



# Research Strategy Group

## Note of meeting on 9 February 2022

- Present:** Jonathan Seckl (Convener), Susan Bodie, Christina Boswell, David Brown, Laura Cockram, Jarmo Eskelinen, Jane Hillston, John Lonsdale, Antony Maciocia, Ed McCracken, Susan McNeill, Andy Mount, Fiona Phillipi, Michael Rovastos, James Smith, Dominic Tate
- In attendance:** Susan Cooper (secretary), Jen Cusiter, Jacq McMahan, Katherine Quinn
- Invited:** Libby McCue, Lorna McLoughlin, Theresa Merrick, Eliane Reid
- Apologies:** Chris Cox and George Baxter (Susan Bodie and John Lonsdale represented EI)

### 1. Note of Last Meeting (13 December 2021)

Paper A

Approved

### 2. Convener's Update

The Convener briefed members on the following topics:

- Christina Boswell (current Dean of Research for CAHSS) will become the new Convener from August.
- After the sudden announcement that the GCRF fund would close in January 2021, UKRI had just announced it will allocate £20 million of additional funding to HEIs proportionate to the reductions made in 2021.
- The Advanced Research and Invention Agency<sup>1</sup> (ARIA) has become a legal entity with a budget of £800 million for the next four years. Peter Highnam<sup>2</sup> was announced as CEO (post meeting note: Highnam resigned before taking up post). A Chair has yet to be appointed.
- It appears increasingly likely that the UK Government and EU will not sign a Trade and Cooperation Agreement. Instead, those researchers based in UK who are holders of Horizon Europe awards would receive funding through the UK Government's guarantee<sup>3</sup>
- ISG were carrying out a long term assessment of how Covid and Hybrid working was altering work patterns such as the use of lab and other work spaces. .

### 3. How People and Money Developments will support Research

The P&M Finance Transformation Lead and the ERO Head of Research Finance gave a joint presentation. In the discussion, the following points were made:

- Volunteers are being sought for acceptance testing which would include Research Training grants
- The structure of the financial management will be able to take account of the variety of ways research projects operate
- The P&M processes are intended to increase transparency which should make it easier to for PIs and research Support staff to easily see the financial position of a grant on a day to day basis, including those that involve foreign currency transactions.
- The P&M structures are intended to make it easier to comply with funders' terms and conditions (including the EU) and to make it easier to comply with funder audits
- Issues could arise during the bedding in of the system but it was hoped that rigorous user testing would reduce such issues.

### 4. Promoting University Research to External Audiences

The Director of Communications and Marketing (CAM) outlined the progress made since she had spoken to RSG in July 2021 before describing how CAM had been working with Schools and Colleges to turn the REF Impact cases into a means of demonstrating the University's research excellence and makes real differences to life outside academia. She also explained how CAM hoped to work with Colleges, Schools, ERO, EI and DDI to devise a means of sharing planned content about research in a more systematic way to promote public amplification. The main points in the discussion were:

- How to ensure that we make the best use of research colleagues who are already strong communicators without overloading them
- Identifying potential strong communicators from within the ECR population
- CAM have a potential to contribute to the process of applying for big bids by creating appropriate content

Action	Director of Communications and Marketing to hold a meeting with the Convenor and Deans about how CAM could contribute to the big bid application process as well as the REF2021 results strategy.
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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advanced-research-and-invention-agency-aria-statement-of-policy-intent/advanced-research-and-invention-agency-aria-policy-statement>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-uk-politics-2022-3-serious-blow-for-aria-as-highnam-pulls-out-of-ceo-role/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/horizon-europe-guarantee-open-letter-to-the-uk-research-and-development-sector>

## 5. Growing Research Together – Progress

The Programme lead for GRT outlined the current stage of the project. During February to May GRT will be coming up with a number of high level design options. She described the process that will be followed to construct those options and the groups whose views will be sought. The high level design options will be presented to the GRT steering group. In discussion it was noted that there was an overlap between the individuals who would be involved in this next GRT stage and P&M testing and it would be important not to overload them.

Action	Programme lead for GRT to meet with Antony Maciocia (Representative of Education committee (PG Research) to discuss the place of Research Training Grants in GRT.
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## 6. College updates

**Paper B1 – B3**

The Deans confirmed that it is useful to bring a report to RSG on their College's research plans and key research activities. CMVM has appointed a new registrar, Dr Anne Marie Coriat, who has a wealth of experience of working for major funders. CSE are assessing how to take advantage of the likely strategic opportunities signalled by UK Government. Laura Jeffery will succeed Christina Boswell as CAHSS Dean of Research.

Action	CAHSS Dean of Research to present a paper on SHAPE and the opportunity it presents for whole University (SHAPE = <b>S</b> ocial Sciences, <b>H</b> umanities and the <b>A</b> rts for <b>P</b> eople and the <b>E</b> conomy)
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## 7. UK Government Levelling up White Paper and the University

**Paper C**

There was reason to be positive about the UK Government's Levelling Up agenda although it was light on substance. Nonetheless it was clear that the UK Government had put down a clear marker that it intended to expand opportunities outside South East England. The Innovation Accelerator centred in Glasgow should present opportunities across the M8 corridor.

### FOR INFORMATION OR APPROVAL

## 8. Grants applications and Awards update

**Paper D**

Noted

## 9. Edinburgh Research Office report

**Paper E**

Noted

## 10. Library Research Support update

**Paper F**

Noted

## 11. NSIA update and briefing

**Paper G**

Noted

## 12. FRAP - consultation on REF2021 -University response

**Paper H**

Noted

## 13. FRAP – published views of Chair and lead civil servant

**Paper I**

Noted