

ENGINEERING & PHYSICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

COUNCIL PROTOCOL

This document sets out the respective roles and contributions from both Council and the Executive. It serves as a protocol to support and complement Council's existing [governance arrangements](#) which are set out in the Royal Charter and the Management Statement. This protocol provides an on-going framework to guide the conduct and business of Council.

1. COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE ARE SUCCESSFUL TOGETHER WHEN:

- Council's forward business is planned and agreed;
- There is clear and joint ownership of relevant decisions and actions, or groups of decisions and actions;
- Our strategic direction and the associated messages are clear, to enable strong positioning and advocacy;
- Our plans are clearly described and appropriately supported (e.g. with a communications plan);
- There is a mutual understanding of what business is strategic, and what is operational.
- The contextual relationship between Council's business and government policy and initiatives is clear.

2. COUNCIL'S ROLE IS TO:

- Focus its attention on strategic thinking about what EPSRC does in order to achieve its mission;
- Decide high-level objectives and strategic direction for the organisation (see **section 1** in **Table 1**, below);
- Decide Delivery Plan priorities, including top-level budget apportionments (**section 2** in **Table 1**), and key messages (**section 3**);
- Delegate the development and management of operational business and processes to the Executive, setting principles to guide implementation of plans (**section 4** in **Table 1**), and supporting the Executive;
- Monitor progress against those objectives, including financial progress (**section 5**).

- Achieve the appropriate balances between expert and generalist view, noting that members do not represent their organisation but are representative of the broad EPS stakeholder base.

3. THE EXECUTIVE UNDERTAKES TO:

- i) Lead on the day-to-day operation of the organisation;
- ii) Provide the ongoing policy development input, and inspiration, to advance the mission, drawing on, and engaging with, its stakeholder communities, including the commissioning of strategic advice (SAN, SATs);
- iii) Raise with Council when a clear decision is required, indicating potential actions, risks and consequences;
- iv) Provide sufficient, complete, relevant and timely information to enable effective decision-making;
- v) Record and implement Council decisions;
- vi) Report regularly on the progress of plans against objectives,
- vii) Support Council's effectiveness both collectively and individually, including appropriate meeting support, induction, and briefings;
- viii) Keep Council informed of developments between meetings in a timely and informative way.

4. INDIVIDUAL COUNCIL MEMBERS AGREE TO:

- i) Attend meetings;
- ii) Actively engage with the business, and the concerns of the organisation, its employees and culture;
- iii) Seek information from the Executive to ensure they are fully briefed;
- iv) Be candid with peers and with the Executive, asking appropriate questions;
- v) Seek a Board culture of accountability, and diversity of viewpoint;
- vi) Actively engage in understanding, building and improving the culture of both the whole organisation and the Board itself;
- vii) Advocate on behalf of the community EPSRC sponsors and of EPSRC itself.

Table 1: Illustrative Examples of Council and Executive Functions

| COUNCIL: STRATEGIC DIRECTION & RELATED DECISIONS | EXECUTIVE: OPERATIONAL |
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| <p>1. Decisions on strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulation of the top-level strategy and sign-off of the Strategic Plan. • Promotion/advocacy of the top-level messages. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of relevant input information such as contextual background, stakeholder perspectives (incl government), KPIs. • Drafting of the Strategic Plan. • Provision of briefings on key messages. |
| <p>2. Decisions on the top-level apportionment of budgets e.g:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What apportionments are required to enable clear linkage of financial plans to strategy? • Which research themes should have a designated budget & apportionment between them? • Balance between Capability & Challenge themes; • Balance between research, training, and fellowships; • Balance between doctoral training schemes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of options analysis. • Development of options for themes. • Management of theme development with other RCs, government, including brigading of community perspectives and influence. • Definition and implementation of theme content. |
| <p>3. Decisions on Delivery Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction on the key priorities, messages, and presentation of the Delivery Plan. • Sign off the Delivery Plan & scorecard. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drafting of the Delivery Plan; • Day-to-day implementation of Plans, including definition of theme content such as call specifications, management of peer review process, research and training portfolio management. |

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| <p>4. Direction on principles to guide operational mechanisms:</p> <p>4.1 Establishment of principles and success criteria for mechanisms e.g. studentship support on grants; the timing, scope of Doctoral Training Partnership algorithm;</p> <p>4.2 Establishment of principles and success criteria for community engagement e.g. timing, nature (informing vs consultation, broad/open vs narrow/targeted).</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and definition of operational procedures of mechanisms e.g. calls for proposals, the internal structure of the algorithm. • Definition and execution of individual engagement activities. • Provision of briefing material to support members' own communication activities. |
| <p>5. Monitoring of progress against strategies and direction e.g:</p> <p>5.1 decision on choice of key output and outcome measures to monitor and assess delivery of strategic objectives;</p> <p>5.2 review of Delivery Plan scorecard;</p> <p>5.3 biannual review of progress against KPIs;</p> <p>5.4 periodic oversight of theme progress;</p> <p>5.5 review of financial outturns and forecasts against budgets.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of relevant and adequate information to enable appropriate measures to be decided. • Provision of full, clear and timely information. |