MINUTES OF BIOSCIENCE SKILLS AND CAREERS STRATEGY ADVISORY PANEL

VENUE: ISLINGTON DOUBLE TREE HOTEL, ISLINGTON, LONDON

DATE: 18-19 MAY 2017

PRESENT

Professor Ilaria Bellantuono, University of Sheffield (Chair)
Ms Samantha Aspinall, University of Leeds
Dr Nick Goldman, EMBL-EBI
Professor Selwayan Saini, Inside Biometrics
Dr John Elvin, MedImmune
Professor Edward Wilding, University of Nottingham
Dr Rebekah Smith McGlin, Coventry University
Professor Geraint Thomas, University College London
Dr Tobias van der Haar, University of Kent
Dr Karen Liu, Kings College London

BBSRC Post-docs

Dr Sian Deller, Syngenta
Dr Jingjing Li, Kings College London

BBSRC Office

Dr James Donald
Dr Rob Hardwick
Dr David McAllister
Ms Nicola Woolford
Dr Clare Bhunnoo

APOLOGIES

1. Apologies were received from Dr Karen Lewis, BBSRC.

MAIN BUSINESS

Item 1: Welcome, Introduction and Induction for New Paper Members

2. The Chair introduced this item which included an Icebreaker session for the new Panel members.

3. David McAllister gave the new Panel members a background to BBSRC and the role of the Panel and where it fits within the BBSRC strategy advisory structure. The Panel were briefed on the establishment of UK Research and Innovation and where BBSRC will sit within this and what it could mean for skills and careers.

4. The Panel members new to BSC took part in an icebreaker session. The aim of this exercise was to get the members thinking about what they would like to achieve as a member of BSC and also what would be the one thing they would like to change. During the exercise the Panel raised the following main points:

   • Who are we training and at what point in their career?
   • Changing career structures for post-docs.
How do we measure change?
- Diversity of thought.
- Who defines leading?
- Level 8 Apprenticeships.
- Sector leading E, D & I Agenda – how do we link this to our skills and careers?
- Sector leading E, D & I Agenda – why just sector? Why not global, national and international agenda?

Item 2: A Strategy for UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences (BSC01/17)

5. David McAllister and Clare Bhunoo presented the Strategy for UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences.

6. The Panel was invited to consider how might the skills needs in biotechnology and biological sciences be expected to change over the next 5-10 years? How can BBSRC prepare for that and we can stay ‘ahead of the curve’ as a nation?

7. The Panel were also invited to consider if the UK is currently producing people with the right skills and capabilities both for modern bioscience research and for the breadth of other careers that trained bioscientists take and if not what needs to change?

8. The key messages arising from this discussion were:

   - World class bioscientists lead to world class bioscience.
   - Focus on support for lifelong learning and development, rather than training periods.
   - Supporting skills, careers and talent for the whole of the bioeconomy with:
     - A strong system that is robust yet flexible enough to manage change
     - Supporting skills development in specific areas when required.
   - Future role in shaping culture of closer working (skills development) between academia and industry.
     - Learn from best practice in industry.
   - Future skills needs include:
     - Numeracy, IT and data management
     - Professional skills including risk awareness, collaboration skills, creativity and project design.
       - ‘Tools for productivity in the 21st Century’
     - Interdisciplinary and cross-discipline working – support in-depth knowledge but prepare for interfaces.
     - Skills for industry including interdisciplinary, translational and collaborative.
   - Flexible career structures for ECRs.
     - Reducing attrition of post-docs
     - Flexibility in the structure/duration of grants to encourage innovation, risk and postdoctoral independence.
     - Doctoral training for technicians and apprenticeships.
     - Front-loading of training during PhD.
   - Knowledge gap in understanding the value and careers of postdocs.

The Panel was informed that these points would be inputted into a strategy workshop arranged in July with BBSRC Council, Executive and representatives of strategy advisory panels and research committees. This workshop aims to further develop the strategy for UK bioscience and biotechnology.
Item 3: Standing Items

i) Minutes of Meeting on 16 December 2016 (BSC02/17)

9. The minutes were circulated to Panel members for approval with no amendments received. The Panel agreed the minutes of the last meeting.

Chair's Update (Oral)

10. The Chair updated the Panel on the Training Partnership Forum and in particular a good example of a PIPS programme from the University of Norwich.

Reflection on Strategy Discussion (Oral)

11. The Panel were provided with the opportunity to reflect on the key messages and conclusions of the discussion that took place under Item 2 (A Strategy for UK Biotechnology and Biology Sciences). BBSRC found the discussion very useful and gained a lot of information that would be fed into the Council discussion in late June 2017.

Training Partnership Forum Summary (BSC03/17)

12. Robert Hardwick updated the Panel on the presentations given at the Training Partnership Forum. There were a good range of discussions including keynote presentations from Melanie Welham, BBSRC Chief Executive, Professor Paul Boyle (Vice-Chancellor, University of Leicester), Dr Paul Wakeling (University of York) and Dr John Elvin (MedImmune). The feedback received from the community has been positive and indicated that this was much more focused than the previous event. Those members of BSC that attended the Forum echoed this, and congratulated BBSRC on a very successful event.

Item 4: Student Surveys (BSC04/17)

13. Robert Hardwick led the discussion on the BBSRC Student Surveys 2016 and updated the Panel on the main findings that the vast majority of students are very satisfied with their PhDs.

14. The Panel were invited to discuss the summary of the surveys and survey format and suggest changes they may wish to see.

15. The Panel were confused by the Researcher Development Framework comparison. It appeared that the median and mode were incorrect as some of the numbers were outside the range and a lot of the numbers did not make sense. The Panel considered the outcomes difficult to interpret and the presentation of the data confusing. The Panel commented that students are much more confident on starting their PhD and it is not until they complete their PhD that they are much more realistic. The Panel indicated the surveys show statistics to be the most important skill to the students. The Panel considered it would be beneficial to have more focus groups to advise on the structure and content of future surveys. The Panel did not think the statistical data analysis was meaningful due to the fact that the cohorts were different.

ACTION: BBSRC to incorporate questions for students on how they were on starting compared to when they completed their PhD.

ACTION: BBSRC to consider creating more focus groups including employers of PhD students.
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**ACTION:** When designing future surveys BBSRC should form focus groups to advise on the structure and content of surveys.

**Item 5: Post-doc Group Appointments Process (BSC05/17)**

16. James Donald led the discussion on this item. The Panel were asked to note the formalised process for the appointment of members to the post-doc subgroup and the revised Terms of Reference. The Panel were asked to agree a member of BSC to act as the BSC representative on the subgroup. The Panel were invited to comment on the proposed future activities of the post-doc subgroup and mechanisms through which the subgroup can receive input from the wider post-doc community.

17. The Panel agreed to the appointment of Karen Liu as BSC representative to the post-doc subgroup.

18. The Panel commented that it would be useful for members of the post-doc group to remain on the group for approximately 6 months after they have moved on from being a post-doc.

19. The Panel commented it would be useful to know how institutions are supporting PhD students post-PhD and post-docs and if post-docs are taking up the training available to them.

**ACTION:** BBSRC to include reference to the Post-doc Vision in the Pool Induction process.

**ACTION:** BBSRC to input query regarding support of post-docs into strategic partnership conversations with the DTPs.

**ACTION:** BBSRC to finalise and publish revised webpage and call for new members of the Bioscience Skills and Careers Postdoctoral Researcher Subgroup.

**Item 6: Non-Faculty Researchers Workshop Outputs (BSC06/17)**

20. Robert Hardwick led a discussion on this emerging piece of work on the development of the action plan to support these researchers. The Panel were invited to discuss and approve the proposed members of the expert working group and also to discuss the outputs of the workshop held in March 2017.

21. The Panel commented that the working group needs representation from industry. The Panel raised concerns that the group appears to have a greater representation of women and the gender balance needs to be addressed. The Panel would like to see representatives from the technical research area/post-docs. The Panel agreed that engaging with Dr Laura Bellingan (Director of Policy at the Royal Society of Biology) was useful in ensuring a joined-up approach across the biosciences. The Panel agreed that technicians should be included on papers where they have contributed towards the work and would like to see something in BBSRC Terms and Conditions to reflect this.

22. The Panel discussed the name of the working group and suggested Research Technical Professionals (RTPs).
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Item 7: Industrial Strategy – Capability and Talent (Oral)


Item 8: Equality and Inclusion Action Plan (BSC07/17)

24. David McAllister led the discussion on this item.

25. The Panel were invited to note and comment on the progress made by BBSRC in implementing its 2014-17 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) strategy and associated Action Plan.

26. The Panel were invited to suggest areas, challenges and topics that could be incorporated into future EDI plans for (a) BBSRC/the biosciences; and (b) as part of UK Research and Innovation. The Panel were invited to identify priorities for activity and potential partners in implementation of the revised strategy.

27. The Panel congratulated BBSRC on the work achieved so far on this item. The Panel suggested whether it would be possible to influence schools by sending out post-docs, professional doctorates or PhD students into schools to act as mentors to students aged 15/16 and commented that it would be useful for funds to be made available to carry out these activities.

28. The Panel considered the targeted used of REPs by using them as a policy intervention tool in this space.

ACTION: BBSRC to consider the use of REPS to support widening participation.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

29. The meeting wrapped with a round-table summary of the key points to emerge from the meeting.

30. The Panel commented they would prefer slide decks rather than papers for the next meeting.

31. The Chair thanked the Panel for their time and contributions to the meeting.

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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>BBSRC Lead</th>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Thursday 18th May 2017</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Lunch on arrival</strong> (Chair &amp; New Panel Members)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chair’s Brief (Chair and Office)</td>
<td>David McAllister</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>13:00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Welcome and Introduction and Induction for New Panel Members including Icebreaker session.</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>Oral</td>
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<td>Rob Hardwick</td>
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<td>James Donald</td>
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<td><strong>Coffee</strong> (Existing Panel Members to join group)</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>A Strategy for UK Biotechnology and Biological Sciences</td>
<td>David McAllister</td>
<td>BSC01/17</td>
<td>16:00</td>
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<td><strong>End of Day 1</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Dinner</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Friday 19th May 2017</strong></td>
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<td>Standing Items</td>
<td>Chair</td>
<td>BSC02/17</td>
<td>09:00</td>
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<td></td>
<td>i. Minutes of Meeting on 16 December 2016</td>
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<td>ii. Chair’s update</td>
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<td>iii. Opportunities, suggestions and proposals</td>
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<td>iv. Training Partnership Forum Summary (to note)</td>
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<td><strong>Items for Discussion:</strong></td>
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<td>Student Surveys</td>
<td>Rob Hardwick</td>
<td>BSC04/17</td>
<td>09:30</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Post-doc Group Appointments Process</td>
<td>James Donald</td>
<td>BSC05/17</td>
<td>10:00</td>
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<td>Non-Faculty Researchers Workshop Outputs</td>
<td>Rob Hardwick</td>
<td>BSC06/17</td>
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<td><strong>Coffee</strong></td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Industrial Strategy – Capability and Talent</td>
<td>David McAllister</td>
<td>Oral</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Equality and Diversity Strategy</td>
<td>David McAllister</td>
<td>BSC07/17</td>
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<td><strong>Lunch</strong></td>
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