

**IN CONFIDENCE**

**TAC 14/2009**

**BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL**

**TRAINING AWARDS COMMITTEE (TAC)**

**MINUTES OF MEETING ON 31 MARCH 2009**

**Present**

*Committee Members*

Professor Ian Roberts (Chair)  
Professor John Birch  
Dr Helen Cassaday  
Professor Peter Doyle  
Professor Jonathan Elliott  
Dr Shirley Ellis  
Dr Colin Farquharson  
Dr Ian Furner  
Dr Simon Leather  
Professor Michael Stumpf  
Dr Will Watson  
Professor Tony Wilkinson  
Professor Sue Wonnacott

*BBSRC Office*

Dr Ian Lyne  
Mrs Avril Ferris  
Mr Darren Pirt  
Mrs Debbie Tyson

**Apologies**

Apologies for absence had been received from Professor Clive Edwards and Dr Sheila Francis.

**Conflicts of Interest**

The Chair reminded members at the outset of the meeting that normal conflicts of interest had been taken into account in the allocation of items for discussion in the agenda. Members were asked to declare any further conflicts as appropriate. The Chair reminded members that copies of the Conflicts of Interest Register that they had completed previously were available should they need to amend their declarations.

**MAIN BUSINESS**

**Standing Items**

**Item 1: (TAC 1/2009)  
Minutes of Meeting on 5 December 2008**

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on 5 December 2008 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

**Item 2: (TAC 2/2009)  
Matters Arising**

**Systems Biology Implementation Plan: A Roadmap for UK Systems Biology**

2. TAC noted that the Skills sub-group of the Integrative and Systems Biology Panel had met for the second time on 13 March 2009. TAC was represented on the sub-group by Professor Jonathan Elliot.

3. Professor Elliott updated TAC that the sub-group would be making recommendations on training initiatives to help establish systems biology skills. This would involve the call for proposals in systems biology to be considered on a competitive basis. Full details of these proposals would be circulated in due course.

4. TAC would be kept updated of further developments. **ACTION: Dr Lyne to update TAC as soon as further details were known.**

**Targeted Priority Studentships – DRINC**

5. TAC noted that Professor Helen Cassaday had agreed to represent the Committee at the DRINC Panel on 1 July 2009 when proposals submitted to the second call for studentships in this area would be considered. Ten studentships were available under this second call. It was noted that from the ninety four outline proposals submitted approximately 20 had been asked to submit full applications including whether they wished to apply for studentships as well. **ACTION: Dr Lyne to keep TAC updated of further developments.**

6. Dr Lyne also highlighted to TAC that funds from the TPS line would be used to fund a number of other skills and careers activities.

**BBSRC Studentships: Animal Costs on Studentships**

7. TAC noted that this issue had been discussed at the first meeting of the Bioscience Skills and Careers Panel on 26 January 2009. BSC had agreed that the issue of supplementation of studentships in this area should be explored further with the Medical Research Council. It was also noted therefore that any funding for this would then be taken from the Targeted Priority Studentship line. **ACTION: Dr Lyne to keep TAC updated of further developments.**

**BBSRC TAC Departmental Visits**

8. TAC noted that following on from the agreement that the Office would take forward the organisation of a number of departmental visits to be undertaken in 2009, members would be approached shortly with regard to their involvement in the visits. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to contact TAC members in due course.**

**Next Generation Conference 2009**

9. TAC noted that the Next Generation Conference 2009 would be held on 19/20 November with a venue, hopefully in the Cardiff area, to be confirmed in due course. TAC members had previously been provided with details of this date and event. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide TAC with further details once confirmed.**

## **EPSRC Systems Biology Doctoral Training Centres (DTCs) Panel**

10. Dr Lyne updated TAC. Members noted that following EPSRC's review of the Systems Biology DTCs as part of its broader programme of DTC investment, the centre at Oxford was being entirely funded by EPSRC, while BBSRC would be funding 5 studentships p.a. for three years (2009-11) at the DTCs in Warwick and Manchester.

11. It was also noted that the funding to Warwick and Manchester was being match-funded by the universities. TAC member, Dr Sheila Francis, had represented the Committee on the review panel for the Systems Biology DTCs.

## **Evaluation of BBSRC's Fellowship Programme**

12. TAC noted that following on from the agreement that an evaluation should be undertaken of BBSRC's Fellowships Programme, focusing in particular on its early-career scheme, the David Phillips Fellows, a questionnaire had been sent out to all BBSRC's current and former David Phillips Fellows. The aim of the questionnaire being to better understand the impact of the Fellowship and guide its future development.

13. Members also noted that the Office was in the process of finalising an evaluation panel to look at the information received, some members of the Committee may have been contacted with regard to this. **ACTION: Dr Lyne to keep TAC updated of developments.**

## **HEA Conference – the Changing UK Doctorate (24 November 2009)**

14. TAC noted that the report from the HEA conference was in the process of being finalised and would be published shortly.

## **David Phillips Fellows Mid-Term Reviews Update**

15. TAC noted that following the eight Mid-Term Reviews undertaken on 4 December 2008 the Office would provide the Fellows with written feedback. Two outstanding Mid-Term Reviews, not undertaken due to the non availability of the fellows involved in December, would take place prior to this meeting on 31 March 2009. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide written feedback to fellows.**

## **BBSRC Vacation Bursaries 2008: Report**

16. TAC noted that following on from the report of the Vacation Bursaries 2008 which members had noted at the last meeting, further information taken from these reports (ie highlights from the individual bursary holder's reports) would be made available to members by email in due course. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide the finalised information to TAC members.**

## **Item 3: (TAC 3/2009)**

### **Skills and Careers Unit Update**

17. This item brought to the attention of the Committee a number of topics of current interest related to the work of the BBSRC Skills and Careers Unit.

## **BBSRC Masters Studentships Roadshow – Monday 18 May 2009**

18. TAC noted that the Skills and Careers Unit would be organising a one day Roadshow, in central London, for prospective applicants to this year's call for Masters Training Grant Funding. Further details would be made available in due course. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide TAC with details of the Roadshow once finalised.**

## **BBSRC DTG Workshop – Friday 5 June 2009**

19. TAC also noted that the Skills and Careers Unit would be organising a one day Workshop, again in central London, to discuss training policy and good practice. This would be open to all existing BBSRC DTG holders. Again, further details would be made available in due course. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide TAC with details of the Workshop once finalised.**

**Fellowship Updates – see Restricted Annex 1 (not attached to this version of the minutes)**

## **Bioscience Skills and Careers (BSC) Panel**

20. TAC members noted that the next meeting of the BSC Panel would be held on 22 July 2009.

### **Item 4: (ORAL) Chair's Actions on Behalf of TAC**

21. The Chair highlighted to TAC that since the last meeting of the Committee on 5 December 2008, he had attended the first meeting of the BBSRC BSC Panel which had been held on 26 January 2009. The minutes and BSC Workplan from this meeting are covered later in the agenda for this meeting.

### **Items for Discussion**

#### **Item 5: (ORAL) 2008 David Phillips Fellows Mid-Term Reviews Update**

22. The Chair provided an oral update on the two Mid-Term Reviews which had been carried out prior to this meeting on 31 March 2009.

23. A sub-Group of TAC, Chaired by Professor Roberts, had reviewed the mid-term progress of the final two David Phillips Fellows whose fellowships were awarded in 2006. Neither of these fellows had been available to present their reviews in December 2008 with the rest of their cohort.

24. Both fellows were required to present their work and to respond to questions.

25. Oral feedback was given to both fellows immediately after the assessment which would be confirmed in writing to the fellow in due course. Reports of the mid-term reviews are recorded separately to these minutes in the fellows' individual files.

**ACTION: Mrs Ferris to provide the fellows' with written feedback.**

26. In general discussion, TAC noted that with regard to the issue of David Phillips Fellows gaining advice on securing permanent positions following their fellowships,

the planned David Phillips Workshops should prove helpful . **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the arrangement of the David Phillips Fellows' Workshops.**

**Item 6: (TAC 4/2009)  
BBSRC Masters Competition 2009**

27. Dr Lyne introduced this paper. It invited the Committee to note the priority areas that had been agreed by BSC for the 2009 BBSRC Masters competition. In addition, TAC considered the assessment criteria and the relative weightings that should be used as part of the call including the use of RAE quality profiles.

28. TAC agreed that there should be no pre-agreed RAE quality threshold when considering proposals. Nevertheless, applicants should be asked to provide details of the RAE quality profiles and numbers of FTE category A staff for all institutions and units of assessment that were directly relevant to the masters proposals. This information would be taken into account as part of the general assessment of the proposal. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the incorporation of these agreed measures.**

29. The Committee suggested a number of alterations to the weightings as outlined. These would be taken forward by the Office. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to incorporate the agreed amendments to the finalised weightings.**

30. Lastly, with regard to the J-eS proposal form itself, TAC was asked to note that under cross-Council agreed format it was difficult for BBSRC to alter the form but the Office would endeavour to make the guidance notes as clear as possible. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward.**

**Item 7: (TAC 5/2009)  
BBSRC Industrial Impact Fellowships Competition 2009: Method of Working**

31. TAC considered the eight proposals submitted to the 2009 BBSRC Industrial Impact Fellowships competition.

32. Following discussion of all the proposals the Committee agreed and confirmed those candidates which should be called for interview. Details are recorded separately to these minutes.

33. The interview dates and composition of the relevant sub Committee to undertake the interviews would be confirmed in due course. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the arrangement of the interviews.**

**Item 8: (TAC 6/2009)  
BBSRC Fellowships 2008/09: Proposal Sift**

34. The number of proposals received for the five schemes was 90 for David Phillips fellowships, 15 for Research Development fellowships, 8 for Professorial fellowships (one of which was a proposal for a Diamond Professorial Fellowship), 4 for Institute Career Path fellowships and 1 for an Institute Development fellowship.

35. TAC had carried out a preliminary sift on 4 December 2008 to sift out ineligible proposals and proposals that were non-competitive against their respective scheme criteria. From the total of 119 proposals, 51 were sifted out from further consideration.

36. Of the remaining 68 proposals the Committee was invited to identify a shortlist of applicants who were of the appropriate quality to be called for interview against the criteria for each scheme.

37. The Committee shortlisted 20 David Phillips applicants, 10 Research Development applicants, 3 Professorial applicants (including the Diamond Professorial Fellowship Applicant), 1 Institute Career Path applicant and 1 Institute Development applicant for interview against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda. Details of which are recorded separately to these minutes.

38. Interviews for shortlisted applicants were to be held as follows:

David Phillips and Institute Career Path – Thursday 30 April 2009 and Friday 1 May 2009

Research Development, Institute Development and Professorial – Thursday 14 May and Friday 15 May 2009

39. All interviews would take place at the Holiday Inn, Bloomsbury, Coram Street, London. Panel Memberships had already been finalised as follows:

David Phillips and Institute Career Path

Professor Roberts (Chair)  
Professor Birch  
Dr Cassaday  
Professor Doyle  
Professor Edwards  
Dr Ellis  
Dr Francis

(It was noted that for the Institute Career Path interviews a Rothamsted representative would also be present)

Research Development, Institute Development, Professorial (including the Diamond Professorial)

Professor Roberts (Chair)  
Professor Elliott  
Dr Furner  
Dr Leather  
Professor Stumpf  
Dr Watson  
Professor Wonnacott

(It was noted that for the Diamond Professorial interview a Diamond representative would also be present)

**ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the organisation of the interview sub Committees.**

40. Following the discussion of the proposals the Committee had a general discussion over the proposal processes and how well the round had gone with the aim of suggesting any improvements which could be considered in future rounds.

41. With regard to refereeing the proposals it was agreed the design of the assessment form and the scoring system should be reviewed to make it more helpful to the Committee. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward a review of the referee's assessment form.**

42. The Committee also confirmed that it was still not convinced of the value of the Professorial Fellowship scheme in its current format. TAC agreed that it would be supportive of either changes to the Professorial scheme or the transfer of funds from this fellowship type to other schemes such as the David Phillips. **ACTION: Dr Lyne to raise this issue again with the BSC Panel in due course.**

43. Finally, TAC agreed it would prefer to see the Institute Career Path Fellowship Scheme opened up to proposals from all BBSRC's sponsored Institutes in each round as opposed to limited to certain Institutes in each call as had been the case in the rounds so far undertaken.

**Item 9: (TAC 7/2009)  
BBSRC Fellowships: Final Reports**

44. The Committee considered four final reports from BBSRC David Phillips Fellows against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda.

45. The Chair outlined the procedures and asked for any conflicts of interest to be declared.

46. Discussions relating to the progress of the Fellows and the Committee's comments are recorded separately to these minutes on the fellows' individual files. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the provision of written feedback to the fellows concerned.**

**Item 10: (TAC 8/2009)  
BBSRC Fellowships: New / Re-assigned Mentors**

47. TAC agreed the new procedures and to the re-assignment of a number of fellows to new mentors. Additionally the Committee noted that, for those mentor visits that were overdue, the Office would be taking forward arrangements with mentors and mentees as soon as possible. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward the re-assignment of fellows and the ongoing organisation of the mentor visits.**

**Items to Note**

**Item 11: (TAC 9/2009)  
Draft Minutes of BBSRC's Bioscience Skills and Careers (BSC) Panel Meeting on 26 January 2009**

48. TAC noted the draft minutes of the first BSC meeting which the Chair, Professor Roberts, had attended on 26 January 2009.

49. Professor Roberts updated the Committee on the main issues which had come out of the meeting and highlighted how these had formed the BSC Workplan which was the next item on the agenda (TAC 10/2009).

**Item 12: (TAC 10/2009)  
BBSRC Bioscience Skills and Careers (BSC) Panel Workplan: Summary of Meeting on 26 January 2009**

50. TAC noted the summary document which was a public domain review of the first BSC meeting on 26 January. Dr Lyne summarised the document and updated members further on the relevant ongoing issues surrounding the Workplan and how this may effect the work of TAC. **ACTION: Dr Lyne/ Professor Roberts to keep TAC updated of all ongoing BSC activities as appropriate.**

**Item 13: (TAC 11/2009)**

**BBSRC Industrial CASE Competition 2008: Outcomes of Proposals**

51. TAC noted details of the 70 awards that had been offered following the round of Industrial CASE proposals assessed at the last meeting. This was the final figure following on from the Office completing full eligibility checks on all the proposals recommended for award.

**Item 14: (TAC 12/2009)**

**Modular Training for Industry and Industry Interchange Programme**

52. TAC noted this paper which provided information on the Modular Training for Industry and Industry Interchange Programme Panel Meeting held on 21 November 2008.

**Item 15: (TAC 13/2009)**

**BBSRC Current Activities and Plans: Report to Winter 2008 Committees**

53. TAC noted this paper which covered the current and planned activities, mainly within BBSRC's Research Group.

**Any Other Business**

54. The Chair asked that the Office endeavour to take forward the arrangement of the next round of TAC Departmental Visits as this was an important function in the activities of the Committee. **ACTION: Mrs Ferris to take forward.**

**Next Meeting**

55. The next meeting was scheduled to take place across 15/16 October 2009. Venue and timings to be confirmed.

Darren Pirt  
Innovation and Skills Group