



Engineering Professors' Council
Minutes of the RIKT Committee meeting
held on 10th March 2025 via Zoom

Present

Johnny Rich (JR), Ion Sucala (IS), Andy Alderson (AA), Jill Stewart (JS), Sarah Peers (SP), Sarah Spurgeon (SS), Nikita Hari (NH), Crina Oltean-Dumbrava (COD) and Juliana Early (JE)

With

Stella Fowler (SF), Rhian Todd (RT) and Lisa Chilcott (LC)

Apologies

Greg Gibbons (GG), David Brown (DB), Anne Nortcliffe (AN) and Idongesit Ekerete (IE)

1.	Apologies	
	Apologies received as above were NOTED.	
2.	Minutes of last meeting held on 24th September 2024	
	<p>"Draft" watermark to be removed from the 24th September 2024 minutes and loaded to website. Action: RT</p> <p>For the benefit of new committee members, all attendees introduced themselves.</p> <p>2409-03 - LC circulated COD's article '10 steps to apply for Horizon funding' and received no comments. COD asked for the article to once again be circulated to committee members for comment as there have been changes in the sector over the past year. JR suggested LC circulate an online word document so committee members can make changes/additions. Action: LC</p> <p>IS said the deadline for responses is the 20th March 2025. JR said a line can be added to the beginning of the article saying here are some thoughts, please add your own. JR and IS thanked COD for creating the article.</p>	<p>2503-01</p> <p>2409-03</p>
3.	Matters arising and items not elsewhere on the agenda	
	<p>JR said three AI webinars have taken place and were very successful. JR said one of the speakers, Conrad Wolfram, founder of Wolfram, has been in touch to discuss further opportunities. JR said we should think about how we might do more on AI. JR said the webinars were organised following discussion with Manish Malik about a potential CPD offering on AI. The success of the webinars showed there might be an audience for it. COD asked if we should ask professional organisations if they would accept a CPD offering on AI. IS suggested starting by asking IET. SP suggested checking with the</p>	

	<p>Engineering Council first as they set policy around CPD. JR said he has been wary about progressing with CPD but will look into it further within the next year or so.</p> <p>COD asked if the EPC should look at what is happening in HE right now and offer mentoring or counselling to members. JR agreed and said the Executive has been doing what it can by responding to consultations, making a submission to the comprehensive spending review and written a letter to the Secretary of State regarding level 7 apprenticeships. JR said this discussion will likely come up at the next Board meeting, the Rep Support Sessions and the Heads & Deans meeting. SP suggested a survey of researchers at member institutions to see if they are concerned about their positions. SF and JR to follow up the idea of a survey. Action: JR/SF</p>	2503-02
4.	REF Update	
	<p>IS said at the request of the REF Director, Rebecca Fairbairn, he has had a couple of meetings with her to discuss open access, and the work engineering higher education is doing with defence and commercially sensitive topics on. IS said the fact that many engineering departments and colleagues in the country are doing significant work with the defence and security sector should be discussed. IS said for obvious reasons, the results of those pieces of research are not published in journals or papers, and the same applies not only for outputs, but for impact case studies. IS said this is not good because it doesn't reflect the quality and volume of a certain research that's ongoing. It doesn't give a proper image of where all the money going into research is going and in under the current circumstance it could help UKRI to make a stronger case for keeping the funding in some areas of research. Rebecca has told IS that REF would like to have more panellists of high standing in terms of research but also with good industry links. IS said they would also like applicants with a certain level of security clearance. IS asked the committee, how can we communicate this to our members and encourage them to apply? JS confirmed even if she wanted to submit a security cleared case study it would likely be rejected. IS said in REF 2020 2021 it was the defence and security related outputs and impact case studies that were dealt with in a separate pipeline and assessment done by members with the security clearance, but REF believes that this time we need a much more robust process because colleagues doing work with defence will not be encouraged or may be discouraged to put together an impact case study or submit a report. Another problem at the university level would be benchmarking and assessment pre submission, so the idea is to create a separate panel with members with security clearance. This will help universities know which output, which impact case, is good enough to be submitted. IS said Rebecca had said they require expertise from outside of the UK and outside of academia. They need international expertise at strategic and discipline levels to ensure the UK's assessment properly accounts for the value of international partnerships and differences in international approaches. And non-academic expertise is needed to ensure the value of research happening.</p> <p>JE said when talking about defence case studies is, it's very late in the day to go back to universities because most colleagues would be well down the route of having advanced drafts of case studies ready for the next REF, so a lot will already be locked in place at this point.</p> <p>IS said he would feedback the discussion to Rebecca. JR suggested asking Rebecca if her email could be drafted into a blog for inclusion on the website and circulation to members. IS to have further conversation with Rebecca. Action: IS</p>	2503-03
5.	R&D case study project	
	<p>SF referred to the written paper that was circulated prior to the meeting. SF said she has looked at how we can highlight the R&D that is happening as a basis for advocacy and future campaigning. SF said in the paper she has outlined how important the</p>	

	<p>engineering research community is in many government drivers and proposed that we get some evidence of this from our members that is suitable for advocacy and something that we can draw on when trying to make representation in various lobbying or consultation responses. SF asked the committee for feedback about collating case studies. Is there an appetite for this, and if so, how we might the committee resource it? IS said he thinks it is an excellent and timely idea.</p> <p>The committee discussed the <i>Place Based Impact Accelerator</i>, UKRI funded projects on regional upskilling investment and place agenda, <i>Strengthen Places Funds</i> (re: underpinning academic excellence supporting industry) and <i>Towns Deal Funding</i> (pre-Covid) as good short cuts / sources for case studies and data to back up making the case. AA posted in the chat that his initial thoughts on this item were to draw on appropriate REF Impact Case studies? Draw on recent PBIAA awards? Link to Enterprise collaboration toolkit? AA said this was put on the backburner due to resource limitations, but it should be reviewed in light of Patrick Vallance's note of the need to strengthen collaboration between policymakers, universities and businesses on the back of the downturn in industry funding for university research in the NCUB latest state of the relationship report.</p> <p>JR suggested setting up a working group which SP, JS, JE and IS volunteered to attend. SF asked RT to circulate the meeting details to members of the committee that were unable to attend and if necessary to the RIKT community members. RT to fix a date for the first meeting. Action: RT</p>	2503-04
6.	<i>Horizon scanning and other business</i>	
	JR encouraged committee members to attend Congress on the 9-11 June in Manchester.	
7.	<i>Date of next meeting</i>	
	24 th June at 10.30am.	

Action log

Reference	Agreed action	By
2503-01	"Draft" watermark to be removed from minutes and reloaded to website	RT
2409-03	LC to circulate an online word document of COD article so committee members can make changes/additions.	LC
2503-02	JR and SF to discuss the possibility of a survey for researchers.	JR/SF
2503-03	IS to feedback committee discussion on REF to Rebecca and invite her to write a blog for the website.	IS
2503-04	RT to arrange a meeting of the R&D case study working group and invite the committee and RIKT community.	RT