



Economic
and Social
Research Council

ESRC

Executive Chair (533)

Candidate pack

Closing date: 12 September 2022



Department for
Business, Energy
& Industrial Strategy

If you have any questions, require further information, or would like this candidate pack in alternative format, please contact the Campaign Manager, Methun Mandhra at publicappointments@beis.gov.uk

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Economic and Social Research Council

UKRI was established in 2018 and brought together the seven Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England into one NDPB while retaining their individual identities and functions.

The ESRC, as one of the UKRI Councils, is the specialist Council responsible for providing research funding to the economic and social science community.

The ESRC has an annual budget in 21/22 of £183m and alongside its research funding and training programmes manages a number of significant investments including the Institute of Fiscal Studies and What Works centres.

Further information about UKRI can be found [here](#)



About UKRI and ESRC

All the key opportunities and challenges for the UK have people and behaviour at their core. Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and its aftermath, raising productivity, realising the full potential of medical and technological advances, coping with an ageing population, addressing climate change and improving public services; all require a rich understanding of how individuals, firms, markets, communities and governments behave and interact.

ESRC, as the UK's largest funder of economic, social, behavioural and human data science, supports social science that generates this rich understanding. Its focus is on creating a world-leading portfolio of research, data and training that builds fundamental understanding of our social and economic world, and on improving how we align this research with pressing societal challenges in order that it delivers significant benefits to the economy and society.

The ESRC is an integral part of UKRI alongside the other six Research Councils, Research England and Innovate UK. This facilitates the closest possible collaboration across the whole breadth of UK's research and innovation activity, allowing completely new integrated ways of working to thrive. UKRI is led by Dame Ottoline Leyser as CEO and overseen by an influential independent Chair and Board. It is funded by UK taxpayers via the Department for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy. The successful applicant will be accountable to the Board and CEO, have access to Ministers and will be selected by the Secretary of State for Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.

The role

We are seeking an outstanding leader for the Economic and Social Research Council who will build and enhance its worldwide reputation for excellence in economic and social sciences research and oversee its investments in research centres and infrastructure. This is a uniquely exciting opportunity to shape the future profile of economic and social sciences research in the UK and help to develop and train the researchers of the future.

As Executive Chair of ESRC, you will have responsibility for an annual core budget of over £180m alongside cross-UKRI funds and lead circa 210 dedicated staff based across Swindon and London.

The Executive Chair, working with the ESRC Council members, is responsible for setting and implementing the strategic vision for ESRC and through this, shaping UKRI's direction and position on the social sciences. As a visible and credible leader of both ESRC and the wider social science research community, you will provide direction ensuring delivery of world-class research, innovation, skills development and infrastructure investment.

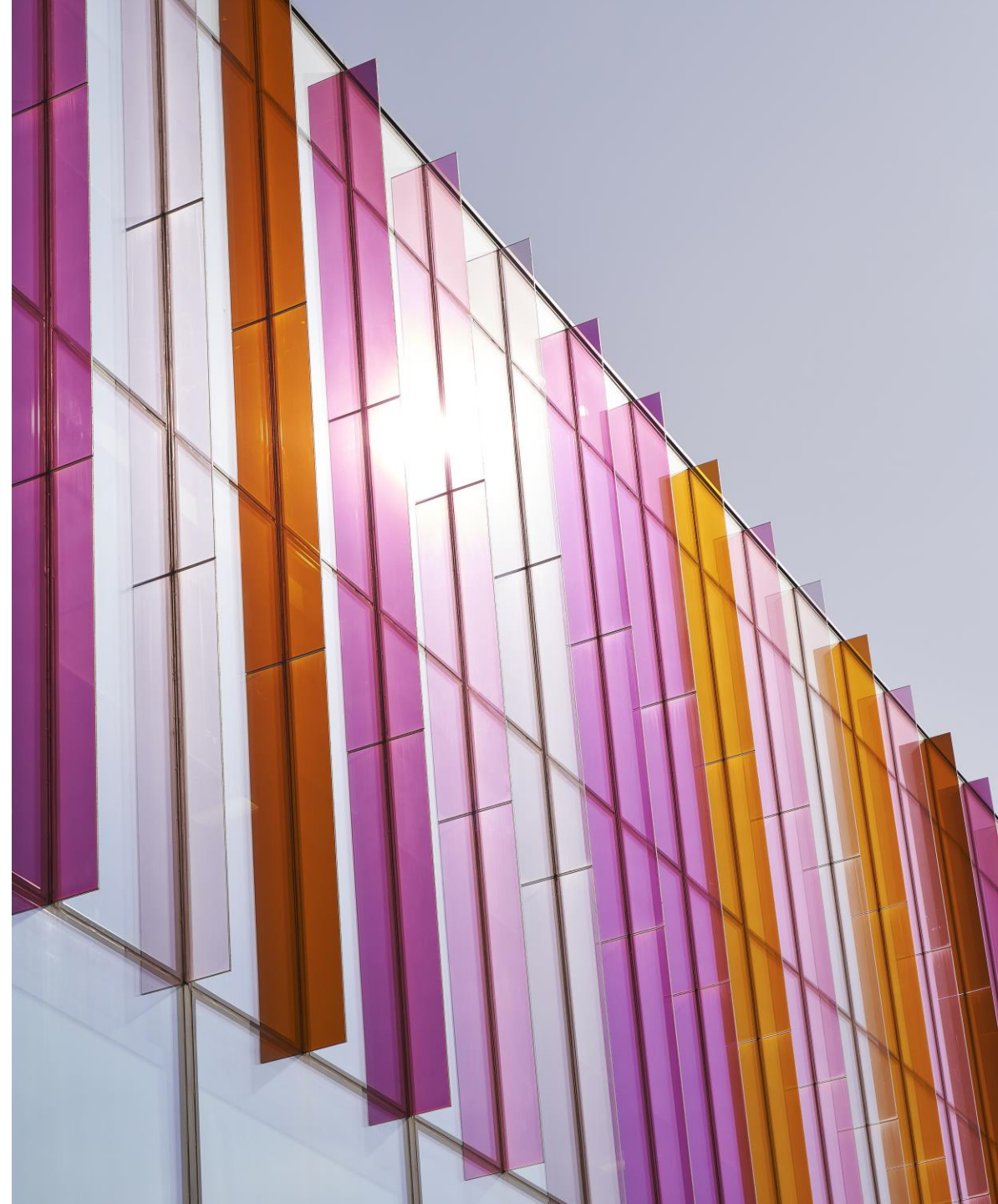
You will be closely involved in the wider leadership and decision-making of UKRI and have the opportunity to lead on one or more major cross-cutting themes for UKRI.

Diversity

We are committed to increasing the diversity of our boards and bringing in talent, regardless of its origins. We encourage applications from all candidates regardless of ethnicity, religion or belief, gender, sexual orientation, age, disability or gender identity. We particularly welcome applications from people with ethnicity, gender and disability characteristics currently underrepresented on our Boards.

Arrangements for candidates with a disability: As a Disability Confident leader, we guarantee to interview anyone with a disability whose application meets the essential criteria for the post. More details on the criteria can be found in this pack. If you wish to apply through the Disability Confident scheme, you will need to tick that option on the Diversity Monitoring form that you will submit alongside your application.

Adjustments: All candidates are entitled to request reasonable adjustments at any stage of the application process. If you would like to discuss reasonable adjustments prior to submitting your application, please contact the campaign manager at publicappointments@beis.gov.uk.



Person specification/responsibilities

1. As a member of the Executive Committee, work with the UKRI Board to deliver best value from the science and innovation funding system and contribute to the development and implementation of the overall UKRI Strategy;
2. Act to ensure UKRI is a strong, unified voice for research and innovation, in facilitating dialogue with key stakeholders including government and with partners on the world stage;
3. Enhance ESRC's capability as a major contributor to world-leading research in the social sciences both nationally and internationally;
4. Work to ensure the linkage of research to innovation, i.e. by supporting the innovation work of other UKRI Councils but also more widely to support the sector in working closer to the market and with businesses;
5. Lead ESRC in the successful pursuit of its objectives providing the inclusive vision necessary to maintain and develop the quality and outputs of its research, postgraduate and capital investment portfolio, ensuring routes to innovation where appropriate;
6. Work with the Senior Independent Member and ESRC Council to lead and develop ESRC's strategic approach to the funding of research and alignment with innovation, in relation to both directed and responsive-mode programmes, to the funding of postgraduate/skills training and its investment in major longer term capital projects; and to ensure that the UK develops its world leading position in economics and social science;
7. Work collaboratively across UKRI to foster interdisciplinary work and build on collective capabilities, ensuring cross-Council working, links through to innovation where appropriate and providing support and challenge when required. This is likely to include specific responsibility for the strategy and delivery of one or more cross-cutting activities, presenting opportunities for the Executive Chair to develop UKRI functions within their experience and expertise that support the work of all of the councils;
8. Maximise efficiency and ensure value for money from public investment;
9. Represent and develop positive relationships between the ESRC and its diverse stakeholders in government and public funding agencies, higher education institutions, academic and research communities, third sector, industry and the public at large and internationally; and advocate for the value of the economic and social sciences; and
10. As a core member of the senior leadership team, continue to drive forward the ongoing programme of transformational change to build UKRI and its capabilities as a steward of the research and innovation system, led by and accountable to the UKRI CEO.

Criteria

Essential Criteria:

Strategy skills

- A commitment to demonstrate and maximise the economic and societal value of UK social and economic research, and
- An ability to develop a clear and transformative strategic vision for ESRC's disciplines through the development of high quality programmes that maximise value for money

Sector leadership and stakeholder management

- A credible leader with acknowledged experience in the application of social and economic science and research.
- A good communicator able to command confidence and have credibility across both the wide academic domain of ESRC and stakeholder landscape including with Government Ministers, world class social science and industry;

Management and corporate leadership

- Demonstrable capability as a senior leader and manager, able to deliver research and innovation results;
- An ability to advise on major business developments that impact on the Council's role or activities and on its exposure to, and management of, risk;
- Ability to manage and build the capability of a diverse cadre of skilled employees and programme managers and able to inspire and motivate colleagues throughout the organisation

Partnering and impact

- Capable of a collegiate approach across UKRI, working with peers on the Executive Committee to deliver against a shared strategy for innovation and research;
- Expertise and credibility in communicating the insights from social science and turning them into impact

Desirable criteria:

- Commitment and ability to drive interdisciplinary working and advance links to innovation and public policy

Terms of appointment

Appointment Term: An initial period of 4 years.

Remuneration: £120k with Performance Related Pay of up to 10% (with scope to negotiate up to £149k base salary for an exceptional candidate)
Remuneration and expenses are taxable.

Time Commitment: To secure the best candidate, UKRI is willing to consider a secondment arrangement on the basis that the role will require a minimum commitment of 4 working days per week. This arrangement would allow a candidate to retain one day a week to maintain research activity with their current employer. Any potential conflicts of interest would be managed through the UKRI Conflicts of Interest policy, which can be shared with candidates before applying.

Location: London

Nature of Appointment: This is a Public Appointment by the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The post holder would be an officeholder and an employee of UKRI.

Availability: The successful candidate will be encouraged to take up their appointment as soon as possible, following the successful completion of pre-appointment checks and security clearance.



How to apply

Your application is submitted in two parts.

Both parts must be submitted **by 23:59 on 12 September 2022** in order for your application to be considered complete. Applications received after this date will **not** be considered.

Part one: CV and Statement of Suitability

One document combining a two-page statement of suitability and two-page CV (no more than four sides of A4 in total). The key to a good application is to give the reader specific information about how you meet the criteria for appointment. Think about your knowledge, skills, experience and personal attributes, and take full advantage of the space available. Provide practical evidence that best demonstrates how you meet the essential criteria

Save the document as 'Surname, First initial – URN553 – ESRC, Exec Chair.

Send to publicappointments@beis.gov.uk with URN553 – ESRC, Exec Chair in the subject heading.

Part two: Diversity Monitoring and Conflict of Interest Form.
Complete this [form](#).



Assessment Panel, Process and Timing

If you are shortlisted for the role, due diligence will be carried out.

Shortlisted candidates may also be required to complete a written exercise as part of their assessment. The written exercise will be assessed against the essential criteria for this campaign and support will be offered to those candidates requiring a reasonable adjustment.

The members of the Advisory Assessment Panel are:

Chair: Alexandra Jones (Director, Science Research & Innovation, BEIS)

Organisation Rep: Dame Ottoline Leyser (CEO)

Organisation Rep: TBC

Independent Panel Member: Gerard Lyons

The timelines for this campaign is indicative and subject to change. Please check the advert for any updates.

Advert Closes	12 September 2022
Panel Sift	October 2022
Panel Interview	November 2022
Candidates notified of the outcome	December 2022
(Pre-Appointment Hearing)	TBC
Appointment confirmed	January 2023

Annex A

Conflicts of Interest and Due Diligence

Public Appointments require the highest standards of propriety, involving impartiality, integrity and objectivity, in relation to stewardship of public funds and the oversight and management of all related activities. This means that any private, voluntary, charitable or political interest that might be material and relevant to the work of the body concerned should be declared.

It is important that those appointed as members of public bodies maintain the confidence of Parliament and the public. If there are any issues in your personal or professional history that could, if you were appointed, be misconstrued, cause embarrassment, or cause public confidence in the appointment to be jeopardised, it is important that you bring them to the attention of the Assessment Panel and provide details of the issue(s) in your application. In considering whether you wish to declare any issues, you should also reflect on any public statements you have made, including through social media. The Panel may explore issues with you before they make a recommendation on the appointment.

As part of our due diligence checks we will consider anything in the public domain related to your conduct or professional capacity. This will include us undertaking searches of previous public statements and social media, blogs or any other publicly available information. This information may be made available to the Panel and they may wish to explore issues with you, should you be invited to interview.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss further, please contact the BEIS Appointments, Diversity and Talent Team at publicappointments@beis.gov.uk.

Annex B

The Seven Principles underpinning Public Life

In 1995 the Committee on Standards in Public Life defined seven principles for public life. All candidates for are expected to demonstrate a commitment to, and an understanding of, the value and importance of the principles of public service which are:

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

Further information on the principles of public life can be found [here](#).

Annex C

Complaints Procedure

If you feel you have reason to complain you should direct your concerns in the first instance to the Public Appointments team (publicappointments@beis.gov.uk) who will make every effort to deal with these and respond to you within 48 hours.

If your complaint is not dealt with satisfactorily, you can find information about the steps you can take under BEIS Complaints Procedure [here](#).

The Commissioner for Public Appointments is the independent regulator of public appointments. The Commissioner's primary role is to provide independent assurance that public appointments are made in accordance with the [Governance Code on Public Appointments](#). The Commissioner also investigates complaints and may conduct an inquiry into the policies and practices followed in relation to appointments processes which he regulates. The Commissioner will not investigate complaints relating to non-selection unless it appears that the appointments process has breached the Governance Code on Public Appointments.

You can contact the Commissioner by email at publicappointments@csc.gov.uk or by post, as follows:

The Commissioner for Public Appointments
Room G/8, 1 Horse Guards Road
London, SW1A 2HQ

Further information on the role of the Commissioner or the appointments process is available at: publicappointmentscommissioner.independent.gov.uk.



**Economic
and Social
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For queries about your application or the recruitment process, please email the BEIS Appointments Team at publicappointments@beis.gov.uk



ESRC: Economic and Social Research Council



@ESRC



Economic and Social Research Council

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Executive Chair

Pre-appointment Hearing Questionnaire

1. What motivated you to apply for this role, and what specific experiences would you bring to it?

Rigorous, impactful social science makes the world a better place. Understanding society and the economy helps us improve people's lives and tackle global challenges. And it has urgent relevance to the significant economic challenges the UK now faces. I applied for the role of Executive Chair of ESRC because I firmly believe in the power of social science, and in the importance of a fair, efficient and supportive funding system in maximising its impact.

I have spent the past fifteen years working at the interface of research and public policy, as director of a think-tank focused on innovation policy, as a policy adviser on research and innovation policy, as Chief Executive of a learned society, and as a writer and speaker on the economics of innovation. It would be an honour to make use of these experiences to help ESRC and UKRI in their vital mission.

2. Please elaborate on any experience you have that will be relevant to the role. In which areas do you feel well-qualified to make a contribution; and in which will you have to acquire new skills, or knowledge?

I believe my experience is relevant in three respects:

- A track record as a policy-focused researcher, having spent eight years running Nesta's Policy & Research Unit (an ESRC-eligible Independent Research Organisation), co-authored two peer-reviewed economics books and written dozens of impactful reports;
- Senior leadership and management experience, serving as CEO of the Royal Statistical Society, as a member of Nesta's senior management team, and as a manager at McKinsey & Company. In these roles, I have a track record of leading teams to design and manage research-funding programmes in the fields of innovation studies and innovation policy, and of leading strategic planning processes and organisational restructuring;
- Expertise on research and innovation policy at the highest levels, having been adviser to three science and innovation ministers. This involved working on the set-up of UKRI, and the design of research funding programmes including the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund, the Strength in Places Fund and the Strategic Priorities Fund.

Although I have not held a senior academic role at a university, I have always worked closely with university researchers, and have significant experience of dealing with university leaders both as a policymaker and as CEO of a learned society. It goes without saying that the UK's universities form a central part of our research ecosystem. I undertake to work closely with university leaders and social scientists based in universities to understand their concerns and to ensure that the ESRC maintains its strong working relationship with them. I hope that my past experience of working with academic researchers to help them maximise their impact will be valuable in this respect.

3. How were you recruited? Were you encouraged to apply, and if so, by whom?

I was recruited through a public appointment process run by BEIS. I was prompted to apply by the valedictory address of Sir John Kingman, UKRI's former chair, who mentioned the vacancy of the role and the importance of filling it.

4. Do you have any business or financial connections which might give rise to a conflict of interest, or perception of conflict of interest, in carrying out your new duties as Executive Chair of the ESRC? If so, how do you intend to resolve them?

I am currently a Governor of the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, which receives funding from ESRC, and a member of the Productivity Commission, part of the ESRC-funded Productivity Institute. These are unpaid roles.

If I am appointed, I will resign these roles to avoid any potential conflict of interest.

5. If appointed what professional or voluntary work commitments will you continue to undertake, or do you intend to take on, alongside your new role? How will you ensure that this will not impinge on your responsibilities as Executive Chair of the ESRC?

I currently serve as a trustee of two grant-making charities, the Mohn Westlake Foundation (which funds charities in the fields of youth opportunity and data for good) and Two Magpies Fund (which funds charities fighting violence against women and girls). These roles take up a small amount of time, and are in my experience compatible with a full-time role.

6. Have you ever held any post or undertaken any activity that might cast doubt on your political impartiality? If so, how will you demonstrate your political impartiality in the role if appointed?

I have experience of working across the political spectrum. It is a matter of public record that I have been a donor to the Conservative Party and the Liberal Democrat Party in the past. I served as a policy adviser (a non-political Civil Service post) to three Conservative science and research ministers. But I have also worked at a centre-left think-tank run by a former Labour Party special adviser, and worked constructively with Labour ministers during my time at Nesta before the 2010 election.

This experience has taught me the importance of making decisions in an impartial way, and in dealing openly and transparently with matters with political sensitivity. I undertake to bring this spirit of openness to my work at the ESRC.

7. Do you intend to serve your full term of office, and do you intend to apply for another once it has ended?

I intend to serve my full term of office. I would consider a further term if this were deemed appropriate.

8. If appointed what will be your main priorities, both short and long term, on taking up the role? What do you envisage as being the main challenges to these priorities?

My guiding principle as Executive Chair would be to enable economic and social science researchers to do excellent research that changes the country and the world for the better. I am inspired by the example of Michael Young, the first chair of the ESRC's precursor organisation, who combined a passion for excellence with an unwavering belief that the best social science was visionary, engaged, and regularly tested through application in the real world.

My immediate priorities would be:

- To tackle the operational challenges presented to ESRC and UKRI as a whole by the Grant and Tickell Reviews, by reducing operating costs, cutting unnecessary bureaucracy, and by experimenting with new ways of working. ESRC should always aspire to be an exemplary funder, both in terms of efficiency and innovation. This kind of operational change is never easy, and will require careful design and stakeholder management, but is important to ESRC's legitimacy both with our research community and with Government.

- To ensure ESRC continues its effective support for the social science research community, particularly the next generation of researchers, and that we equip them with the skills and opportunities to remain at the methodological cutting edge.
- To manage the impact of the uncertainty over the UK's future relationship with Horizon Europe, working closely with the social science community, the Government, international partners and the rest of UKRI to minimise disruption for researchers and identify new opportunities where possible.
- To build on ESRC's strong track record of funding impactful research on big, important questions, building on the success of projects like the What Works Centres and the Productivity Institute.
- To contribute to the broader UKRI mission, in my role as a member of UKRI's Executive Committee, leading on cross-cutting workstreams as agreed with UKRI's Chief Executive

In the medium term, I think there is a significant role for ESRC to play in a number of areas:

- Applying social science expertise to **improve the wider innovation system**. The ESRC's research community includes world-class expertise in how to do R&D well, and how to ensure R&D generates societal benefits. I would like to see ESRC at the cutting edge of trialling and assessing what funding methods work best, sponsoring research into "what works" in promoting innovation and research excellence, and building on the UK's strong tradition of interdisciplinary innovation studies research.
- Further investing in **data infrastructure and analytic skills**. One of the treasures of UK social research is our high-quality longitudinal data and studies. The UKRI report on data-driven research conducted by Sir Ian Diamond and the Royal Statistical Society showed the centrality of analytic skills and large data sets to impactful social science research. Opportunities include investing in data analytic skills in doctoral training, continuing ESRC's excellent work to make the most of administrative data sets, ensuring that research metrics adequately reward the production of data tools and infrastructure, and making sure ESRC-funded research is world-class in terms of data publication and commitment to replicability.
- Increasing our **impact** through translation. Research has the greatest benefit when researchers are well connected with business, government and civil society. The ESRC has a strong track record of supporting policy-focused programmes; I intend to continue and deepen this. In addition, I would seek out opportunities for social science researchers to be more deeply involved in translational projects like the successors to the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. Central to this would be strong partnership between ESRC and Innovate UK, and with innovation teams in other councils. I would also work to resolve the long-standing funding disparity facing Independent Research Organisations, which in my experience have unique translational capabilities. Finally, I would work to push ESRC-funded insights to policymakers and into the public debate. This sometimes requires sensitive communications and political handling, but is essential to maximising the impact of social science research.

9. What criteria should the Committee use to judge your performance over your term of office? Please explain why.

- On my ability to articulate a set of strategic objectives for ESRC;
- On the impact that ESRC research has the wider innovation economy, on policymaking, and in businesses and other institutions;
- On the use of social science expertise to improve the way we fund and promote research and innovation in UKRI and beyond;
- On the contribution that ESRC makes to cross-cutting UKRI initiatives and to interdisciplinary research.
- On my effectiveness as a member of UKRI's senior leadership team, in particular my delivery of the cross-cutting UKRI workstreams I take responsibility for (as agreed with UKRI's Chief Executive)

10. How will you protect and enhance your personal independence and the institutional independence of the ESRC from the Government/Ministers?

The President of the Academy of Social Sciences was correct when he wrote recently that “the ESRC [must be able to] fund descriptive and evaluative work across a range of national challenges without political fear or favour, and [must have] a chair committed to impartiality and rigour”. I am committed to this impartiality, and to the principles of UKRI’s independence as set out in the Higher Education and Research Act.

My experience of working with ministers at Nesta (an arm’s-length body that transitioned into an independent charity) and as a ministerial adviser has taught me that institutional independence is best served by a policy of open and unambiguous communication – with Government, with the ESRC’s community of researchers, and with the users of our research. To this end, I intend to be active on public platforms, communicating clearly about ESRC’s priorities, decisions, and interactions with Government.

11. How do you assess the public profile and reputation of the ESRC?

The ESRC has a strong and well-deserved reputation among the social science community as a fair and impartial funder. Major ESRC-funded centres, like UK in a Changing Europe and the Productivity Institute, have established a respected position in the public debate as sources of rigorous advice. This is a testament to the good work of the current and recent leadership of ESRC, and the energy and talent of ESRC’s community of researchers.

I hope to lead ESRC to build on this success, in particular by deepening the connection between ESRC-funded researchers and policymakers and businesses who can make use of their insights.

12. What risks do you think ESRC will face over your term of office? How do you intend to manage them?

Demonstrating impact. UKRI and our communities of researchers currently benefit from a generous funding settlement, and a remarkable cross-party consensus on the importance of funding R&D. The quid pro quo of this situation is that UKRI and its research councils need to ensure this investment generates impact, and that this impact is salient both to policymakers and to the voters and taxpayers whose money we are entrusted with. For ESRC specifically, this means ensuring not only that social science research is rigorous, but also that it is well-connected to users and their concerns, and that it answers questions of pressing public importance. We must also address the issue of the role of place in our innovation system, as raised cogently by critics like Richard Jones and Tom Forth. If the economic benefits of research mostly accrue to the South East of England, the credibility of the system will be undermined; it is incumbent on ESRC and other research funders to show how the benefits of research can be widely spread.

Efficiency. The Research Councils’ activities consume taxpayers’ money; they also require non-trivial amounts of researchers’ time - in writing grant proposals, in peer review, and in compliance and reporting. This work has an important purpose: it ensures that limited research funds are used as effectively as possible, increases the impact of research, and ensures that public money is well looked after. But it is essential that our activities be done as efficiently as possible. ESRC’s ability to improve its efficiency, building on the findings of the Grant and Tickell Reviews and on wider developments in funding practices, will be vital to its legitimacy both with Government and with its researchers.

Diversity and people. UKRI has put in place a major strategy to support and increase diversity. ESRC’s success in the coming years will depend on its ability to nurture its research community, ensuring the next

generation of researchers has the research skills they need to succeed, and fostering a supportive working environment. Delivering on these commitments will be essential if we want to continue to produce high-impact research.

13. How do you assess the role of ESRC in working alongside the other Research Councils and more broadly UK Research and Innovation (UKRI)? What role do you see for the Executive Chair of ESRC in these relationships?

The founding principle of UKRI is that collaboration among disciplines makes for better and more impactful research. As Executive Chair of ESRC, I have a responsibility not just to ESRC itself, but to UKRI as a whole as a member of the UKRI senior leadership team. With this in mind, I would aim to work closely with other research councils to identify opportunities for joint funding of research and doctoral training, and to provoke creative thinking about the role that the social sciences can play in wider research efforts. I would also hope to build on the important relationship with Innovate UK to increase the links between ESRC-funded research and the UK's knowledge-intensive business services sector.

And we must not neglect the new arrival in the UK's research funding system, ARIA, with whom I hope to build a constructive relationship.

I believe that the social sciences have a special role to play in determining "what works" when it comes to the funding of research and innovation. The UK has a strong tradition in the field of innovation studies, and growing capability in using experiments and analysing novel data to understand how best to promote innovation. There are also valuable partnerships to be established with the emerging field of progress studies, which has attracted considerable attention from high-tech businesses around the world and from a range of funders. All of this presents an opportunity for ESRC to build on projects like the UK Innovation and Research Caucus to help UKRI as a whole and the wider UK innovation ecosystem become better at what they do.