

IN CONFIDENCE

TAC 24/2010

BIOTECHNOLOGY AND BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES RESEARCH COUNCIL

TRAINING AWARDS COMMITTEE (TAC)

MINUTES OF MEETING ON 14 OCTOBER 2010

Present

Committee Members

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

BBSRC Office

Dr Simon Cutler
Mrs Avril Ferris
Mr Darren Pirt
Mr James Watson

Apologies

No apologies for absence had been received for this 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 13/2010)

Minutes of Meeting on 25 March 2010

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on 25 March 2010 were accepted as a correct record of the meeting.

Item 2: (TAC 14/2010)

Matters Arising

Strategic Skills Awards: Animal Costs on Studentships

2. TAC had previously noted that the first 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).

3. TAC now noted that following the 1 March 2010 closing date, 26 proposals had been received by MRC with 20 received by BBSRC. An independent panel (including representation from the NC3Rs) organised by the BPS had met on 12 April 2010. Following this meeting 13 of the BBSRC proposals were approved for funding.

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 these successful proposals.

5. Finally, TAC noted that a second call for proposals was due to go live in October 2010 with a closing date around the end of May 2011. Full details would be available on the BBSRC website in due course.

BBSRC TAC Departmental Visits

6. TAC noted that two visits to take place in 2010/11 had now been confirmed as EBI, Cambridge on 2 November 2010 and the University of Glasgow on 19 January 2011. Professor Roberts, as TAC Chair, would be attending both, a second TAC member for each was currently being finalised by the Office. Members noted that a paper on Departmental Visits would be put to the Committee at the March 2011 meeting.

Next Generation Conference

7. TAC noted that the Office was currently working on the final details of the Next Generation Conference which this year would be held on the 18/19 November at the Marriott Worsley Park hotel just outside of Manchester. Over 110 BBSRC funded students and postdocs would be attending the two days to receive a broad spectrum of career advice. Professor Roberts would again be attending and participating in this event.

Research Experience Placements

8. TAC noted that the BBSRC Research Experience Placements had 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. A paper with the reports of these Placements would be put to the Committee at a meeting in 2011.

David Phillips / Institute Career Path Fellows' Workshop

9. TAC was updated that it was still planned by the Office to hold this event in 2011. The Committee would be kept updated of developments.

Royal Society / BBSRC Innovation and Business of Science Course

10. TAC noted four BBSRC David Phillips Fellows had attended Module 1 (Science and the Economy) of the Royal Society Innovation Course held in July 2010. These were, Conrad Nieduszynski, James Allen, Thomas Nuhse and Violaine See. Module 2 (Leadership) was now accepting registrations and the Office had notified all eligible BBSRC fellows that they could sign up for this Module which would take place between 26 – 28 October 2010.

Agri-food / Food Security Skills – ATP Initiative

11. TAC was updated that the BBSRC Advanced Training Partnerships (ATP) scheme brings together key stakeholders from the agri-food industry and the academic research base to provide high-level skills training for those employed within the agri-food sector. BBSRC had committed up to £15M for this scheme, to support the development and delivery of postgraduate training over five years.

12. Members noted the ATP scheme had been launched in February 2010 and following an outline proposal stage, nine consortia had been invited to develop and submit a full application for the competition. These proposals covered a wide range of areas, including aquaculture, livestock, crops, food science, horticulture and agricultural systems. The partnerships being developed consisted of consortia of organisations including universities, agricultural colleges and other research institutions, as well as, among others, supermarkets, levy bodies, private research organisations and the farming community.

13. Full details of the ATP scheme were available on the BBSRC website. Awards were expected to start in Spring 2011.

Innovator of the Year (IoY)

14. TAC noted that the second Innovator of the Year awards ceremony had been held in London on the evening of 18 March 2010. There were winners in three different categories and the overall Innovator of the Year 2010 was selected from the three winners.

15. Professor Dave Goulson from the University of Stirling won the Social Innovator category for - Bumblebees for everyone. Professor Shankar Balasubramanian of the University of Cambridge was the Commercial Innovator for - The creation of Solexa sequencing®: Technology for sequencing genomes. Dr Michael McArthur of the John

Innes Centre won the Most Promising Innovator category for - Potent novel antibacterials to combat drug-resistant bacterial infections. Professor Balasubramanian was selected as the overall Innovator of the Year.

16. TAC also noted that BBSRC's Innovator of the Year 2011 competition was now open for entries with further details available on the BBSRC website.

The Biotechnology Young Entrepreneurs Scheme (YES)

17. TAC noted YES was an annual business plan competition designed to raise awareness of commercialisation amongst bioscience postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers. The 2010 competition had closed on 18 June 2010 with over 500 participants signing up.

18. A briefing meeting had been held on 4 August 2010, and would be followed by six regional workshops during autumn 2010. The final was scheduled to take place on 13 December 2010. A very positive review of the first 15 years of the scheme was considered by TAC previously and could now be found on the BBSRC website.

The Research Councils Business Plan Competition (BPC)

19. TAC noted that 83 applications had been submitted to stage one of the RCUK Business Plan Competition 2009/10, 15 of which had been of relevance to BBSRC.

20. In the second stage of the competition, 59 five-page plans had been submitted, 11 of which were of relevance to BBSRC. Shortlisting for the final (scheduled for 24 November 2010) had taken place on 28 September 2010 and results would be made available shortly.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)

21. TAC noted BBSRC had been involved with a strategic review of the KTP scheme, led by the Technology Strategy Board. An independent evaluation had looked at the scheme in terms of the economic impact of KTPs on companies, the benefits to the individual involved and their academic supervisor, and the administration of the programme.

22. It was noted that the review was extremely positive in many respects, though identified areas where the administration of the scheme could be improved. The Research Councils had encouraged the TSB to consider more devolved forms of administration where possible, following the model of studentship administration, where KTP offices had a strong track record of establishing and managing successful KTPs.

Office of Life Sciences

23. TAC noted BBSRC was represented on the OLS Industry and Higher Education Forum Advisory Group, chaired by Aileen Alsopp (Astra Zeneca). The Advisory Group brought together Research Councils and other funding bodies, with academic and industry representatives in order to address issues relating to the supply of high-level skills for the life-sciences sector.

24. TAC noted it would appear the new Government was supportive of the OLS and BIS would be continuing to support the Advisory Group and related activities.

25. BBSRC was also involved with an horizon-scanning workshop with the OLS Industry and HE Forum Advisory Group on 24 May 2010. The aim had been to brainstorm the issues around retaining a healthy and dynamic skills and training environment for the pharmaceutical industry in the UK, in the context of the wider HE and health sector context. The outputs from the workshop would feed into the future workplans of the OLS.

BBSRC Fellowships: Mentor Visits Update

26. TAC noted the Office was taking forward David Phillips and Institute Career Path Fellow mentor visits as appropriate with the relevant members and institutions.

Future of Roberts Ring-Fenced Funding

27. TAC noted that currently the Research Councils provided 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 had been agreed for the current CSR period (i.e. up to April 2011).

28. 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.

29. Following this, an agreed RCUK statement had been released indicating that the ring-fenced funding would come to an end, and Research Councils now expected institutions to be building in the costs of providing professional skills and career development for researchers into their normal running costs, and recovering them through standard mechanisms (i.e. through postgraduate fees or through cost-recovery on grants).

30. The Councils would be considering the possibility of transition arrangements (e.g. to taper the ending of the ring-fenced funding) as part of their spending bid discussions.

BBSRC Fellowships 2009/10: Outcome of Competitions

31. TAC noted that following the sifting of the proposals carried out by the Committee at its last meeting on 25 March 2010, interviews had been held in April 2010 with panels made up of sub Groups of TAC members.

32. Following the interviews, recommended awards had been made and all successful applicants had been informed in due course. The successful David Phillips Fellows and one Institute Career Path Fellow would be attending an Induction Seminar which followed the TAC meeting on 14 October.

BBSRC Industrial Impact Fellowships Competition 2010: Outcome of Competition

33. Similarly to the other BBSRC Fellowship schemes, interviews for Industrial Impact Fellowships had been held in April 2010, and following this one award had been made for the 2009/10 round. This was to Dr Malcolm Rhodes, to be held at the Department of Life Sciences at the University of Manchester. His project title being:

“Applications of Systems Biology in the Biopharmaceuticals and Bioprocessing Industries”.

BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships: Gender Analysis

34. TAC noted that this analysis paper, providing an overview of gender statistics relating to proposals submitted for BBSRC David Phillips Fellowships across the last five proposal rounds, was still being robustly checked in the Office and would be circulated to TAC electronically in due course.

BBSRC (IIP and MTI) support for SULSA BioSKAPE PROGRAMME

35. TAC noted 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).

36. 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

37. 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.

38. All supported projects would need to demonstrate connectivity to current or prior BBSRC-funded research. The BioSKAPE assessment panel would be supplemented by TAC member Dr John Birch and required ultimate approval by TAC before funds would be released.

39. Members noted the closing date for the first call had been 15 September 2010 and BBSRC was awaiting an update from SULSA.

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

40. TAC was reminded that, as noted previously, 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.

41. The Industrial CASE proposals under consideration at this meeting had been submitted to an earlier than usual closing deadline. Similarly the closing deadline for the BBSRC Fellowship schemes had been brought forward to 30 September 2010 again to fit in with charged timescales. The Quota DTG studentship call would now be postponed until after the transition period and so would be in Spring 2011 as a result.

David Phillips Fellowships Outline Proposal Stage

42. TAC noted that as agreed at the last meeting the introduction of an Outline Proposal Stage for David Phillips Fellowships would be introduced from the 2011/12 round.

Item 3: (TAC 15/2010) Skills and Careers Unit Update

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

Bioscience Skills and Careers Panel

44. TAC noted that the Bioscience Skills and Careers Panel (BSC), chaired by Professor Ottoline Leyser OBE FRS, had met on 13 July 2010. Members noted the following outline of the key discussion of the meeting is below:

- **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 report of the Panel's discussions and recommendations is included elsewhere in the agenda.
- **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

Fellowship Updates – See Restricted Annex 1

Excellence with Impact (EwI)

45. TAC noted that BBSRC's EwI competition was intended to help departments foster a culture change in how students and staff view the potential for exploring the wider impact of their research.

46. Twenty departments were participating and the scheme would lead to the award of prizes in two categories – one for the department demonstrating the greatest culture change, and one for the department demonstrating the greatest impact from its research over the period.

47. On 19 January 2010, a Best Practice workshop had been held in London to bring together all the participants in the scheme.

48. During summer 2010, BBSRC staff had visited departments to hear about the progress which was being made. Members of an independent panel would make formal judging visits during October-November 2010.

49. Departments would submit Final Reports by 1 December 2010, and the Judging Panel would choose the winners in each category at a meeting on 13 January 2011. Winners of BBSRC's two impact incentive schemes – Excellence with Impact and Innovator of the Year would be announced at a business networking event in London on 24 March 2011, involving senior government ministers, business leaders, and academics.

Biology Degree Accreditation

50. TAC noted that BBSRC had been supporting the Society of Biology in a project to develop a pilot accreditation process for undergraduate biology degrees. A consultation meeting took place on 13 October 2010 where BBSRC was keen that the pros and cons around accrediting biology degrees were fully discussed and debated.

51. This event would launch the Society of Biology's pilot framework, and would be of interest to both university departments interested in understanding the impact of accreditation on their degrees, as well as employers who wished to find out about the benefits of accreditation for their recruitment. The intention was for degrees (or degree pathways) to be accredited where they offered high levels of practical and mathematical training in preparation for specific research or scientific careers.

BBSRC Policy Placements

52. TAC noted that Policy Placements enable BBSRC-funded PhD students to undertake a 3-month placement to the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology (POST), Welsh Assembly Government, Scottish Parliament or the Royal Society Science Policy Centre.

53. During their placement, successful applicants work on an area of science policy by producing a POSTnote or similar briefing document, contributing to a longer report, assisting a select committee in a current inquiry, responding to queries for information, and/or related activities.

54. The placements were open to all BBSRC-funded postgraduate students registered for a PhD, who would be engaged in their penultimate or final funded year of study during the 2010-11 academic year. Successful applicants would receive a 3 month extension to their PhD funding as well as travel and accommodation costs for those who live outside reasonable commuting distance.

55. TAC noted the closing date for applications had been 1 October 2010 for placements to be taken up in early 2011.

Item 4: ORAL

Chair's Actions on behalf of TAC

56. The Chair highlighted to TAC that since the last meeting of the Committee he had attended the Bioscience Skills and Careers (BSC) Panel meeting held in July 2010. The key discussion points from this meeting are recorded earlier in these minutes under Item 3 at paragraph 44.

57. The Chair mentioned to the Committee a few points from the BSC discussions as follows.

58. It was noted that there was obviously the potential for budget reductions following the Spending Review, the real affect of which would not be known until 2011. BSC and in turn TAC would need to bear this in mind with all potential planning.

59. BSC had discussed the BBSRC Fellowship portfolio and had agreed that the David Phillips scheme should, wherever possible, be defended as this was the most effective scheme. In discussion TAC supported this view.

60. Finally the Chair highlighted that BSC had also discussed the importance of improving training for postdocs in line with the improvements in this area now enjoyed by students. It was noted that the concept of withholding final payments on research grants if the postdocs had not been involved in the production of the final report could be considered.

61. TAC enquired where the recommendations from BSC where now taken forward. In discussion it was noted that the various recommendations were taken forward via the appropriate Groups, Panels and BBSRC Council. Council had met in October and an extra Council meeting was now scheduled for December. It was also noted again that how recommendations could be taken forward was dependant on the Spending Review.

62. Additionally the Chair updated members that he had also attended the initial sift meeting of proposals submitted for BBSRC Advanced Training Partnerships (ATPs). He would also attend the next meeting to consider the remaining proposals in due course.

Items for Discussion

In the discussion of all items where peer review was undertaken members left the room when proposals or individuals were discussed from the member's own institution. On the occasions when the Chair, Professor Roberts, left the room, the meeting was chaired by the deputy Chair of the Committee, Professor Edwards.

Item 5: (TAC 16/2010)

2010 Industrial CASE Studentships Competition

63. The Committee considered 150 proposals for Industrial CASE studentships to commence from October 2011 using the criteria as set out in the Method of Working paper. It was noted that there had been up to 88 awards available for allocation.

64. This was now the third annual call for Industrial CASE proposals since the scheme had been opened up to submissions from academic supervisors as well as

directly from industrial organisations. TAC agreed that it was pleasing that this was the first year that significantly more proposals were received than there were awards available.

65. TAC noted that the high number of proposals received meant that the ranked list, based on the IMs pre-scores to start with, was vital on this occasion as the Committee would not be able to support all fundable proposals on this occasion.

66. The Office also highlighted that a number of the original 150 proposals received had, following thorough remit checking, been either rejected if within the remit of EPSRC or (in the case of those within the remit of MRC) the applicants had been offered the opportunity to have their proposal transferred into the MRC's current Industrial CASE call which was still open. Eleven applicants were offered this by the MRC.

67. The Committee then assessed the remaining proposals under consideration in line with the Method of Working. Following discussion the Committee recommended that 94 awards were fundable as TAC agreed only proposals scoring 7.5 or above should be suitable for funding.

68. This meant there were seven proposals all scoring 7.5 with six of these falling below the cut off line of 88 potential awards available. Therefore TAC agreed the seven scoring 7.5 should be re-ranked based on the score given to criteria 1 Company Research Environment and Training to determine the order either side of the anticipated funding cut off line.

69. The Committee noted that the number suitable for funding may still change as the Office was still undertaking Financial Viability Checks on a number of the proposals in the 94 agreed as fundable.

70. The Committee's recommendations are recorded separately to these minutes.

71. Finally, in summing up this round, the Committee agreed that the weightings applied to the various criteria should be revisited before the next call. Therefore it was agreed a paper on this should be put to the meeting on 3 December 2010.

Item 6: (TAC 17/2010) Assessment of BBSRC Fellowship Reports (Annual)

72. Mr Watson, BBSRC Research, Innovation and Skills Directorate, attended to record discussions for this item.

73. A total of 49 annual BBSRC Fellowship Reports were considered against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda.

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

75. The Office reminded the Committee of the importance of maximising Impact and so members were asked to highlight any fellows who had the potential to be used as examples of excellent Impact.

76. Discussions relating to the progress of the fellows and TAC's comments on additional issues associated with their awards were recorded separately to these minutes and would be held on fellows' individual files.

77. The Office would arrange for Fellows to receive written feedback of the Committee's assessment of their progress to date.

Item 7: (TAC 18/2010)

BBSRC David Phillips and Institute Career Path Fellows: Assignment of Mentors 2010

78. TAC agreed the mentors to be assigned to the 2010 cohort of David Phillips and Institute Career Path Fellows. The allocations of these new mentors had also aimed to ensure each member had no more than three or four mentees at any one time.

79. The Office would confirm these mentor allocations in writing to all parties involved.

80. In general discussion of mentoring, TAC agreed that the Office should look to instigate the arrangements for mentor visits a little earlier ie at the fellows' one year point rather than at the eighteen month point. The Office would take this forward.

Item 8: (TAC 19/2010)

BBSRC Fellowships: Final Reports

81. The Committee considered the final reports of four BBSRC David Phillips Fellows and one BBSRC Institute Development Fellow against the assessment criteria outlined in the agenda.

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

83. Discussions relating to the progress of the Fellows and the Committee's comments are recorded separately to these minutes on the fellows' individual files.

84. The Office would take forward the provision of written feedback to the fellows concerned.

Item 9: (TAC 20/2010)

Industry Interchange Programme: Final Reports

85. TAC considered two IIP final reports in line with the procedures outlined in the agenda paper. Dr Cutler outlined the purpose of reviewing the reports highlighting the points about which BBSRC wish to be satisfied. Members noted that in line with the terms and conditions of the scheme, 10% of the financial contribution from BBSRC under each award was held back, subject to TAC being satisfied with the report.

86. The Committee's recommendations are recorded separately to these minutes.

Items to Note

Item 10: (TAC 21/2010) Reviewing BBSRC's Training Strategy

87. TAC noted this paper and in line with the earlier discussions on the July 2010 BSC meeting noted it was very much a work in progress.

Item 11: (TAC 22/2010) BBSRC David Phillips Fellows and Institute Career Path Fellows Induction Seminar

88. The newly awarded BBSRC David Phillips and Institute Career Path Fellows would be attending a BBSRC Induction Seminar on 14 October 2010 following the regular TAC meeting.

89. The Committee noted the arrangements for the Seminar, which would involve presentations and discussions from Professor Roberts, Dr Cutler and Professor Edwards. Former BBSRC David Phillips Fellow Dr Andy Radford from Bristol University would also be making a presentation.

90. The fellows would have the opportunity to meet Committee members and mentors over lunch.

Item 12: (TAC 23/2010) BBSRC Current Activities and Plans: Report to Summer 2010 Committees

91. The Committee noted this paper which covered the current and planned activities, mainly within BBSRC's Research Group.

Any Other Business

Fellowship Renewals: The Way Forward

92. Following on from the consideration of the BBSRC Fellows' annual reports, the Committee had a discussion over the way forward for BBSRC Fellowship Renewals.

93. The Committee agreed that a paper on this should be put to the next TAC meeting on 3 December 2010. It was agreed this should include potential amendments to the wording of the renewal scheme and that BBSRC could incorporate its own criteria into why it was or was not inviting fellows' for renewal.

Update on numbers of proposals received for BBSRC Fellowships in the current round

94. Mrs Ferris updated the Committee that the following numbers of proposals had been received for BBSRC's Fellowships schemes in the current round:

David Phillips: 90
Institute Career Path: 4
Research Development: 10
Institute Development: 1
Industrial Impact: 4

Payment of TAC Members Expenses and Fees

95. Mrs Ferris asked for members to let the Office know if they had or were experiencing delays in receiving payments since the transfer of this function to the Shared Service Centre. Members were reminded that there had been a number of teething problems and therefore members should highlight any payments that had possibly not been received.

Darren Pirt
RIS Directorate
November 2010