

NERC Training Advisory Board Meeting
Summary of discussions
13 & 14 June 2017
Amba Hotel Marble Arch, London

Members present: Nigel Brown (Chair), Elizabeth Baggs, Nigel Cassidy, Richard Corfield, Alistair Crame, Keith Davidson, Marie Edmonds, Liz Elvidge, Ewan Hunter, Johannes Laube, Rachel Mills, Gareth Phoenix, Kathryn Whaler (Day 1 only)

Apologies: Katrien Van Landeghem, Alexander Milner, Kathryn Whaler (Day 2)

Other attendees: Tim Wheeler (Director of Research & Innovation) (Day 1 only), Robyn Thomas (Associate Director, Funding Operations & Research Careers), Katie Tearall (Head of Research Careers), Vicki Durbridge (Senior Programme Manager, Research Careers), David Roberts (Senior Programme Manager, Research Careers), Emma Johnston (Programme Manager, Research Careers)

Secretary: Andy Lloyd (Programme Manager, Research Careers)

Key issues discussed

Training activities – general update

The Training Advisory Board (TAB) noted this standing paper that outlined the status and progress of NERC's training investments.

TAB was provided with a strategic update on issues affecting NERC and the Research Councils more widely. These included progress towards the establishment of UK Research and Innovation and current Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund (ISCF) initiatives.

Postgraduate training finance report

TAB noted the postgraduate training finance report.

DTP evaluation update – final outputs

TAB considered the final outputs of the Doctoral Training Partnership (DTP) mid-term evaluation. Individual feedback has been circulated to the DTPs and TAB advised that NERC should publish the independent evaluation report together with an accompanying management response prepared by the NERC Executive.

DTP2 commissioning mechanism

The Board considered a number of different mechanisms for commissioning the next round of DTPs (DTP2). Members discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the various options and provided advice to the NERC Executive. The issue will be discussed at the NERC Council meeting in September 2017.

Balance of the training portfolio and scope of DTP2

TAB discussed the overall balance of NERC's postgraduate training portfolio and provided advice on the objectives and scope of the DTP2 investment. TAB made recommendations on the levels of future

investment across NERC's postgraduate training schemes and also made specific recommendations regarding the scope of DTP2.

Shortlist of areas of training priority

TAB reviewed the outcomes of the 2017 request for evidence of training priority and shortlisted a number of high priority areas to be taken forward for further evidence gathering and consideration at the November 2017 TAB meeting. The output will be a new priority topic area for the 2018 Centre for Doctoral Training (CDT) competition.

Evaluation of CDTs

TAB considered the options for formally evaluating NERC's CDTs. TAB advised that given the relatively short length of CDT awards and the presence of existing quality assurance mechanisms, an evaluation of performance of individual CDTs was not appropriate. TAB also advised that a formal evaluation of the CDT mechanism was not appropriate at the current time; however, the NERC Executive will consider the best format to present a light-touch synthesis of impact data.

International recruitment to NERC funded doctoral studentships

TAB reviewed NERC's current policy on international recruitment to doctoral studentships. Members discussed the issues around opening up international eligibility across NERC studentships and the potential mechanisms that could be employed to deliver this flexibility in the future should it be taken forward by the NERC Executive.

Early career researchers evaluation

The board received an update on the progress of the early career researcher (ECR) evaluation. An independent consultant has been appointed to undertake the data collection and analysis components of the evaluation, and assist NERC in presenting the outcomes. The consultant will work closely with NERC and the TAB/Science Board working group throughout the evaluation to ensure that this process is completed in line with the agreed objectives.

Any Other Business

The Chair thanked the members of TAB for their hard work and recent contributions including extra duties completed as part of the working groups and the DTP evaluation.