SUMMARY OF MEETING ON 24 MAY 2016

1. Briefing and contextualisation on UKRI

BBSRC staff presented an update on developments regarding UKRI and answered questions from the Panel. The evolving landscape may impact upon how skills and careers are supported in the biosciences, but at this stage this is purely speculative.

2. Terms of Reference and Panel operations

This year, BSC is in transition, with a new chair, reduced membership with no new members, and continuing discussion around how best to use the Panel for strategic advice in the skills and careers area. The Panel had a good conversation before the Office presented the results of internal discussions, which the Panel then commented upon. The Panel voiced their support for increased use of ad-hoc and/or focus groups, continued attention on PhDs and early-career post-docs, monitoring of policies and programmes, as well as examining opportunities for increased dialogue with other sectors (e.g. professional bodies and industry). They also made recommendations around the required skills and expertise around members, emphasising the need for a wide range of backgrounds.

3. Best Practice in Mentoring

The Office presented findings of a literature review around mentoring and the Panel discussed the proposed statement of expectations for mentoring. The Panel emphasised that this should not encourage a “tick-box” approach, and that it may be worth looking at best practice from industry as well.

4. Postdoc Engagement and Future Directions

The Panel discussed the activity of the Postdoc Sub-Group, including the minutes of the latest meeting and the future direction of the group. The Panel were very supportive of the work at this group, but aware that it now needed to build on the success by increasing membership and awareness within the postdoc community.

5. GCRF & capacity building

In response to the changes in available budget, the Panel was given a briefing on the Global Challenges Research Fund and discussed how studentships and career programmes could interface with GCRF and promote international development. The Panel concluded that there were opportunities for studentships, fellowships and networks with international aspects, but that these would have to be fair and meet local needs as well as our own.