

**NERC Training Advisory Board Meeting
Summary of discussions
1 & 2 December 2016
Mercure Bristol Grand Hotel, Bristol**

Members present: Nigel Brown (Chair), Elizabeth Baggs, Heidi Burdett, Nigel Cassidy, Richard Corfield, Alistair Crame, Keith Davidson, Marie Edmonds, Liz Elvidge, Ewan Hunter, Johannes Laube, Rachel Mills, Alexander Milner, Gareth Phoenix, Kathryn Whaler

Apologies: Roger Benson, Katrien Van Landeghem

Other attendees: Harriet Jevon (Associate Director, Funding Operations & Research Careers), Katie Tearall (Head of Research Careers), Vicki Norton (Senior Programme Manager, Research Careers), David Roberts (Senior Programme Manager, Research Careers)

Attendees for specific items: Nichola Badcock (NERC Head of National Capability Commissioning), Robin Mellors-Bourne (Careers Research & Advisory Centre)

Secretary: Andy Lloyd (Programme Manager, Research Careers)

Key issues discussed

Training activities – general update

TAB noted this standing paper that outlined the status and progress of NERC's training investments.

Harriet Jevon provided TAB with a strategic update of issues affecting NERC and the Research Councils more widely. These included the Higher Education and Research Bill, Official Development Assistance (ODA), Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF), the recent government statement on EU students and a selection of recently awarded and future NERC opportunities.

Keith Davidson summarised discussions from the 6th and 7th meetings of the NERC Joint Capital Advisory Group (JCAG).

Postgraduate Training Finance report

TAB noted the Postgraduate Training Finance report.

Early Career Researcher Working Group update

TAB received an update from the first meeting of the Early Career Researcher Working Group. The working group of Science Board and TAB members is supporting a review of NERC's provision of its support for early career researchers. The activity resulted from broader discussions regarding the health of the research base.

Following a scoping and then data collection stage, the working group will meet again to review the data and identify the key issues in advance of a workshop for all Science Board and TAB members.

National Capability Commissioning update

Nichola Badcock presented an update on NERC National Capability commissioning, including the categories and plans for delivery. TAB discussed NERC Research Centre support for postgraduate training using National Capability funding and opportunities for TAB to input when NERC commissions training from its Services and Facilities.

Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) Commissioning – 2017 call

TAB considered the evidence relating to each of eight shortlisted focus areas to be considered for future CDT investment. TAB agreed that three areas fulfilled the criteria for priorities for CDT investment and recommended that the top ranked priority area be taken forward. The NERC Executive will make a final decision on the topic for the 2017 CDT.

TAB agreed that a new Request for Evidence should be held early in 2017 to inform future CDT commissioning and wider training investments. TAB will base future recommendations on the resulting new evidence. Members discussed the importance of seeking evidence submissions from end-user organisations.

CDT proposal assessment process

TAB discussed the application and assessment processes for CDT competitions. TAB considered both the burden on the applicant community of preparing proposals and the need of assessment panels to have sufficient information on which to base their decisions and agreed that future CDT competitions should continue to include a sift at outline proposal stage. TAB also recommended the assessment criteria that should be used for outline and full proposal assessments.

Review of NERC Support for Professional Skills Training

TAB discussed NERC's provision of professional skills training. TAB agreed that NERC should continue to directly support professional skills training. There was evidence of a need for focussed training in this core skill area; members felt that the training was not currently being delivered by other means. TAB considered a variety of options for delivering this training and made a recommendation as to the most appropriate mechanism for continuing this provision.

Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) evaluation update

TAB received a report on the current status of the DTP Evaluation. TAB noted progress to date including the completion of the online surveys and the ongoing evaluation visits.

NERC has commissioned an independent consultant to undertake wider analysis of the DTP evaluation survey data and other evidence and contribute to the final DTP Evaluation report. Initial findings based on a preliminary analysis of some of the survey data were presented and TAB recommended areas to be prioritised for further analysis.

Discussion – Evidence required for consideration of DTP2 scope

TAB discussed the information that the Board may require to inform recommendations on the scope of any future DTP call and the postgraduate training portfolio more widely. TAB advised on the key points to be considered when the format of any future DTP competition is discussed and agreed the types of evidence that would be provided to inform the discussion. NERC Office will gather the evidence requested and incorporate it into the papers for consideration at the June 2017 TAB meeting.

Any Other Business

TAB discussed student data requests that have been received by NERC Office and agreed the level of detail that NERC would be able to provide in such circumstances.