



Research Strategy Group

Note of meeting on 18 April 2023

Present: Christina Boswell (Convener), George Baxter, Jarmo Eskelinen, Laura Jeffery, Susan McNeill, Edd McCracken, Antony Maciocia, Andy Mount, Fiona Philippi, James Smith, Dominic Tate, Lorna Thomson

In attendance: Susan Cooper (secretary), Jen Cusiter, Katherine Quinn, Lynn Walford

Apologies: Stuart Forbes, Chloe Kippen

Invited Anne Sofie Laegran

1. Note of Last Meeting (23 February 2023) **Paper A**
Approved

2. Matter Arising **Paper B**

2.1 Minute 3.3 (AOB: Sustainable Travel Policy)

The College Research Offices disseminated a joint message from the Convener and Director of SRS about the changes that had been made to the Sustainable Travel Policy and how Diversity Travel operates. They will collate feedback which would be considered by the Convener, Director of SRS and Depute Director of Finance.

2.2 Minute 10 (Establishment of a Major Initiatives Governance Group)

Discussion was ongoing about the terms of reference of this group and its relationship with other University committees.

2.3 Other Matters Arising: Paper B states the action taken in relation to the following matters arising:

- Minute 4 Minutes 4 (Strategic Impact Fund);
- Minute 6 ((University and Climate Change – Ambition and Opportunities);
- Minute 9 (REF202X Planning); and
- Minute 11 (RSG Review).

3. Convener’s Update

The Convener’s briefing covered the following topics

- The Nurse review and suggestions there should be more public accountability about HEIs use REG/ QR allocations;
- Recent visit by key staff from Innovate UK;
- The UK Government’s budget statement on 21 March and its implications for RDI;
- The HEBGIS data for 2021/22 had been released. Edinburgh was 4th in UK in terms of total value of income to publicly funded research from collaborative research with non-academic organisations¹.

4 Outputs – Early Thoughts on Improving Quality **Paper C1-C3**

The Deans and CRMs were thanked for their work. CSE highlighted the hard work done by Engineering, EPCC and Geosciences, and the CAHSS Dean of Research expressed interest in the Geosciences approach. The CAHSS report outlined the work that would be undertaken. CMVM have a number of initiatives to improve output quality, which include encouraging staff to wait until they can develop a compelling narrative before publishing; and supporting ECRs to produce high quality outputs. CMVM is actively implementing its Fair Publication Policy agreed in 2020. A number of points were made about output quality and assessing output quality:

- The pressure on ECRs to publish in order to secure external funding such as Fellowships;
- IAD were running workshops to support researcher to improve their abstracts;
- Journal clubs can provide mutual peer review, with helpful input; and
- For those UoAs that draw on staff from across the University activity (notably scholars working on education/ pedagogy), earlier conversations are needed for REF202X.

5 University Postgrad Research Student Population –Size and Shape **Paper D**

A major discussion is ongoing about the University’s PGR/PGT population, covering both size as well as the PG experience. In CMVM and CSE particularly, PGRs are a key part of the University’s research success. It is important that they get the right training for their future careers in academia or outside. RSG recognised the importance of ensuring we are in a good place to engage with UK wide debate what the ‘Deal’ for PGRs should be. Of course, the question of funding is key to this debate and not just because of the cost of stipends.

Action:	CSE Dean of PGR in his role as Doctoral College Co-lead of the Doctoral College leadership group to produce a periodic report for RSG which will include the ‘White paper’ and how the ideas are developing
Action	RSG secretary, CSE Dean of PGR & Convener should plan how to have meeting in 2023/34 with PGR theme

6 International Science Partnership Fund **Paper E**

¹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/business-community/services>

UK funding to work with international partners is evolving rapidly both in terms of opening and closing opportunities. Members recognised the level of uncertainty including association to Horizon Europe, but also the continued lack of information and how much ODA funding there would be to support research. The University needed to be agile and respond rapidly in order to take advantage of opportunities as well as diversifying our funding portfolio and our range of international partners. All of this activity requires enough professional services staff with the right skills to support researchers.

7. Research Cultures Action Plan – Designing Delivery Plan

Paper F

Members were invited to give their views on the design for the delivery plan, which would be presented to University Executive. A 'task and finish' RCAP Delivery Group will be set up and the Research Cultures Forum will be reconvened. RSG will have responsibility for monitoring progress and the nature of that monitoring must be agreed.

8. SHAPE in Innovation

Paper G

Members were impressed by the SHAPE in Innovation tool (<https://shape-innovation.ed.ac.uk/>), which will signpost STEM + Med researchers to SHAPE researchers whose areas of investigation mean they would be ideal partners from genesis of a research idea. There were three very broad themes (Climate and sustainability; Future Health and Care; and Data, Digital and AI). Each theme has eight dimensions, which direct the user to specific research centres. In answer to questions, members noted that the tool would need to be periodically updated; input from DDI proposing centres that should be mentioned was welcomed, and although the tool had been developed for internal users it could be helpful for an external audience.

9. College Reports

Paper H1 & H2

CAHSS were commended for the establishment of a new International Olympic Committee Research centre, which would be a joint venture with Bath. It was encouraging to note that Ailsa Henderson (SPS) has been appointed to the UK Covid-19 enquiry. CMVM confirmed that MRC had secured funding for the Human Genetics Unit, which involved transition to the new MRC funding model. Roslin has also secured BBSRC Strategic Institute funding for Roslin for the next five years. The Convenor thanked CMVM for carrying out a comprehensive College wide assessment of activity to improve Research Culture. In regard to CSE, there had been considerable success in staff being awarded ECR Starting Grants. Several significant funding announcements were imminent and the new EPSRC Deputy Director will visit in May.

PAPERS FOR APPROVAL

11 Research Excellence Grant: Strategic Investment Plan

Paper J

Approved: A proposal that the plan, having been revised to take into account feedback from RSG, is approved by Convener's action, for submission to University Executive.

12 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - Report & Action Plan 2023-2025

Paper K1 & K2

Approved: The report and action plan, on behalf of the University. Both would be made publicly available.

PAPERS FOR INFORMATION

13 Strategic Impact Fund update

Paper L

Noted. Members congratulated Anne-Sofie who will become the Head of the newly created University Research impact team.

14 Library Research Support report

Paper M1 & M2

Noted

15 Research Ethics and Integrity Group report

Paper N

The report was noted

Agreed: That the Convenor would approve the 2021/22 Research Ethics and Integrity report on behalf of the group to ensure that it could be submitted in time for approval by the University's Risk Management Committee.

16 Edinburgh Research Office report

Paper O

Noted

17 Research Grants and Applications update

Paper P

Noted