

**Minutes of the Board meeting of the Health Research Board  
held on Friday, 18th February 2022 at Grattan House, 67-72 Lower Mount Street,  
Dublin 2.**

**Present:** Prof B Hannigan (Chairperson)  
Dr T Cunningham (on Zoom)  
Prof S Donnelly  
Prof T Fahey  
Dr J Ling (on Zoom)  
Dr T McWade (on Zoom)  
Prof C Normand  
Dr C Saidlear

**Apologies:** Prof M Harding

**In attendance:** Dr M O'Driscoll (Chief Executive Officer)  
Ms C Cronin (Board Secretary and Head of Governance)  
Dr T Maguire, Director of Research Strategy and Funding. attended for items 5, 9, 10 and 11.  
Ms O Ward, Head of Research and Innovation Infrastructures, attended for item 9.  
Dr P Clarke, Programme Manager: EU Programmes and Policy, attended for item 11.

---

## **1. Conflict of Interest**

Prof Fahey and Prof Normand declared a conflict of interest in relation to the decision on the Structured PhD Programme in Population Health & Health Services Research and left the meeting while this matter was discussed.

## **2. Minutes of the previous meeting**

Minutes of the meeting held on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 were approved subject to the inclusion of a full listing of matters covered in the CEO's Report.

The Board accepted the recommendation from the Chairperson to publish the minutes of the meetings of the Board that take place from the beginning of 2022. It was agreed that the Board would discuss at its next meeting the content and updated format of the minutes to be published,

timing of publication and the possibility of including links in the minutes to relevant sections on the HRB website where appropriate.

### 3. Matters arising and action points from previous meetings

The Secretary reported on the action points from the previous meeting and the Board noted that

- the table entitled '*New Call Announcements and New Awards to be Approved by the Board in 2022*' would be included in the paper on Budget 2022 and deliverables plan when the Department of Health's letter of allocation is received. The table would be updated and included with the reading material for the Board for each subsequent meeting.
- the matter of the disposal of the HRB premises at 73 Lower Baggot Street had been addressed in the CEO's report
- the media digest had been included as reading material linked to the CEO's report.

### 4. CEO's Report

The CEO highlighted the following items from her report:

#### **Budget 2022**

The annual letter from the Department of Health setting out the HRB's financial allocation for 2022 was still outstanding. It was expected that the HRB would receive an increase of approximately 2.5% on its core allocation in addition to other funding for new specific actions. The delay in issuing the letter relates to non-core funding for additional items. Once the letter is received the HRB would finalise its budget and business plan for the year and bring it to the Board for approval.

#### **Update on National Innovation Strategy**

The draft for consultation of the National Innovation Strategy would be issued to members of the Board once it becomes available.

#### **Creating our Futures report**

'Creating our Future' is an initiative launched last summer by Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DHEFRIS), that aimed to start a national conversation with the public on research and science. 18,000 submissions had been received and health and wellbeing are coming through as strong themes.

#### **'Innovate for Ireland'**

The HRB had been invited to a meeting with DFHERIS, to discuss a planned national programme called 'Innovate for Ireland', which aims to fund 1,000 prestigious doctoral scholarships, attracting the very best graduates from around the world funded through a Public Private Partnership.

#### **Future of 73 Lower Baggot Street**

The building at 73 Lower Baggot Street had been placed on the State Property Register for a period of time to give other public sector organisations an opportunity to request its use. It was agreed to bring a paper to the next meeting of the Board setting out proposals for the sale in the event Ministerial approval is granted.

The CEO also reported on:

Health Information Bill

Cancer Consortium

Blended working arrangements in the HRB

Updates from around the organisation

- Annual update on HRB gender policy
- Membership of strategic working groups
- Gambling report published
- HRB Media Coverage

### **HRB Policy on Approval of Host Institutions**

It was agreed to bring a paper to a future meeting of the Board setting out the HRB's policy on Approval of Host Institutions.

## **5. Open Science**

The CEO gave a presentation to the Board on recent developments in Open Science, the activities of the HRB in relation to Open Science and the implications for HRB funding activities. The presentation made reference to the website <https://hrbopenresearch.org/>.

The CEO presented a number of issues that the Board might want to consider at future discussions including the appropriate HRB Open funding model going forward and deficits in the supporting infrastructure (in HEIs) at a national level. The Board noted that, as the platform was only recently set up, many publications were research protocols and, although this indicates good practice by researchers, the number of publications of research findings and outputs was limited. Other key issues discussed were Open Science in the Cloud, effective Data Management Plans and Data Repositories.

The importance of having a continuation plan/succession plan for information held on the website, the editorial process associated with HRB Open, and the invisibility among publications of research created at NGO level were also discussed.

It was agreed to include the matter of HRB Open / Open Science as a discussion item at the Board's strategy event in November.

## **6. Conflict of Interest**

Prof Normand presented a paper prepared by the Board's Task and Finish Group on Conflicts of Interest. Prof Normand talked through a worked example and the Board discussed the practical interpretation of the policy and interpretation of the principles.

It was noted that the recommendations were 'organisation wide' and that the principles would be adapted by the CEO for use by the HRB staff. The Board were in broad agreement with the

recommendations set out in the paper from the Task and Finish Group and the Chairperson and Secretary agreed to prepare a process and template for consideration at a future meeting of the Board.

## 7. Programme of Work for the Board

The CEO introduced the proposed programme of work for the Board for 2022. The Board considered the programme of work and noted that it would be updated and presented to the Board at each meeting during the year.

The Board noted that calls would be issued for the Knowledge Exchange & Dissemination Awards, Impact Award and Summer Student Scholarships schemes during 2022 and **agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Team to approve awards made under these schemes.**

## 8. HRB Service Plan Report 2021 – Status report as at 31 December 2021

The CEO presented a report on the delivery of the HRB's service plan for 2021. The Board noted the report on status of HRB's Service Plan for 2021 as at 31 December 2021, thanked the staff for their work during the year and **approved the submission of the report to the Department of Health's Research Services and Policy Unit as the progress report on the annual Performance Delivery Agreement.**

## 9. Definitive Interventions and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) 2023

Ms Ward introduced the strategic purpose and investment in prior rounds of the DIFA awards scheme (see [link](#)). She said that improvements in monitoring and governance arrangements developed as part of the ongoing work with the HRB's Standing Advisory Group on Clinical Trials would be incorporated into the 2023 call. Ms Ward referred to the National Cancer Strategy (2017-2026), and engagements with the Department of Health and the National Cancer Control Programme around the revised funding model for cancer trials in Ireland and the recent investment in cancer clinical trials infrastructure. She explained, in that context, that DIFA 2023 would include an investment in cancer clinical trials as a special funding stream, subject to the receipt and successful quality review of cancer-related proposals.

The Board discussed the inclusion of a special funding stream for cancer trials and **approved the issuing of a call for the Definitive Interventions and Feasibility Awards (DIFA) 2023 over five years up to the value set out in the HRB's budget.**

## 10. Structured PhD Programme in Population Health & Health Services Research

Dr Maguire referred to decisions of the Board at the meetings on 14 May 2021 and 25 June 2021. She also referred to paragraphs in the paper that set out the application review process and the response to the panel feedback. The Chair commended the modifications made to achieve an inclusive, national approach and the Board **approved funding for PhD training in population health and health services research, at a cost of €6 million over nine years.**

### 11. EU Horizon (health) – Ireland’s performance to date and HRB’s strategic role

The Board noted a report on Ireland’s performance in the now completed seven-year Horizon 2020 funding programme, and Ireland’s performance after the first year of the new (Horizon Europe) programme.

Dr Clarke and Dr Maguire provided the Board with an update on recent developments and the impact of Brexit on international collaborative research that involves the UK. The Board discussed the critical role that the HRB plays in promoting and enabling Irish participation in EU initiatives and commended the extent of work underway.

### 12. Decision taken since the last meeting of the Board

In the interval since the last meeting the Board took the following decision by written procedure:

#### Facilities Services

The Board **approved the award of a contract to Apleona HSG Ltd for the provision of Facilities Services**. The duration of the contract is 36 months with provision for one twelve month extension. The maximum value of this contract is €190,000 excluding VAT.

All members of the Board voted in favour of the proposal.

### 13. Date of next meeting

The date of the next meeting was set for Friday 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022.

### 14. Executive Session of the Board

No decisions were taken during the executive session of the Board.

Signed:   
Prof Bernie Hannigan (Chairperson)

**Actions Arising from the Board Meeting of 18 February 2022**

No.	Action
1.	Board to discuss the content and updated format of the minutes to be published, timing of publication and the possibility of including links in the minutes to relevant sections on the HRB website where appropriate.
2.	Paper to be brought to the next meeting of the Board setting out proposals for the sale of 73 Lower Baggot Street.
3.	Paper to be brought to a future meeting of the Board setting out the HRB's policy on Approval of Host Institutions
4.	HRB Open / Open Science to be included as a discussion item at the Board's strategy event in November
5	Process and template on Conflict of Interest to be prepared by the Chairperson and Secretary and considered at a future meeting of the Board