



## **HEADS OF UNIVERSITY CENTRES OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES**

Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on 15 November 2018 at IBMS, Coldbath Square, London.

Present: Professor Kevan Gartland (President & Chair, Glasgow Caledonian), Dr Craig Donaldson (Plymouth), Professor Valerie Randall (Bradford), Dr Claire Wynn (Dublin IT/Dublin Technological University), Dr Linda Walsh (Glasgow Caledonian), Professor Yvonne Barnett (Past-President), Professor Jacqueline McCormack (Sligo IT), Professor Janey Henderson (HUBS), Professor P Gerry McKenna (Hon Executive Secretary).

In Attendance: Ms Jill Rodney (IBMS), Mr Alan Wainwright (IBMS).

Apologies: Dr Claire Pike (Anglia Ruskin), Dr Selwa Alsam (Essex), Dr Ian Locke (Honorary Treasurer, Westminster), Professor Julie McLeod (Buckinghamshire New), Professor Hilary MacQueen (HUBS, Open), Mr Merfyn Williams (Bangor), Dr Sue Jones (York St John), Mr Andrew Usher (IBMS).

1. The President, Professor Kevan Gartland, welcomed Dr Claire Wynne from Dublin Institute of Technology (Technological University Dublin from January 2019) to the Executive Committee for 2018-19.

2. The previously approved minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 01 May 2018 were noted. The minutes of the AGM held on 4 September 2018 were approved with minor amendment.
3. Professor McCormack informed the Committee that the external examiners database had been updated and would soon be uploaded to the HUCBMS website.
4. The Committee received a written report and a verbal update from the President on a positive meeting covering areas of mutual interest involving himself and Dr Linda Walsh with the President of IBMS, Alison Geddis, and the Chief Executive, Jill Rodney.
5. The Hon Executive Secretary, Professor Gerry McKenna, shared written comments he had received on TEF developments from Professor Julie McLeod. It was noted that a number of relevant papers on TEF had been published recently by OfS and DoE. The latter's was a response to the subject level consultation while the OfS papers covered the operational outcomes of year 4 provider level TEF and year 2 subject level pilot.
  - a. There will be a final (year 4) opportunity to apply or reapply for provider level TEF rating (18/19).
  - b. Provider level awards from year 2/3/4 will all last until 2020/21 and subject level TEF process will supersede the process in 2021.
  - c. Subject level TEF will open early 2020 and awards will be published in 2021. Due to large numbers of applications there is a longer window for application and award.
  - d. the proposal for year 2 pilots is for a provider level outcome in addition to a subject level outcome.
  - e. The model has moved to one where all subjects are assessed.
  - f. The metrics are changing; NSS questionnaire results will remain weighted at 0.5 but will now include 'learning resources' and 'student voice' in addition to previous 'teaching quality', 'assessment' and 'support'. Continuation core metric remains but will be weighted at 2.0 (double currently). The DLHE/graduate outcomes metric (1.0) will remain with the addition of LEO employed and median salary - so the LEO data are now core metrics.
  - g. The subject assessment panels will be merged; medical science will merge with the nursing & allied health panel. The natural sciences (which contains biosciences) will merge with the engineering panel.
6. The Committee noted recent deliberations and meetings on Equality and Diversity organised through the Royal Society of Biology. The draft questionnaire prepared by

Dr Sue Jones was approved with minor amendments. Professor Val Randall agreed to liaise with Dr Jones on the issues raised.

7. The Committee considered two papers prepared by the President regarding maternity payments for research students. There was concern at the lack of common approach between universities and evidence of differing practices within certain institutions. It was agreed that when the papers had been considered by Glasgow Caledonian University, this obvious breach of equality should be highlighted across the system.
8. Professors McKenna and Yvonne Barnett updated the Committee on REF 2021. It was noted that Main Panel A had proposed provisionally, as part of the consultation process, that the previous facility for multiple submissions within Unit of Assessment 3 be discontinued. HUCBMS had written a strong letter to the REF Team arguing against this proposal and pointing out the difficulties of assessing the disparate set of subjects included within UoA 3 within a single submission. A conciliatory but non-committal reply had been received.  
Concern was expressed that UoA 3 has become heavily practitioner-focussed at the expense of the sciences. The outcome of the consultation will be published in New Year. Following discussion it was agreed that subsequent to the publication of finalised UoA criteria, a small sub-group of the Executive Committee would discuss the most appropriate submission options for BMS, including UoA 5 (Biological Sciences) as a possible alternative to UoA 3. The outcome of these discussions will be conveyed to HUCBMS members and the REF Team.
9. Professor McKenna tabled a briefing paper he had prepared for the Heads of University Biosciences (HUBS) on Brexit issues relating to higher education and research. A copy of the paper is attached to these minutes.
10. Professor McCormack and Dr Linda Walsh updated the Committee on Irish and Scottish matters, respectively. There remains concern regarding the acceptance of BMS graduates from Northern Ireland and Great Britain by the relevant statutory approval body in the Irish Republic. It was agreed that this anomalous situation should be investigated further.
11. Dr Donaldson reported on the recent deliberations of the Council for Healthcare Science. These include concerns relating to:
  - Viability of Practitioner Training Programmes (including Healthcare Science: Life Science)
  - Placement support issues
  - Programme Structure
  - Viability of Apprenticeship programmes

- Workforce planning uncertainty in Healthcare Science
12. Professor Randall and Alan Wainwright updated the Committee on relevant issues arising from the IBMS and the IBMS Education and Professional Standards Committee. These included: new programmes being validated, the use of technology in the future, proposed recognition and further development of professional doctorates, and the development of on-line annual programme monitoring.
  13. The Committee noted that Dr Claire Pike has replaced Professor McCormack on the RSB Education Policy Advisory Committee.
  14. Professor Janey Henderson reported on the activities of the HUBS Executive Committee. These included: the forthcoming joint HUBS/HUCBMS Workshop which will be hosted at Bradford with the theme “overcoming barriers in teaching chemistry in the biosciences” (Professor Jon Green and Dr Linda Walsh have overseen this important initiative on behalf of HUBS and HUCBMS, respectively), the Biology Teacher of the Year Award, the move by HUBS to have a single 2-day annual conference starting in April 2019 at the Sanger Institute at Cambridge (the 2020 conference will take place at the Crick Institute in London) , and work on early career development for bioscience lecturers.
  15. Dr Wynne outlined details of the proposed lecture and exhibition space, potential accommodation options, and provisional social programme for HUCBMS 2019 which will be held at the Technological University Dublin. Brief discussion also took place about potential speakers and themes. It was agreed that the arrangements, including the academic and social programmes, should be advanced before the next meeting of the Committee.  
Future HUCBMS conferences are scheduled for: York St John University (2020), and Coventry University (2021).
  16. In the absence of the Hon Treasurer, Dr Ian Locke, and Dr Selwa Alsam (Essex), discussion of finances, including the financial out-turn for HUCBMS 2018, was deferred until the next meeting of the Committee.
  17. There was no other business. Future meetings of the Committee will take place on 6 February and 8 May 2019.

# **Royal Society of Biology/Heads of University Biosciences (HUBS)**

## **BRIEFING PAPER**

### **BREXIT and HE and Research**

The focus over the last 18 months on the withdrawal terms of the United Kingdom from the European Union has largely side-lined necessary detailed and related negotiations and planning on strategic and operational matters which will have a profound impact upon the economic, social and cultural development of the UK and its regions post-Brexit. Uncertainty about the future is the current prevailing attitude.

Apart from the obvious detrimental effects of any development which curtails international cooperation and collaboration in HE and research, and upon which the evolution of the sector has always depended, there are a number of identifiable issues which are of major concern. These include:

#### **Immigration Rules for Staff and Students**

Current proposals in the government's Brexit White Paper indicate that freedom of movement will end and reference is made to a visa system with certain permissible exceptions, including the possible facilitation of temporary mobility of scientists and researchers. This is substantially different from the current arrangements and there is already evidence of a decline in applications from EU mainland citizens for academic and research posts in the UK.

#### **Fee Status for EU Citizens**

There is no reference to mutual EU student fee recognition in the Brexit White Paper. This could lead to EU Students paying full overseas student fees while studying in the UK. While a small select number of universities might benefit from this, the majority would probably experience a fall in student numbers and fee income.

#### **Student Loan Access**

EU students may lose the current access to UK student loans arrangements. There is a suggestion in the Brexit White Paper that loans may be linked to agreed trade arrangements. This implies an oversimplification of the role and purpose of HE and whilst it is recognised to be a major positive contributor to the UK's balance of payments and GDP, it is more than a simple tradeable commodity.

#### **Framework Programmes and Erasmus+**

Both Horizon Europe (9<sup>th</sup> EU Framework Programme) and the next phase of Erasmus begin in 2021. The government seeks to explore association (associate status) in Horizon Europe and the Euratom research and training programme, though would not be eligible for full membership, including the planning of priorities post-Brexit. There is less overt support for

Erasmus where the UK has traditionally been a net importer of migrant students. Given the slow rate of progress on the withdrawal agreement and the government's preoccupation with it, the possibility of a time gap before, and if, the UK gets into a position to participate further in Horizon Europe and Erasmus programmes is real.

### **European Structural Investment Funds**

It is assumed that a post-Brexit UK would not be eligible, except for certain long-term commitments and involvement by the EU (such as peace initiatives in Northern Ireland and support for its border region) to European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF). Such funds have traditionally supported capacity building in disadvantaged regions through training programmes, and infrastructure (including research and knowledge transfer infrastructure) to enable eligible regions to 'catch up' with better endowed areas. This 'elevator effect' has had significant impact in building the research capacity in many of the more recently established UK universities and supporting associated innovation in their regions. It is imperative that the UK government puts in place a replacement support fund to support continued capacity building and reduction in geographical or regional disadvantage - a UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) has been proposed by the government for these or relatively similar purposes.

### **UK Universities' Dependence on EU Funding**

UK universities have been highly successful in winning EU funding from both the Framework Research Programmes and the European Structural Investment Funds. Their overall dependence upon such funding varies by university and the nature of the funding. The top 10 UK performers in winning Framework funding are established 'Russell Group' universities. This funding is however less than 10% of their total funding from all sources. However, the nature of Framework funding, involving inter-institutional and trans-national collaboration, supports projects and advances which would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

There is evidence that despite the government agreeing to honour commitments and continued involvement in the current Framework Programme (Horizon 2020), there has been a decline in new projects being led by UK researchers. The newer universities receive much less European funding overall but it makes up a higher percentage of their overall income with the 10 most dependent receiving between 33% and 61% of their funding (mostly from ESIF).

### **Developing New UK-EU Partnerships**

In the absence of any certainty or clear guidance from the UK government on future UK-EU relationships in HE and research, many leading universities have understandably been making contingency plans. This includes the proposed establishment of branch campuses within the EU and/or establishing institutional partnerships and alliances including joint appointments, PhD and master's programmes as well as shared intellectual property arrangements. This would allow the participating institutions to benefit from both EU and UK funding opportunities.

Whether the proposed inter-institutional 'top down' approach to European collaboration will outperform the more individually and research-group driven current EU research partnerships remains to be seen. It is however evident that whatever collaborative

arrangements the UK's highest ranking universities may be able to organise and bring into effect, the vast majority of UK universities are likely to have less interaction than currently exists with their European peer institutions post- Brexit.

Professor Gerry McKenna MRIA CBiol FRSB FIBMS

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