Each year the UK Research Office (UKRO) organises an Annual Conference aimed primarily at European Liaison Officers, European research managers, Research Councils and policy makers. This year’s event was held at Edinburgh University and was attended by ECD’s Margaret Bennett.

Speakers from the European Commission and the Research Councils, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and UUK gave presentations about funding policies, programmes and implementation issues, particularly Horizon 2020, the framework programme for research and innovation that will replace FP7 and will run from 2014-2020.

Horizon 2020 will focus on Excellent Science, Industrial Leadership and Societal Challenges. The rules will be simplified and the application process should become more straightforward. Researchers will have personal accounts and the system will be more user-friendly. The web pages will be more project-focused and more accessible. A new development is that VAT will be recoverable under Horizon 2020.

The first informal calls will be announced in December and Horizon 2020 will be launched officially on 1st January 2014.

Horizon 2020 will place a strong emphasis on engagement and collaborative research work with SMEs requiring closer relationships between academia and industry. The TSB is continuing to be successful in establishing partnerships, and UK HEIs are the most successful in Europe in terms of levels of participation and making use of funds. However UK businesses overall are participating less than their European counterparts. The recommendation is that universities need to become more involved with businesses, an area where Staffordshire University performs well. The perspective Humanities and Social Sciences can offer adds value to a project and AHRC’s experience is that impact/problem-solving is greater with interdisciplinarity. Single discipline research will also continue.

H2020 is a great opportunity for the university, recommendations include building your network, reading call documents carefully in order address the question.

The External Projects Team is here to offer advice and support. Contact us on externalprojects@staffs.ac.uk
Upcoming Funding —

Challenge Led Applied Systems Programme (CLASP)
The Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) External Innovations runs a Challenge Led Applied Systems Programme (CLASP) to support the application and commercialisation of STFC research in the four key global research challenge areas identified in the STFC Futures Programme. [Here]

These four areas are Energy, Environment, Healthcare and Security. Individual annual calls are aligned to specific challenge areas. STFC is now offering £1.5M to fund a range of projects from short feasibility studies to large developmental projects that will use STFC funded research to solve key challenges in the Energy sector.

There is a two stage application process for CLASP. Applicants are invited to submit a short outline, which is assessed by the CLASP panel. Short listed applicants are then invited to develop a full proposal with the assistance of CLASP panel members assigned as mentors.

**Closing dates** Outlines: 10 September 2013 Invited Full Proposals: 03 December 2013

**Contacts** For help with Je-S, please contact the Je-S helpdesk. [Handbook]

The STFC office can provide help and support on CLASP applications. Please contact andi.kidd@stfc.ac.uk

See also Commercialisation; [Here]; Events and Innovations Club; [Here]

BBSRC –New Investigator Scheme

EPSRC, as part of its contribution to the Research Councils UK Energy Programme, is looking to support a SUPERGEN Energy Storage hub. There is up to £4M available for this call and EPSRC is looking to support a single hub for five years -28/08/13


**Open Calls**

| EPSRC, as part of its contribution to the Research Councils UK Energy Programme, is looking to support a SUPERGEN Energy Storage hub. There is up to £4M available for this call and EPSRC is looking to support a single hub for five years -28/08/13 |

| AHRC- Care for the Future Large Grants Call | http://bit.ly/10DzGIL |
| Major research projects that explore the relationship that exists between past, present and future, and how they interact with and shape each other, through a temporally inflected lens. 10/10/13 |


| BBSRC –New Investigator Scheme | http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/funding/grants/new-investigator.aspx |
| Assists early-career researchers to secure their first major element of research funding. 25/09/13 |

Become a Peer Reviewer

All the Research Councils use a peer review process to assess whether grant applications should be given funding. This is made up of academics in the field. Which means it is possible to become a member of a peer review panel. Being a member gives the opportunity to read and review other grant submissions. Joining a panel is a great way to get a better understanding of what makes an excellent funding proposal.

The AHRC’s Peer Review College has around 1,500 members from higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and overseas, and from outside academia. When people are required to join the panel, the AHRC makes a call. You can request to be emailed when this happens by sending a message to: peerreviewcollege@ahrc.ac.uk

A similar process is followed in the other research councils.
Innovation and the Research Councils

Innovation is the application of knowledge or ideas for the development of products, services or processes – whether in business, the public services, or non-profit sectors. The UK innovation system is multi-faceted, with a wide variety of actors, both publicly and privately funded. RCUK and the Research Councils play a role in it through investment in knowledge creation and its translation to application.

This booklet Innovation and the Research Councils highlights how UK research is vital to boosting innovation for economic and business growth.

A copy of the report is available to download Here.

CROSS DISCIPLINARY WORKING: SANDPITS

The Research Councils have a strong emphasis of working together. This means there is funding for staff to carry out research with colleagues from other faculties or different research areas outside of your own institution. The councils are keen to see researchers developing new relationships and project funding often stresses the need to work with other institutions or even non-academic organisations.

A sandpit is a residential interactive workshop over five days involving 20-30 participants, the director, a team of expert mentors and a number of independent stakeholders. An essential element of a sandpit is a highly multidisciplinary mix of participants taking part, some being active researchers and some being potential users of research outcomes, to drive lateral thinking and radical approaches to addressing particular research challenges.

The sandpit is an intensive discussion forum where free thinking is encouraged in order to delve deep into the problems on the agenda and uncover innovative solutions.

You can get involved by applying to attend a sandpit. There is an open call for participants for each sandpit event. Or you can sign up for alerts on the EPSRC website. Apply to take part in a Sandpit – sign up for alerts: Here.

The Sandpit approach is about bringing together people who would not normally interact. They are looking for people who can bring new thinking to an existing problem.

Changes to Research Councils grants processes

The Research Councils have made changes to the way they process grants, studentship and fellowship applications. This change is part of an ongoing programme of ensuring all the Research Councils use the same system and processes.

About RCUK Shared Services Centre Ltd

The creation of the RCUK Shared Services Centre Ltd (RCUK SSC) sharing and standardising processes means more funds can be invested in research, simplifies the grant application process and administration for the Research Councils and their communities.

RCUK SSC is a separate legal entity, wholly owned by the seven UK Research Councils. The RCUK SSC is already providing shared services in HR, Finance, Procurement and IT and grants support through management of the Je-S (Joint Electronic Submission) service for grants, studentships and fellowships.

A list of grants processing contacts is available Here.
**RCUK cross research council themes**

RCUK have a number of cross council themes (RCUK website).

Novel, multidisciplinary approaches are needed to solve many, if not all, of the big research challenges over the next ten to 20 years. To achieve this, RCUK co-ordinates the delivery of multidisciplinary research in several priority areas.

(all links are to the RCUK website):

- **Global Uncertainties:** realising greater security for all (individuals, communities and organisations) in a changing world. The programme examines issues such as crime, terrorism, ideologies, arms proliferation and cybersecurity – research areas where the social, physical and natural sciences can work together on solutions across traditional disciplines (ESRC Lead)
- **Living with Environmental Change:** understanding how people respond to environmental change and developing strong economic responses, including new business models, smart regulation and sustainable global poverty alleviation (NERC lead)
- **Lifelong Health and Wellbeing:** realising economic, social and health gains of healthy ageing while reducing dependency, costs and inequities later in life (MRC lead)
- **Digital Economy:** understanding how technology affects lives, changes the way society interacts, offers new government services and revolutionises business (EPSRC lead)
- **Energy:** understanding connectivity of energy systems, including supply technologies and energy demand (EPSRC lead)
- **Global Food Security:** Funding social science research to create a sustainable, affordable supply of good-quality food for the world’s growing population, from less land and fewer inputs (BBSRC lead)

**Time to Start Shouting from the Roof Tops**

The Medical Research Council (MRC) celebrated their 100th birthday at the end of June. The MRC is the UK’s oldest Research Council, yet only 51% of people in the UK are aware their taxes are used to fund medical research. It would be expected that the same goes for the other six research councils supported by the UK government. The MRC is taking the centenary as an opportunity to promote themselves and the good work they do through research. But their worrying statistic of 51% awareness, should motivate all of us who work in academia to start singing and dancing from the rooftops to share our successes and the benefits that funded research brings.

The External Projects Team blog would be happy to share some of your good news stories on our blog (http://blogs.staffs.ac.uk/research), so feel free to drop us a message with details of what you have been doing. This will go out to other research staff in Staffordshire University. Whilst you are at it, you could also share with the Universities Press Team press@staffs.ac.uk.

**MRC Research Initiatives**

The MRC focuses its funding on research areas which make a difference to human health. There are currently fourteen focus areas of which three fit well with work done at Staffordshire University.

- **E-Health informatics research** An initiative with leading UK research funders to ensure the UK is secured as a world leader in E-health records linkage
- **Lifelong Health and Wellbeing (LLHW)** Multi-disciplinary research addressing factors across the life course that influence healthy ageing and wellbeing in later life
- **Mental health research** MRC's objectives aim to understand the mechanisms of obesity and related disease, and develop interventions to prevent or treat these conditions

Research Councils often have specific funding allocations for focus areas. If these cover research areas where you work, it is worth keeping an eye on the Medical Research council to see if there are any special funding calls to suit your research. Funding opportunities are available Here.

**Visit Our Research and Funding Blog:** http://blogs.staffs.ac.uk/research

**ESOF 2014** is a biennial, interdisciplinary, pan-European general science meeting, which aims to showcase the latest advances in science and technology, promote a dialogue on the role of science and technology in society and public policy and stimulate and provoke public interest, excitement and debate about science and technology.

http://esof2014.org/