



HEADS OF UNIVERSITY CENTRES OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCES

Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee held on 13 November 2020 via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Professor Yvonne Barnett (President, and chair; Anglia Ruskin), Dr Linda Walsh (Glasgow Caledonian), Professor Valerie Randall (Bradford), Professor Jacqueline McCormack (Sligo IT), Dr Esther Bell (KCL), Dr Sue Jones (York St John), Professor Hilary MacQueen (HUBS; Open), Dr Claire Pike (Anglia Ruskin), Dr Lowri Mainwaring (Cardiff Metropolitan), Dr Lynne Lawrance (UWE), Professor Victor Gault (Ulster), Dr Selwa Alsam (Essex), Professor Julie McLeod (Birmingham City), Dr Ian Locke (Honorary Treasurer, Westminster), Professor P Gerry McKenna (Hon Executive Secretary).

In Attendance: Ms Jill Rodney (IBMS). Mr Alan Wainwright (IBMS).

Apologies: Mr Andrew Usher (IBMS), Dr Simon Fox (Plymouth)

1. The minutes (approved by previous circulation) of the meeting on 26 May 2020 were noted.
2. The minutes (approved by previous circulation) of the AGM on 02 September 2020 were noted.
3. The President, Professor Barnett, welcomed Dr Lynne Lawrence to her first meeting of the Executive Committee. She also thanked Executive Committee colleagues for their commitment to the work of HUCBMS at a time when there

have been so many aspects of professional and personal lives challenged and needing constant attention in the face of Covid-19.

There followed a wide-ranging discussion of how different biomedical sciences schools and departments have coped with the challenges imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been many examples of innovations in teaching and learning, assessment and research. Also noted was the high level of cooperation between the NHS laboratories and HUCBMS schools/departments during the pandemic.

It was agreed that the profile of Biomedical Sciences has never been higher. It will be important to continue to support HUCBMS member institutions through regular communication, sharing best practice and collaboration in education, research and knowledge exchange within and beyond the HE sector.

4. **TEF.** Professor McLeod reported that the sector is still awaiting the outcome of the Pearce independent review of TEF. The NSS, which forms a key metric for the TEF pilots is under a 'root and branch' review by the OfS with outcomes of the review expected to inform the latest NSS. There is a concern if NSS, or a similar input metric, isn't retained as otherwise the only metrics will be continuation and graduate outcomes. Recent report from DfE related to 'quality courses' amalgamates continuation with graduate outcomes to form a 'start to success' metric. Significant issues have been identified by the sector and further information is awaited.

5. **REF.** The President updated the Committee of REF developments. Main panels and sub-panels have initial meeting dates in their diaries and are working to the July 2020 updated REF 2021 timetable. The Main Panels and Research England are committed to working with sub-panel members to manage the ongoing impact of Covid-19 prevalence on their ability to undertake their assessment role. It was noted that a number of additional assessors were in the process of being appointed and an updated list would be published shortly.
The President thanked the Honorary Executive Secretary, Professor McKenna, for putting forward additional nominations on behalf of the HUCBMS Executive Committee. The wide-ranging discipline coverage of UoA 3 was noted alongside a desire to ensure that there would be appropriate appointments made, and in sufficient number, to cover submissions in biomedical sciences.

6. **Knowledge Exchange Framework and the KE Concordat.** Professor MacQueen updated the Committee on KEF and the new KE Concordat, <https://www.keconcordat.ac.uk/>.

The submission deadline for KEF has passed and HEIs are now waiting for the outcomes, which are likely to be presented as radar diagrams.

The aim of the Concordat is to give universities and their staff and students clarity of mission and to support their development, give partners an accurate representation of the approach that individual universities are taking to KE, provide clear indicators of their approaches to performance improvement, and give HE governing bodies and government broad confidence in the activity that is taking place in universities. It also aims to stress how collaboration between universities and partners in various aspects of KE can be beneficial to all participants.

There is a lot of encouragement for HEIs to join the KE Concordat and to sign up if not to the development, at least to the principles.

7. **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.** Dr Jones briefed the Committee on EDI matters. She attended an RSB EDI meeting in September and relevant information had been circulated to the HUCBMS membership. There was discussion on when to recirculate the approved EDI questionnaire to HUCBMS members. It was agreed that this might be done biennially or triennially. Dr Jones proposed that the web resources / links on the HUCBMS webpages for EDI be enhanced. It was agreed that Dr Locke, Professor McCormack and Dr Jones should take this forward along with a general updating of the webpages. Dr Jones also provided links to relevant EDI information:

<https://www.rsb.org.uk/policy/groups-and-committees/returners-to-bioscience-group>
<https://sciencecouncil.org/professional-bodies/diversity-equality-and-inclusion/>

8. **Brexit.** The Hon Executive Secretary provided a brief update on Brexit. It was noted that it would be in the interest of HE and research for a UK-EU Trade deal to be reached. This would allow continued UK participation in EU research framework programmes and ERASMUS+, as an associate member. The uncertainty surrounding the proposed replacement of EU Structural Funds by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund is a major concern for many UK HEIs.
9. **Northern Ireland, Ireland, Scottish and Welsh matters.**
- a. Professor Gault reported that in Northern Ireland:
- Placement numbers remain healthy

- The new School of Medicine at Ulster is now established and recruitment of staff has begun
 - The Northern Ireland universities are engaging with universities in the Republic around potential all-island funding opportunities.
- b. Professor McCormack reported that in the Republic of Ireland:
- A Minister for Further & Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science is now in place; Simon Harris.
 - CORU registration for Medical Scientists will be mandatory by end of March and is being developed for Clinical Biochemists.
 - Significant developments are underway within the Institute of Technology sector as most are now in consortia that have either achieved or working towards Technological University status.
 - Athena SWAN Ireland are currently undertaking a consultation for review
- c. Dr Walsh reported that in Scotland:
- SFC has provided additional funding to support extra students recruited following the exams uplift.
 - NHS Scotland is creating 3 NHS Covid-testing hubs in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen opening on 23rd November. They will take over the testing from some sample currently undertaken at the Lighthouse Laboratory. Initially this will include Care home workers and relatives and healthcare workers. The hubs will be managed by HCPC registered staff (on a 12-month secondment), HCPC registered BMSs on fixed-term contracts and some Band 3 and 4 support workers. Year 4 Hons students have been invited to join a bank of staff to cover evenings and weekends as the hub will be 24/7. They will be paid at Band 3 rate.
- d. Dr Mainwaring reported that in Wales:
- Health Education Improvement Wales (HEIW) has now triggered a tender process for health education provision. Universities have until 27 January 2021 to submit their tenders. For successful universities the new commissioned contracts will run for 7 years from 1 August 2022 – 31 July 2029.
 - The Lot for PTP Healthcare Science (leading to registration as Biomedical Scientists) is an all-Wales Lot and has projected commissions of 28-35 per year.

10. **Council for Healthcare Science Education.** It was agreed that relevant issues emerging from the Council for Healthcare Science Education would be considered by the Executive Committee as and when they arise. There was nothing to report currently.

11. **Joint HUBS/HUCBMS workshop.** Dr Walsh informed the Committee that a joint HUBS/HUCBMS workshop is being planned for 2021 on '*Robust Online Assessments*' which assess knowledge and understanding and help to mitigate against cheating, plagiarism and collusion.

12. **Report from IBMS.** Ms Rodney advised the Committee of:

- a. the role the Institute's President in raising the profile of biomedical science and scientists as a consequence of the current pandemic
- b. Operation Moonshot and the proposed use of third year students to be used in carrying out mass testing was highlighted along with the inappropriateness of using this 'work experience' as the third year project. It was noted that MMU and Liverpool University colleagues were involved in this discussion.
- c. the consultation on biomedical scientists being able to supply and/or administer medicines that was currently underway (closing date 10 December). The Committee agreed to respond positively to the consultation both collectively and individually. A link to the consultation was circulated following the meeting.

13. **IBMS Educational & Professional Standards Committee.** Professor Randall and Mr Wainwright reported on the IBMS Educational & Professional Standards Committee on 9.10.2020 which was held by zoom due to the Covid-19 outbreak. The Chair and Deputy Chair, Andrew Usher and Joanna Andrew, were elected for a further 3-year term.

- Items of interest to HUCBMS included re-accreditation of full-time BMS programmes at Aston, Coventry & Sultan Qaboos Universities and 5 part- & full-time MSc programmes at Cardiff Metropolitan University.
- The Institute has prepared useful 'How to' booklets on Reflection, Tips for Exam Success & Referencing to assist students preparing for Institute exams. These cover similar issues to those faced by University students.
- At the meeting it was agreed reluctantly to postpone the forthcoming Institute examinations to Spring 2021, probably to be effected in a different format, due to unavailability of venues and other covid-19 related issues.
- It was agreed to move forward with electronic portfolios requiring an investment in an IT system to provide an appropriate e-learning platform. IBMS has already developed an online Support Hub as a mechanism for supporting members in all education areas including CPD and training. This will generally signpost support already offered by the IBMS.

14. **HUBS.** Professor MacQueen updated the Committee on HUBS activities:

- Annual conference will be online, on the 12th-13th April 2021. As usual it will have sessions on Teaching, Research and Policy. The programme will be finalised shortly.
- The Early career group, ECLBio, are running 3-4 webinars on a variety of topics relevant to their members. These webinars are well supported and popular.
- Submissions for HE Bioscience Teacher of the Year must be made by 29th November. The winner will be announced at the Conference in April.
- HUBS/RSB are running a workshop online on 7th Jan 2021 on *Engaging students as partners in teaching and learning*. There will be two more workshops in the L&T series over the coming year; titles to be announced.

15. **Social media strategy.** Professor McCormack outlined the importance of social media in raising the profile and issues relevant to HUCBMS. She proposed arranging for a social media consultant to review HUCBMS' social media accounts and run a training session for the Executive Committee. This was agreed.

With reference to minute 7. above, it was agreed to to review and update the website in parallel with this exercise.

16. **HUCBMS 2021.** It was agreed to plan for an 'in place and in person' annual conference in 2021. This will take place at York St John University on 1-2 September. The social programme will be similar to that planned for the cancelled HUCBMS 2020 conference. Committee members agreed to propose topics and speakers for the academic programme to the Hon Executive Secretary by mid-January 2022.

The Hon Executive Secretary will contact Coventry University concerning the planning of HUCBMS 2022.

17. **Finances.** The Hon Treasurer, Dr Locke, advised that the overall financial position remains healthy. He will chase up outstanding institutional payments. He will not be recommending an increase in subscription payments for 2021. This was agreed.

18. **Date of next meeting.** It was agreed that the Committee would meet in late January/early February and that the meeting would probably take place online via Teams.