



HEADS OF UNIVERSITY CENTRES OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES (HUCBMS)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on Wednesday 2 September 2020 via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Professor Yvonne Barnett (President, and chair; Anglia Ruskin), Dr Linda Walsh (Glasgow Caledonian), Professor Valerie Randall (Bradford), Professor Jacqueline McCormack (Sligo IT), Dr Esther Bell (KCL), Dr Simon Fox (Plymouth), , Dr Claire Pike (Anglia Ruskin), Dr Lowri Mainwaring (Cardiff Metropolitan), Professor Hilary MacQueen (HUBS; Open), Professor Victor Gault (Ulster), Dr Ian Locke (Hon Treasurer, Westminster), Professor P Gerry McKenna (Hon Executive Secretary) and over 30 delegates.

Apologies: Dr Sue Jones (York St John) and Ms Jill Rodney (IBMS).

1. The minutes of 2019 AGM previously published on HUCBMS website were noted and approved.
2. **President's Introductory Comments and Report on HUCBMS Executive Committee activities and discussions in 2019-20.** The HUCBMS President, Professor Yvonne Barnett, noted that the HUCBMS Executive Committee had sought to maintain links with members during the difficult circumstances resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic. Biomedical sciences staff in universities had shown great dedication and innovation in their support for UG and PG students. Public Health England advice had been followed and academic standards have been maintained. The joint activities with HUBS to share best

practice including the workshop on alternatives to laboratory-based research projects and support for future employability was excellent.

Professor Barnett congratulated Dr Sue Jones for winning the RSB Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award.

3. **Impact of and response to Covid-19 in BMS schools/departments.** The impact of and responses to Covid-19 were noted. There is considerable uncertainty regarding student recruitment especially with international students. Most universities have moved to blended learning. All universities have been very busy over the summer with risk assessments for rooms, labs and summer exams, clearing etc. Potential lack of placements continues to be a major issue. The impact on teaching and learning, examinations and assessments was also noted. Universities have kept the IBMS informed of developments. It was also noted that there is no indication that HCPC will change its criteria for accreditation in response to Covid. The IBMS is considering suspending re-accreditation of programmes for a year.

Professor Barnett congratulated David Lewis and Sue Jones for the delivery of the research project workshop online. The Hon Executive Secretary, Professor Gerry McKenna, noted that the online delivery had resulted in a larger and geographically wider audience than if the workshop had been located on a university campus. There are lessons arising from this for the planning of future workshops.

4. **TEF.** Professor Julie McLeod confirmed that there was little new to report.
5. **REF.** Professor Barnett informed the attendees about REF 2021 timetable changes, with submission deadlines extended to 21st March 2021.

Professor McKenna informed the meeting that HUCBMS would be making a number of further nominations of output assessors for the UoA 3 REF sub-panel.

6. **KEF.** Professor Hilary MacQueen updated the meeting on the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). Submissions timetable has been changed from May to October, and results will be published in December.
7. **Brexit Update.** Professor McKenna had circulated an update report for information. This and any further developments will be discussed at the next Executive Committee meeting.

8. **Brief comments on Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Northern Ireland matters.**

- I. Professor Linda Walsh reported that Scotland has a satisfactory supply of placements and placement providers are happy to take students. Projects are being delivered in accordance with IBMS guidelines.
- II. Dr Lowri Mainwaring spoke of the positive response of colleagues in Wales to the Covid emergency Health and science programme are being commissioned. The pandemic appears to be having a positive impact on recruitment to BMS programmes. The Welsh government is investing £32 million in accredited labs.
- III. Professor Jacqueline McCormack shared similar experiences in the Republic of Ireland with colleagues responding well. BMS programme applications are strong.
- IV. Professor Victor Gault reported that numbers in NI remain healthy; placement has been working well. He also referred to the approval of the Medical School at L/Derry with the first intake scheduled for September 2021.

9. **Equality and Diversity.** Dr Sue Jones, via Professor Barnett, updated the members on equality and diversity actions and initiatives.

11. **Reports from HUCBMS representatives on other bodies.**

- I. Professor Hilary MacQueen noted the very successful HUBS/HUCBMS joint workshop. She reported that workshops in the near future should be online. HUBS will also be running a course for early career lecturers. Next year's HUBS annual conference will probably be virtual and will focus on equality and diversity. Nominations for next year's Bioscience Teacher of the Year Award will open shortly.
- II. **Royal Society of Biology Education Policy Advisory Committee.** Dr Claire Pike updated members on the various activities of EPAC during the past year.
- III. **Foundation for Science and Technology.** Professor McKenna updated the attendees on FST activities. These included meetings on future research funding and Brexit. FST will be organising a meeting on regional funding.
- IV. **IBMS Education and Professional Standards Committee.** Professor Val Randall reported that EPSC had four meetings. These included approval of the re-accreditation of a number of degree programmes. Some funds are available for research projects. There will be a new certificate in point-of-care testing. It was noted that the IBMS had responded pro-actively and flexibly to the impact of the pandemic.

12. **External Examiners List update.** Professor McCormack noted that a few new potential examiners had been added. Additional names should be forwarded to her as soon as possible.
13. **IBMS developments and accreditation update.** Mr Wainwright reported that online assessments for IBMS programmes had operated very efficiently and satisfactorily. Twenty universities had their accreditation or reaccreditation during the year.
14. **Report by Hon. Treasurer.** Dr Ian Locke reported that the financial position remained satisfactory. He would be chasing up any unpaid subscriptions. The 2019 conference had yielded a minor surplus.
15. **Elections to Executive Committee.** Professor McKenna informed the meeting that there were four nominations for three places on the HUCBMS Executive Committee: Dr Lynne Lawrence (UWE), Professor Jacqueline McCormack (Sligo IT), Dr Linda Walsh (Glasgow Caledonian) and Dr Claire Pike (Anglia Ruskin). In view of the exceptional difficulties of organising an election at the online AGM, it was agreed that all four members be elected for the period 2020-21 to 2022-23 inclusive.
16. **HUCBMS 2021 and 2022 Conferences.** It was noted that HUCBMS 2021 is scheduled to be held in September at York St John University. The 2022 conference is scheduled to take place at Coventry University.
17. **Any Other Business.** There being no other business Professor Barnett thanked the Executive Committee and all delegates for attending. She declared the AGM closed.
18. After the AGM Mr Allan Wilson the President of the IBMS delivered an excellent talk on '**the challenges and lessons for biomedical sciences arising from the COVID-19 pandemic**'.