

Minutes, Board meeting of 6 May 2022

In attendance: André Sursock (Chair), Norman Sharp (Vice Chair), Oisín Hassan, Crichton Lang, Riitta Pyykkö, Philip Winn, Sigurður Óli Sigurðsson (Minutes) and Þorgerður Edda Hall (Minutes, until 10:00).

Apologies received: Ellen Hazelkorn

The meeting was held via video conference call and convened at 9:00, Icelandic time.

(1) Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was adopted.

(2) Commissioned report: impact evaluation of the Icelandic Research Fund

- i. A draft report on the impact of the Icelandic Research Fund (the Fund) was discussed. The Icelandic Centre for Research (Rannís) administers the Fund. The review was commissioned by the (then) Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and was conducted by the Board in line with terms of reference set out by the Ministry. It was completed under budget. Katrín Frímannsdóttir, under Phil Winn's guidance, co-ordinated the review and the writing of the report and was supported by Fróði Jónsson. The review focused on the impact of grants (grants of excellence, project grants and doctoral student grants) awarded by the Fund in the years 2011-2015. Success rate across the seven sub-fields (or expert panels) of the fund are around 20% and are similar for female and male applicants.
- ii. The main challenges in this work have been the availability and reliability of the data. The available data needed to be checked and some of the universities' data did not match Rannís's. Data analysis was further complicated by the fact that many awardees had not been using ORCID identifiers and many do not reference IRF grant numbers in their publications. There is a need to have clearer data coherence on research outputs and impact. The new Icelandic CRIS system (IRIS) should fill that gap.
- iii. The most positive findings of the review are that citations are increasing and that students are becoming increasingly involved in funded project. The fund is also serving as a springboard for international grants. There is anecdotal evidence that funded research has a strong community engagement component and impact but clear definitions of these are needed at the national level before concrete statements can be made to that effect. The Fund is supporting a pipeline of talents for Icelandic knowledge-based and high-tech companies, who are very complimentary of the Fund.
- iv. Although a number of masters and doctoral students are funded on project grants and grants of excellence, the number of doctoral grants awarded per year does not support a large number of students. As a result, most doctoral students support themselves by working within

or outside a university. There may be opportunities to fund doctoral students through industry collaboration.

- v. There was no follow-up analysis of unsuccessful applicants, but surveys and interviews revealed that many of them did apply again rather quickly, using the feedback they received on their applications
- vi. As per the terms of reference for this review, the report did not set out any explicit recommendations.
- vii. The report was approved with minor suggestions for change that PW will finalise before it is sent to the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation (the Ministry)¹.

NS and PEH left the meeting at 10:00

(3) Discussion of UNAK IWR report

- i. UNAK IWR visit was held online on 22-26 November 2021 and a draft report was sent to UNAK for fact checking before a final draft was submitted to the Board.
- ii. Board members agreed that the report was well written and balanced.
- iii. On balance, the report is positive towards QA at UNAK. The University is distinctive and links well with the region. There is a research strategy focusing on the Arctic but one of the recommendations is that certain aspects of UNAK's operations need to be better aligned with the institutional strategy. The Centre for Teaching and Learning and the Director of Quality Management and HR received special praise. There are noteworthy recommendations to engage better students who are in blended learning and to have a wider discussion on equality, diversity and inclusion.
- iv. The references to ESG were appropriate and fit better in the narrative than in many previous QEF2 IWR reports. It may be enough to have only one ESG table in QEF3, rather than the two in QEF2.

(4) Meeting with UNAK Rector Eyjólfur Guðmundsson re. IWR report

NS and UNAK Rector Eyjólfur Guðmundsson joined the meeting at 11:00.

- i. Rector Eyjólfur noted his satisfaction with the quality of interactions with the review team and their professional approach. The online meeting plan worked well and fostered constructive dialogue that was underscored in the report.
- ii. The main takeaway for UNAK is that they must continue to work according to the University strategy and build on strengths. A new position of Vice Rector of Strategic Management is being created, which will have a QA remit and will lead the development of the next strategic plan, to take effect in 2024.

¹ Finalised report was sent to Ministry on 10 May 2022.

- iii. Rector Eyjólfur supports the observation in the report that although UNAK considers itself part of the international academic community, it has maintained its links with the region. Local companies are already sponsoring or co-sponsoring doctoral students.
- iv. A research strategy with an Arctic focus has been set.
- v. UNAK will organise an internal conference on the results of the IWR, to be followed up with a public event in the Autumn with a focus on dialogue with the external community.
- vi. Rector Eyjólfur concluded by noting that quality enhancement is always a work in progress and that the importance of the work of the Board for the benefit of Icelandic higher education cannot be underestimated.

UNAK Rector Eyjólfur Guðmundsson left the meeting at 12:05

(5) Debriefing of meeting with UNAK Rector Eyjólfur

The Board discussed the meeting with Rector Eyjólfur and agreed that the discussion was positive on the QEF and its impact.

(6) AOB

- i. NS noted that UNAK had submitted an action plan for Police Studies along with a status update.
- ii. NS will propose in the upcoming annual meeting that the Board will move towards establishing a panel for the autumn to conduct a review for possible alleviation of limited confidence. The action plan will be further discussed in the Board meeting on 16-17 May 2022.
- iii. The Board will liaise with the Ministry on these developments.

Meeting adjourned at 12:30