

## **SUMMARY OF THE BBSRC BIOSCIENCE SKILLS AND CAREERS PANEL (BSC) MEETING ON 13 JULY 2010**

### **REVIEWING BBSRC'S TRAINING STRATEGY**

As a major item the Panel was invited to discuss in confidence fundamental questions about how BBSRC's approach to training and research career development can best support its new Strategic Plan.

The publication of BBSRC's new Strategic Plan presented an important opportunity for BSC to think broadly about what forms of support can best achieve the supply of highly-skilled and creative researchers needed to realise the Strategic Plan, as well as the effectiveness of current schemes.

The review of BBSRC's training strategy was timely in that it is clear that the Spending Review 2010 will be extremely tight for many areas of public expenditure. It is likely, therefore, that BBSRC will need to make difficult choices regarding the balance of funding in different parts of its portfolio. BBSRC's support for training and career development will need careful targeting to ensure it can have maximum impact. This targeting may relate to, for example, specific stages of research career pathways, particular areas of science, or types of collaboration or partnership.

The two major issues that were discussed by BSC were:

- What forms of support for training and career development can help BBSRC best achieve its strategic aims, and whether the current mechanisms are still appropriate.
- Whether the balance between different career stages within the overall training budget is still appropriate, recognising that there will be significant pressure on the overall size of the budget in future.

A further seven areas were identified in which strategic decisions are needed:

- Should BBSRC increasingly target its support for training and career development to specific priority areas?
- The costs of high quality PhD training – is the UK PhD effectively funded and supported for maximum impact?
- Should BBSRC seek to concentrate its PhD funding to a greater extent?
- Should BBSRC make use of new flexibility to fund international PhD students?
- Training Partnerships – should BBSRC do more to help research organisations cooperate in the provision of high-level training?
- Should BBSRC invest in additional forms of support and development opportunities for the postdoctoral researchers funded on grants?
- Why does BBSRC fund fellowships and is its portfolio of schemes still appropriate?

The Panel made several recommendations covering the above issues that are under current consideration by BBSRC. Further details will be available in due course.

### **RECENT EVALUATIONS OF BBSRC SCHEMES AND GRANT PORTFOLIOS**

The Panel looked at a number of recent evaluations of BBSRC schemes:

- Skills and careers issues in BBSRC grant portfolio evaluations
- Evaluation of the Young Entrepreneurs Scheme

- Evaluation of the BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships Scheme
- Evaluation of BBSRC 'Genomics' Research

## **CONSIDERATION OF RECENT FORWARD-LOOKING STRATEGIC REVIEWS**

It also considered the skills issues identified in a number of recent reviews:

- Industrial Biotechnology
- Next Generation Sequencing
- Computational Requirements for the Biosciences