (<i>Deputy Director of Research Economics</i>)
	Dr Emily Swaine (<i>Deputy Director of Strategy and Partnerships</i>)
	Ms Joy Todd (<i>Deputy Director Research Portfolio</i>)
	Mr Peter Ethelston (<i>Associate Director for Governance and Policy</i>)
	Dr Tom Roberts (<i>Secretary to Council, Minutes</i>)
	Mr Doug German (<i>Private Secretary to Executive Chair</i>)
	Ms Gillian Bartoszewska (<i>Secretariat</i>)
Guests:	Ms Emma Lindsell (<i>Executive Director of Strategy, item 5</i>)
	Professor Melanie Welham (<i>Executive Chair BBSRC and UKRI lead for People, Talent and Culture, item 6</i>)
	Dr Jo O'Leary (<i>UKRI Head of EDI, item 6</i>)
	Ms Tasha Calvert (<i>ESRC Head of Evaluation, item 10</i>)

These minutes do not necessarily reflect the order in which items were discussed.

1.	Welcome and apologies
1.1	The Chair welcomed members to the 17th meeting of Council.
2.	Minutes of the previous meeting (ESRC 2022-02)
2.1	The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.
3.	Matters arising (ESRC 2022-03)
3.1	Members were updated on the status of matters arising from the previous meeting.
4.	Interim Executive Chair’s business and update on context
4.1	Professor Park gave an update on recent activities and noted that a full report would be circulated following the meeting.
5.	Closed session of Council: ESRC Executive Chair recruitment
5.1	Ms Lindsell updated Council on the ESRC Executive Chair ministerial appointment process, led by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. Minute not included as it contains exempt material, at the time of publication, under the terms of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
6.	EDI and Research Culture (ESRC 2022-01)
6.1	Professor Welham outlined the context for the publication of UKRI’s draft Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy. There was an opportunity for UKRI, through its role as leader, investor, partner and employer, to catalyse change across the research system. The draft strategy took a “systems-wide” approach and had been developed through partnership activity and longstanding engagement activities. The draft strategy had been published for open consultation.
6.2	Council welcomed and endorsed the approach. Members supported a focus on pipeline issues and UKRI challenging itself and other institutions to develop diversity in leadership and researchers. Council noted that EDI data collection and evaluation played a pivotal role in realising and assessing progress against EDI ambitions.
6.3	The value and challenge of incorporating additional hard-to-reach categories (such as socio-economic status or diversity of thought) was discussed. The breadth of these categories and their potential intersectionalities would need to be balanced against the need to focus and have granularity within categories (so as to support bespoke interventions).

6.4	Ms Burstow set out ESRC's developing EDI Action Plan. An interim action plan had been developed, which would set the foundations to develop a longer-term plan. ESRC was contributing to the UKRI EDI strategy and collective work programmes, including convening experts from the Strategic Advisory Network (SAN) on socioeconomic background to discuss potential measures. ESRC was also planning an innovation caucus for EDI which would bring together knowledge and expertise within the social sciences to support the UKRI work and the wider sector. Other activity underway included updating peer review training with best practice and supporting the UKRI review of peer review.
6.5	Ms Burstow shared the interim action plan, noting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The presence of more detailed data analysis (moving beyond the aggregate level to the disciplinary level but also intersectionality and our comparator populations); • ESRC was working in partnership with Learned Societies on a joint EDI programme on how to scale up individual activities and work collectively on gaps; • Some areas were more advanced than others. For example, a pilot undergraduate research placement scheme with 5 DTPs was being launched in 2022.
6.6	Ms Burstow outlined the scope and initial findings of the ESRC Ethnicity Analysis 2016-17 to 2020-21. Council members discussed the variables which impacted on the data including ethnic minority group and disciplinary focus and suggested areas for further analysis. ESRC recognised the value of this input in future work across UKRI and with external stakeholders. Additional analysis would mitigate some of the limitations of the aggregate analysis.
7.	Welcome and opening remarks from Professor Penn and the CSA network
7.1	<p>Professor Penn highlighted the role of Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) in providing an overview of the application of science and engineering in policymaking in government departments and arm's-length bodies. The CSA network had several observers on research councils' Councils, and individual CSAs reported on relevant discussions to the wider CSA network and key stakeholders in government.</p> <p>The BEIS CSA Office have been working closely with UKRI and GO-Science colleagues to define the roles and responsibilities of CSAs as members of Council. CSAs support the identification of priority areas of research and actively socialize them with the CSA network and within their departments. CSAs bring departmental contributions where possible and where beneficial for collaborations with UKRI, facilitating timely engagement across departments and their communities.</p>
8.	ESRC's Delivery Plan update (ESRC 2022-04)

8.1	<p>Mr Neathey explained that the draft Delivery Plan set out how ESRC would contribute to the overall UKRI Strategy (due to be published in March 2022). The draft narrative had been developed in conjunction with a small Council sub-group chaired by Professor Coyle.</p> <p>Council endorsed the narrative of the plan, and suggested that it could be more specific in capturing social science impacts. It would also benefit from case studies that focussed on major longstanding investments.</p> <p>The plan made commitments across a wide portfolio of areas. Once ESRC's budget was known, it would be critical to prioritise within each of the seven major strategic priorities set out in the plan.</p>
8.2	<p>Council discussed the outcomes of the quadratic voting exercise, which aimed to establish a steer on the future allocation of ESRC's core budget. The exercise was focussed on the headroom funding that would become available during the Spending Review period.</p> <p>There was strong consensus for further investment in the "talent and leadership" and "data and infrastructure" strategic areas. Both were viewed as fundamental foundations for supporting social science. A strong case was made for further investment in responsive mode, and some members suggested how the scheme might evolve.</p> <p>Council agreed on the importance of funding national priorities, noting major opportunities for co-funding both within UKRI and beyond. It would be important to prioritise a smaller number of investments and deliver at scale to maximise impact.</p> <p>Support for investment in the innovation strategic area was more variable, with emphasis placed on opportunities to co-fund with Innovate UK. Council supported further investment in approaches to knowledge exchange and impact that could deliver rapid evidence and insights into government and elsewhere. These sorts of approaches were relatively inexpensive compared to larger grant funding.</p> <p>Council members thought that current budget levels for the international strategic area were broadly right. However, the decline in ODA funding would limit opportunities for major dedicated strategic investment in international activities in the future.</p> <p>Mr Neathey explained that the Council feedback would be used to frame concrete proposals for the allocation of ESRC's core budget. These allocation proposals would be tensioned against the working 'principles' set out in the paper. Council endorsed these principles, noting that many of them reflected the outcomes of the quadratic voting exercise and discussion.</p>
9.	ESRC's Delivery Plan: unleashing innovation ambitions (ESRC 2022-05)
9.1	<p>Dr Gold, Ms Knetsch and Mr Smith updated Council on the "Unleashing Innovation" ambition in ESRC's new Delivery Plan. Working in close partnership with Innovate UK and across the sector to build a powerful evidence base, ESRC would:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify the optimal conditions for innovation and its successful adoption and diffusion across different firms, sectors and regions;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance impact via knowledge exchange activities, driving the development of policy and practice to achieve UK-wide growth and prosperity; • support ESRC's community to try new ways to unlock their innovation potential.
9.2	Council discussed ways to support innovation, including how to work with external researchers and universities in partnership with government departments.
10.	ESRC Standard Research Grants (Open Call) review – phase 1 update (ESRC 2022-06)
10.1	Mr Neathey and Ms Knetsch updated Council on the key findings from the first phase of the ESRC Research Grant scheme review. The findings would inform broader UKRI work on the cross-council Research Agreement and commitment to responsive mode. In particular, the review would contribute to UKRI's place offering and inform broader EDI work. It would also outline areas where further evidence could be collected to better understand what the Standard Grants scheme had achieved and how it linked to other funding.
10.2	Council discussed the impact on Early Career Researchers of short temporary contracts and heavy teaching responsibilities. Additional guidance could be provided to Grant Assessment Panels to empower panels to challenge Principal Investigator and Co-Investigator time allocations.
11.	Papers for discussion by exception and any other business
11.1	Update on Risk Management (ESRC 2022-07)
12.	Close of Meeting