

IN CONFIDENCE

TAC 13/2010

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

TRAINING AWARDS COMMITTEE (TAC)

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 25 MARCH 2010

Present

Committee Members

Professor Ian Roberts (Chair)
Dr Helen Cassaday
Professor Peter Doyle
Professor Clive Edwards
Professor Jonathan Elliott
Professor Shirley Ellis
Dr Sheila Francis
Dr Ian Furner
Dr Simon Leather
Dr Jane Lewis
Dr Candy Rowe
Dr Will Watson

BBSRC Office

Dr Anuj Bhatt
Dr Adam Bowen
Dr Simon Cutler
Mrs Avril Ferris
Mr Darren Pirt
Mr Sam Potts
Mrs Debbie Tyson
Mr James Watson

Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Professor John Birch and Professor Michael Stumpf. Dr Lyne was also unable to attend on this occasion due to other BBSRC commitments.

Welcome

The Chair welcomed and introduced two new members to their first meeting since joining TAC with effect from 1 January 2010. Dr Jane Lewis from GlaxoSmithKline and Dr Candy Rowe from Newcastle University (Dr Rowe had attended the December 2009 meeting but as an observer, so this was her first official meeting since joining the Committee).

The Chair also introduced Dr Anuj Bhatt and Dr Adam Bowen from BBSRC's Skills and Careers Unit, both of whom were attending to observe a TAC meeting but also to cover the various papers on IIP and MTI, respectively, in the agenda. Finally the Chair introduced Mr Sam Potts, who was on a short term contract working in the

BBSRC RISD Delivery Group and had been involved in the preparatory work for the TAC meeting.

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 1/2010)

Minutes of Meeting on 3/4 December 2009

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on 3/4 December 2009 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

Item 2: (TAC 2/2010)

Matters Arising

Strategic Skills Awards: Animal Costs on Studentships

2. TAC noted that the call for proposals for additional funds for studentships in the *in vivo* area had gone live in January 2010 via the *Strategic Skills Awards* scheme, being run by BBSRC and MRC in collaboration with the British Pharmacological Society (BPS). The Committee noted that following the 1 March 2010 closing date, 26 proposals had been received by MRC with 20 received by BBSRC.
3. These proposals were currently being checked for eligibility and remit by the relevant Councils before being considered by an independent panel (including representation from the NC3Rs) organised by the BPS. The Panel was due to meet on 12 April 2010.
4. Awards would provide additional funding towards the high costs of *in vivo* training and not replace normal studentship funding drawn from MRC or BBSRC DTGs or DTAs. Funding would be provided by both MRC and BBSRC to support the successful proposals. This pilot was likely to run for three years.

BBSRC TAC Departmental Visits

5. TAC noted that the organisation of departmental visits for 2010 was currently being taken forward within the BBSRC Office. Due to ongoing resource issues in the office, it was currently envisaged that two visits would be undertaken in 2010 and these would provide the first in a series of rolling visits over the coming years.

Next Generation Conference

6. TAC noted that following on from the successful sixth Next Generation Conference held at the end of 2009 in Newport, Gwent, the dates of Thursday and Friday 18/19 November had now been set for the 2010 conference. It was also noted that a venue had yet to be confirmed but it was anticipated that the event would be held in North West England. Members at this point were requested to note the date in their diaries.

BBSRC Vacation Bursaries (now Research Experience Placements)

7. TAC had previously noted that these awards, now renamed as BBSRC Research Experience Placements, had now been announced for 2010. The number of awards made available this year had been increased from 100 to 200 and these had been allocated to a number of departments/institutes selected and approved by BBSRC and the Bioscience Skills and Careers Strategy Panel. Members noted that further full details could be found on the BBSRC website.

David Phillips / Institute Career Path Fellows' Workshop

8. TAC noted that the Office was taking forward the organisation of a Workshop for all of the junior BBSRC fellowship holders. Further details would be made available in due course, but at this point it was looking like this would be held in March 2011.

BBSRC Fellows' Conference / Fellows *Huddle* Site

9. Members had previously noted details of the BBSRC Fellows' Conference held in September 2009 and the setting up of a fellow's *Huddle* networking site. TAC now noted that the date had been set for the next BBSRC Fellows' Conference and this would be across Wednesday and Thursday 7 / 8 September 2011. Members at this point were requested to note this date in their diaries. It was also noted that the *Huddle* site had not really taken off yet, but as many people had signed up it was hoped this would still become a useful tool in the future.

Royal Society / BBSRC Innovation and Business of Science Course

10. TAC noted that the third and final module of the Royal Society / BBSRC Innovation and Business of Science Course, 'Scientific Entrepreneurship', had taken place on the 27-29 January 2010.
11. Just one BBSRC David Phillips Fellow, Dr Robert Knight, had attended this module. The course would be repeated later in 2010 with the first module taking place in July.

Agri-food / Food Security Skills – ATP Initiative

12. TAC noted that a new training initiative to fund 'Advanced Training Partnerships' (ATPs) in the agriculture and food sciences sectors had been launched on 10 February 2010, alongside the launch, at the NFU offices, of a sector-led 'Agri-Skills Strategy'. It was also noted that further details of the ATP call were available on the BBSRC website.

13. Members noted the objectives of the BBSRC Advanced Training Partnerships scheme were to:
- Support the development of collaborative training programmes providing **specialist scientific skills** for the agri-food sector in the UK.
 - Support collaboration between public and private partners in the agri-food sector, on a national or regional basis, to achieve the **delivery and uptake** of flexible postgraduate training provision and related activities, and to support the **movement of expertise and skills** between the research base and commercial sectors.
 - Promote the **creation of sustainable partnerships** between public and private sector organisations to establish long-term training mechanisms to meet the emerging skills needs of the agri-food sectors.
14. A briefing meeting had been held on Friday 19 March 2010 at Warwick Conference Park, on the University of Warwick campus. Dr Adam Bowen highlighted that a lot of interest had been shown prior to the outline proposal stage.
15. TAC noted that the deadline for outline proposals was 11 May 2010. These would be assessed by the panel at the end of June (date to be confirmed after appointments to the panel were approved by BBSRC Appointments Board). Those applicants who were invited to submit full proposals would be informed shortly afterwards, with any appropriate feedback.
16. Finally it was noted that the deadline for full proposals would be confirmed after the initial panel meeting, but this was likely to be in November 2010. Full proposals would be assessed by full peer review and the panel meeting for full proposals would be in spring 2011.

Innovator of the Year (IoY)

17. TAC noted that following the closing date for proposals for Innovator of the Year 2010 (which was 16 December 2009, later extended to 15 January 2010), 36 applications had been received.
18. It was noted that a number of TAC members were involved in the short listing of the proposals, where 7 finalists were identified to go forward to the Final and awards ceremony held on 18 March 2010 in Canary Wharf, London. There were three categories of award; Economic Innovator, Social Innovator and Most Promising Innovator, with one of the category winners being named the overall Innovator of the Year. Dr Anuj Bhatt thanked the TAC members who had been involved in the short listing process.
19. TAC members were provided with copies of the Innovator of the Year 2010 Finalists booklet, and Dr Bhatt updated the Committee that the awards ceremony had been very successful.
20. Finally it was noted that as this competition was now continuing; and as there was still not enough interest shown in the competition by female applicants; that members should highlight IoY in their own institutions wherever possible and encourage suitable females to consider applying.

The Biotechnology Young Entrepreneurs Scheme (YES)

21. Dr Cutler highlighted to the Committee that this year marked the 15th anniversary of the Biotechnology YES competition, which attracted around 500 postgraduates and postdoctoral researchers annually to benefit from experiential enterprise training. As nearly 3000 researchers had now benefitted from participation over the years, DTZ had been appointed to review the programme, which would involve the following:
- an assessment of the wider benefits and impact achieved by BBSRC including detailed analysis of the qualitative benefits, including skills development and behavioural changes;
 - the value for money of the scheme and the return on investment realised by BBSRC (taking into account quantitative and qualitative benefits and impacts);
 - recommendations for the future delivery and direction of the scheme; and
 - a critical assessment of whether the scheme remains fit for purpose.
22. Dr Cutler indicated that the final report of the review was expected towards the end of April 2010, and that feedback so far from DTZ was 'very positive'.

The Research Councils Business Plan Competition (BPC)

23. TAC noted that the first stage of the RCUK BPC was now complete with 84 team entries, including many with a bioscience focus, receiving business training through residential workshops at the beginning of the year. Teams were now working on 5 page business plans to be assessed for entry to stage 2 (coaching and mentoring) of the BPC. The closing date for this being at the end of March.
24. Approximately 40 teams would be selected to progress to stage 2 leading to preparation of a full business plan, further assessment and a national final in November 2010. SQW were also in the process of evaluating the first three joint RCUK BPCs and would report late in the spring on the impact the competition has had to date.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)

25. TAC noted that the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships scheme was currently under review by the Technology Strategy Board in order to inform its future development. BBSRC was represented on the KTP Management Board and had been playing an active role in discussing the findings of the review, which had been undertaken by independent consultants.
26. The review had shown KTPs to be working well in relation to both knowledge transfer between a university and a partner organisation, and the training and development of the KTP associate who was typically involved in implementing a change to an organisation's business processes, drawing on research findings and input from the academic partner. The review together with TSB's response to its recommendations would be available shortly.

Assessment of BBSRC Fellowship Reports (Annual)

27. TAC noted that following on from the assessment of the BBSRC Fellows' Annual Reports in October 2009, the Office had now provided written feedback to all the fellows as appropriate.
28. Members also noted that the first cohort of David Phillips fellows' to be considered for renewal was under consideration at this meeting, with three fellows having submitted a proposal for a further period of support.

Food Research Partnership Skills Subgroup

29. As had previously been noted by the Committee, BBSRC was active in 2009 in supporting a sub-group looking at high-level skills in the agri-food sectors which had been established under Professor John Beddington's Food Research Partnership (FRP).
30. The Skills Subgroup had been chaired by Dr Celia Caulcott (Director of Innovation and Skills). A final version of the Subgroup's findings had been presented to the FRP on 3 December 2009, and helped inform aspects of the Government's Food Strategy published in January 2010. It was noted that a final version of the full report would be made available soon.

Government Postgraduate Review

31. The Committee had previously noted that the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) had launched a review of UK Postgraduate study in October 2009. The review was being led by Professor Adrian Smith (Director General, Science and Research, BIS).
32. The report was due at the end of March 2010, and was expected to be wide ranging, considering a number of fundamental issues about postgraduate training in the UK. Members noted the following six main themes which the review group had identified for particular investigation:

Theme 1: International

The UK needs to remain internationally competitive in both attracting overseas students and in the prospects of UK postgraduates in the global employment market. International students provide a crucial fee income for many institutions, as well as enriching the UK's international networks.

- How can the UK remain an attractive place for postgraduate study?
- How can those who have studied in the UK continue to be competitive in the international marketplace for talent?
- Does the proportion of UK domiciled students in the UK PG population matter?

Theme 2: Value of PG

The highly skilled postgraduates that the UK produces power our research base and drive our innovative businesses. Undertaking postgraduate education provides individuals with pathways into a wide range of careers.

- What are the benefits of postgraduate education, to the individual, to HEIs, to businesses and to the wider economy and society?
- Is there an optimal number of taught / research postgraduates studying in the UK?

Theme 3: Business, Employment and Skills

Postgraduates have the higher-level skills required in key sectors of the economy, in particular in the growth industries identified by the Government in *New Industry, New Jobs*. Many employers and professions require postgraduate qualifications for entry or offer postgraduate-level continued professional development.

- Are postgraduates equipped with the right skills, experience and knowledge to progress in employment or further study and get significant value from the investment in their education?
- Do businesses in the UK make good use of the experience and skills that postgraduates can offer?
- How can postgraduate provision in the UK better respond to the needs of business, especially new and emerging industries?

Theme 4: Participation

The recent report *Higher Ambitions* states the Government's continuing commitment to widening participation in Higher Education. Although much is known about the make-up of the undergraduate population, more information is required about those undertaking postgraduate study.

- What factors affect decisions of individuals as to whether or not to undertake postgraduate study?
- How important are alternative models of postgraduate provision (e.g. part-time, distance learning) in supporting expanding and widening participation?

Theme 5: Fees and Funding

The review will consider the affordability of the current system and the link between financial support and the goal of widening participation.

- Is the current model of funding postgraduate provision sustainable, and does it offer the best possible value for money?
- Are there models of providing postgraduate financial support that would be more efficient and productive?
- Are the current sources of financial support for postgraduate students widely understood by potential and existing students?

Theme 6: The Student Experience

The student experience is vitally important, and cuts across each of the other themes:

- What are the key elements of a high quality PG student experience?
- Are there innovative delivery models or mechanisms that benefit the student experience, which could be applied more widely?

Office of Life Sciences

33. TAC noted that BBSRC was represented on the OLS Industry and Higher Education Forum – both its Advisory Group (Dr Ian Lyne) and its Executive Board (Dr Celia Caulcott). Dr Lyne had also been a member of a 'Task and Finish Group' established to explore issues around *in vivo* skills.
34. The Task and Finish Group had met on 13 January 2010 and finalised its recommendations to the Industry and Higher Education Forum Advisory Group. A key recommendation related to the establishment of four-year integrated undergraduate Masters degrees, which would enable students to progress into a fourth year of specialised *in vivo* training. At PhD level, the Task and Finish Group had welcomed the move by BBSRC and MRC to provide 'Strategic Skills Awards' to meet more of the full costs of *in vivo* research training.

35. The Advisory Group had met on 15 February 2010, and endorsed many of the Task Group's findings; however, issues had remained in particular in relation to the position of the Funding Councils in recognising the high-cost of undergraduate provision in this area; and also uncertainty about the support training and careers for veterinary pathologists. These issues would be taken up to the Board for further discussion. The Executive Board was due to meet on 29 March 2010 for the first time, and its decisions would be taken forward by Advisory Group members (the Advisory Group was next due to meet on 15 April 2010).
36. A report on the work of the OLS over the past year, Life Sciences 2010: Delivering the Blueprint, had been published in January 2010, and was available from BIS.

BBSRC Masters Level Studentships: Assessment of 2009/2010 Proposals

37. TAC noted that following consideration of the proposals for BBSRC Masters Level Studentships at the last TAC meeting in December, the Committee's recommendations had subsequently been ratified within BBSRC and all applicants had been informed of the outcome of their proposals in January 2010. These awards were for MTGs for take up in the years 2010, 2011 and 2012.
38. The Office was currently responding to a number of feedback requests submitted from unsuccessful applicants.

BBSRC Industrial CASE Studentships Competition

39. TAC noted that following consideration of the proposals for BBSRC Industrial CASE Studentships at the last TAC meeting in December, the Committee's recommendations had been ratified within BBSRC and all applicants had been informed of the outcome of their proposals in January 2010. The full eligibility, financial viability and project remit checks had all been completed on these proposals in the Office with the outcome that all 67 recommended awards had been offered.

2009 BBSRC Systems Approach to Biological Research Studentships Competition: Assessment of 2009/10 Proposals

40. TAC noted that following consideration of the proposals for BBSRC Systems Approach to Biological Research Studentships at the last meeting, the Committee's recommendations had been ratified within BBSRC and all applicants had been informed of the outcome of their proposals in January 2010.

BBSRC Fellowships: Mentor Update

41. TAC noted that the Office was in the process of confirming in writing the agreed reallocations of mentors from the last meeting. The Office was also taking forward the organisation of all the mentor visits now due with TAC members being contacted as and when appropriate.

Item 3: (TAC 3/2010)
Skills and Careers Unit Update

42. 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.

Future of Roberts Ring-Fenced Funding

43. TAC noted that the options around the future of “Roberts Funding” had been discussed at a Vitae Policy Forum on 7 January 2010. Dr Ian Lyne had represented the Research Councils on a panel discussion to explore the issues.
44. Currently the Research Councils provide a separate funding stream to universities and research institutes on the basis of the number of Research Council funded PhD students and postdoctoral researchers at the institution. The ring-fence on this funding has been agreed for the current CSR period (up to April 2012).
45. Members noted that a report from the Policy Forum would be available on the website shortly, and the discussions at the event were being used to inform internal RCUK discussions of the next steps.

Bioscience Skills and Careers Panel

46. TAC noted that the Bioscience Skills and Careers Panel (BSC), chaired by Professor Ottoline Leyser FRS, had met on 14 January 2010. The key items for discussion had been the review of progress against the 2009 Workplan, and agreement of the office’s priorities for 2010. A summary of the BSC meeting was also available under the items to note in the agenda for this TAC meeting.
47. Professor Clive Edwards had attended BSC to act as a deputy to Professor Roberts who had been unable to attend the January meeting.
48. Professor Edwards highlighted that BSC had discussed the Advanced Training Partnerships (ATPs), already mentioned in these minutes. Dr Bowen added that ATPs would be allowed great flexibility over how they could use their funds. He also highlighted that TAC members had already been invited to take part in the assessment of the ATP proposals.
49. Professor Edwards also highlighted the broader Skills and Careers issues that BSC had considered, including Professional Placements. It was confirmed by the Office that Professional Placements would be piloted by BBSRC in 2010. Dr Clare Nixon of the Skills and Careers Unit would be involved in this pilot.

Fellowship Updates – see Restricted Annex 1

Item 4: (ORAL)
Chair’s Actions on Behalf of TAC

50. As mentioned elsewhere in these minutes, Professor Edwards had attended the January 2010 BSC meeting as the Chair had been unable to make that date. The Chair had not attended any other events, representing TAC, in the period under review.

Items for Discussion

Item 5: (ORAL)

2009 David Phillips Fellows Mid-Term Reviews Update

51. The Chair provided an oral update on the two Mid-Term Reviews which had been carried out prior to this meeting on 25 March 2010.
52. 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 2007. Neither of these fellows had been available to present their reviews in December 2009 with the rest of their cohort.
53. Both fellows were required to present their work and to respond to questions.
54. 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.

Item 6: (TAC 4/2010)

BBSRC Fellowships 2009/10: Proposal Sift

55. The number of proposals received for the five schemes was 85 for David Phillips, 13 for Research Development, 1 for a Diamond Professorial, 2 Institute Career Path but no proposals had been received for the Institute Development scheme.
56. TAC had carried out a preliminary sift on 3 December 2009 to sift out ineligible proposals that were non-competitive against their respective scheme criteria. From the total of 101 proposals, there were 59 proposals left under consideration against four schemes plus an additional three David Phillips Renewal proposals (which had not been considered at the December sift meeting).
57. Of the remaining 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.
58. The Committee shortlisted 21 David Phillips applicants, 8 Research Development applicants, the 1 Diamond Professorial applicant and 1 Institute Career Path applicants for interview against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda. Details of which are recorded separately to these minutes. TAC did not shortlist any David Phillips Renewals candidates for interview.
59. Interviews for shortlisted applicants were to be held as follows:

David Phillips and Institute Career Path – Thursday 15 and Friday 16 April 2010.

Research Development and Diamond Professorial – Thursday 22 and Friday 23 April 2010.
60. All interviews would take place at the Holiday Inn London Bloomsbury, Coram Street, London. Panel Memberships had already been finalised as follows:

David Phillips and Institute Career Path

Professor Roberts (Chair)
Professor Edwards (Deputy Chair)
Professor Ellis
Dr Francis
Dr Furner
Dr Leather
Professor Stumpf

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

Research Development and Diamond Professorial

Professor Roberts (Chair)
Professor Edwards (Deputy Chair)
Professor Birch
Dr Cassaday
Professor Doyle
Professor Elliott
Dr Watson

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

61. Following the discussion of the proposals the Committee had a general discussion over the proposal processes with the aim of suggesting any improvements.
62. In general debate it was agreed that it may be worth considering the importance of strategic areas that were maybe not often covered, for example where an applicant has submitted a proposal where the science is in a strategic area but the candidate themselves may not perhaps be highly ranked.
63. With regard to the David Phillips' Renewals (three of which had been considered in this round). TAC agreed that it was worthwhile to keep the scheme in place as it would then remain an option for occasions when an 'exceptional' fellow came along. But it remained important that the Office managed expectations of Fellows applying or considering applying for a Renewal award, as these really were only to be awarded in exceptional circumstances.
64. Finally, the issue of whether David Phillips Fellows along with Research Assistants, Postdoctoral Researchers etc were eligible to be considered as 'New Investigators' when applying for research grants was discussed. It was agreed this was an area which caused confusion. The Office agreed to check the rules and regulations and clarify to the Committee by correspondence.

Item 7: (TAC 5/2010)

BBSRC Industrial Impact Fellowships Competition 2010: Method of Working

65. The Committee considered the five proposals submitted to the 2009/10 BBSRC Industrial Impact Fellowships competition.

66. Following discussion of all the proposals the Committee agreed and confirmed that three candidates which should be called for interview. Details are recorded separately to these minutes.
67. The interviews would take place on Friday 23 April 2010, at the Holiday Inn London Bloomsbury, undertaken by the same interview panel as that undertaking the Research Development and Diamond Professorial interviews (as outlined earlier in these minutes – see Item 6 (TAC 4/2010)).
68. Following the consideration, the Committee had a general discussion over the scheme. From these discussions the Chair flagged that, if possible, he would still like to encourage the inclusion of ‘matching’ funds from academia as this would open up the fellowships to the potential of being four year duration and not just two year. TAC endorsed this view.

Item 8: (TAC 6/2010)

BBSRC Modular Training for Industry: Assessment of Proposals

69. TAC considered four proposals submitted to the most recent round of Modular Training for Industry awards. The proposals were reviewed in line with the Method of Working paper included in the agenda. TAC members left the room when proposals from their own institution were discussed.
70. The Committee’s recommendations are recorded separately to these minutes.

Item 9: (TAC 7/2010)

BBSRC Industry Interchange Programme: Assessment of Proposals

71. TAC considered ten proposals submitted to the most recent round of Industry Interchange Programme awards. The proposals were reviewed in line with the Method of Working paper included in the agenda. TAC members left the room when proposals from their own institution were discussed.
72. Dr Bhatt highlighted that two of the proposals under consideration were borderline on remit for BBSRC but would be acceptable for support.
73. The Committee’s recommendations are recorded separately to these minutes.

Item 10: (TAC 8/2010)

BBSRC Industry Interchange Programme: Final Report

74. TAC considered one 1-year final report for a BBSRC Industry Interchange Programme award. It was also asked to confirm whether the outstanding 10 percent financial contribution from BBSRC could be made on this award.
75. The Committee’s recommendations are recorded separately to these minutes.

Item 11: (TAC 9/2010)

BBSRC Fellowships: Final Reports

76. The Committee considered five final reports, three from BBSRC David Phillips Fellows and two from BBSRC Research Development Fellows against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda.
77. The Chair outlined the procedures and asked for any conflicts of interest to be declared.

78. Discussions relating to the progress of the Fellows and the Committee's comments are recorded separately to these minutes on the fellows' individual files. The Office would provide written feedback to the fellows concerned.

Item 12: (TAC 10/2010)

BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships: Gender Analysis

79. The Committee noted that this paper had been withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting. It noted that when the statistical data forming the basis of the paper had been finalised and robustly checked it would be circulated to the Committee electronically for comment outside of the meeting.
80. TAC noted that the paper would highlight gender statistics relating to proposals submitted for BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships across the last five proposal rounds.

Items to Note

Item 13: (TAC 11/2010)

Summary of the BBSRC Bioscience Skills and Careers (BSC) Panel Meeting on 14 January 2010

81. The Committee noted the summary which was a public domain review of the most recent BSC meeting on 14 January. Professor Edwards had already provided an oral update, recorded earlier in these minutes, on the meeting which he had attended representing TAC.

Item 14: (TAC 12/2010)

BBSRC Current Activities and Plans: Report to Winter 2009 Committees

82. The Committee noted this paper which provided details of the current and planned activities, mainly within BBSRC's Research Group, covering the winter 2009 period.

Any Other Business

BBSRC (IIP and MTI) support for SULSA BioSKAPE PROGRAMME

83. Dr Cutler highlighted to the Committee that BBSRC had agreed to commit matched-funding to the Scottish Funding Council's SPIRIT (Strategic Priority Investments in Research and Innovation Translation) proposal BioSKAPE (Bioindustry Skills, Knowledge and People Exchange), led by the University of Aberdeen on behalf of the Scottish Universities Life Sciences Alliance (SULSA).
84. The BioSKAPE proposal had been developed in consultation with Scottish-based biotech and pharmaceutical companies and was supported by BIA-Scotland and the Life Sciences Advisory Board People Workstream. It included:
- (1) An industry-partnered PhD programme that would address skills needs and promote industry-academia collaboration (20 studentships phased over 2 years)
 - (2) A 12-month industry placement scheme for undergraduate and Masters students (submitted as a complementary strategic skills proposal)

- (3) A pilot academia-industry interchange programme
- (4) A new series of industry-academia masterclasses

85. Over the 2 year lifespan of the project, BBSRC would fund the industry-interchange (up to 10 exchanges) and industry-academia masterclass (up to 4 industry-supported modules) elements of the proposal. All supported projects would need to demonstrate connectivity to current or prior BBSRC-funded research. The BioSKAPE assessment panel would be supplemented by a TAC member and require ultimate approval by TAC before funds were released. Professor Birch was due to be invited to be the TAC representative on the panel.

Changes to Payment of BBSRC Committee Member Attendance Fees

86. As known by TAC, at present attendance fees were currently paid on a meeting by meeting basis following each individual member's attendance. Members now noted that the Office was to be moving towards a system whereby these fees would be paid via a twice yearly pay-run. These were likely to be in March and October. At each pay-run fees would be paid to members based on each meeting / function they had attended in the period since the last payment.

Cut Over Planning: Transition to the Shared Service Centre (SSC)

- 87. The Committee noted that due to the transition of a number of functions from the retained BBSRC to the SSC, a number of changes to the coming year's competition timescales would result. The period most affected was likely to be around November 2010 until January 2011.
- 88. As a result, at this point the major proposed changes were that the 2010 Industrial CASE studentship call and 2010 Fellowship schemes call would both be opened earlier than usual with earlier closing dates; and the Quota DTG studentship call would now be postponed until after the transition period and so would be in 2011 as a result.
- 89. Members noted these proposed changes and that this would lead to changes to the meeting timetables in the next year.

David Phillips Fellowships Outline Proposal Stage

- 90. The Chair asked for the Committee's agreed view on the introduction of an outline proposal stage for the David Phillips Fellowship scheme.
- 91. TAC agreed this was a very sensible idea but also agreed that the outline proposal must include the following: a letter of support from the host institution, a CV and a one page synopsis of the proposal. This would then lead to the initial sift being replaced as all applicants invited to submit a full proposal would have this sent out to external assessors automatically.
- 92. It was noted that with the call for proposals due to be earlier in 2010 due to the transition to the Shared Service Centre (as outlined previously in these minutes) this would not be introduced until the 2011 competition.

Committee View of 'Electronic' Meeting

- 93. This was the first 'electronic' Training Awards Committee meeting and therefore the Committee was asked for comments on how this had worked. This had included not only the use of eVolumes for the fellowship proposals

but also the use of a PDF agendas and laptops as opposed to paper copies of agenda papers.

94. Generally the Committee agreed it had been a success and that the meeting had run smoothly using these new procedures. It was also agreed that the Office should produce some additional information at future meetings to assist members using the electronic papers. This should include each member receiving a breakdown of their own responsibilities and where to find the relevant papers in the agenda. In addition TAC agreed it would be useful if the Office produced a set of general instructions on using a pdf agenda and the associated 'bookmarking' as relevant.

Next Meeting

95. The next meeting was scheduled for Thursday 14 October 2010, venue yet to be confirmed.

Darren Pirt
Research, Innovation and Skills Directorate
May 2010