



Management Board Meeting, 23rd March 2020, 12 pm (GMT)

Held by Zoom video-conference

Minutes

Attended by: Laura Turnbull-Lloyd (Chair, i-CONN Co-ordinator), Christian Kimmich, Andreas Ioannides, Vicky Papadopoulou Lesta, Ronald Pöpl, Thomas Hein, Marc-Thorsten Hütt, Christian Kerschner, Christina Prell, Demian Battaglia, Jennifer King (Project Manager), John Wainwright (Training Manager, in attendance)

1. Chair's Update

Project Manager

Laura Turnbull-Lloyd welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the i-CONN Project Manager, Jennifer King, to the Board. The Project Manager is available to support the whole network and the partners should feel free to contact her with enquiries.

Consortium Agreement & Grant Amendment

The Consortium Agreement is now complete. The approval of the Grant Amendment, which alters the status of the Environment Agency to a Partner and adds the University of Groningen as a Beneficiary, was delayed by the need for the Environment Agency to undertake actions on the REA Portal. The Environment Agency has now completed these actions and the amendment should soon be finalised. Once the amendment is approved we will be able to recruit ESRs 14 and 15.

Advisory Board

The Chair reported that Jacky Croke has agreed to chair the Advisory Board. Ginestra Bianconi and Martin Everett have also accepted the invitation to sit on the Board. Laura Turnbull-Lloyd reported that she is trying to secure a fourth member by approaching the candidates with most support from the network whilst aiming for disciplinary diversity.

Data Management Plan

The first version of the Data Management Plan must be uploaded on the REA Portal by 1st April 2020. The Chair requested that PIs add ESR project specific information to Table 1 (data type, format and estimated volume) and return to the Project Manager as soon as possible. The Data Management Plan is an evolving document that will be updated as required.

Action: All PIs to add data to Table 1

2. Recruitment

Update from each Institution

Each PI updated the Management Board on their ESR recruitment progress.

Action: All PIs to email project Manager with details of recruitment (name, nationality, start date) as soon as that information becomes available.

ESR Contracts

The Co-ordinator reminded the Board that ESRs must be issued with proper employment contracts and that they must receive the full salary designated by the REA (allowing for the country co-efficient), the mobility allowance and the family allowance (if eligible). The REA will check that the ESRs are getting the correct remuneration.

Researcher Declaration

The 'Researcher Declaration', which each institution must complete on the Portal (one for each ESR) is required within 20 days of the start date on the contract.

3. Impact of Coronavirus

The Management Board discussed the impact of Coronavirus on the i-CONN network. The Co-ordinator explained that the REA was offering to be flexible, that they would invoke Force Majeure if COVID-19 meant that commitments required by the grant agreement are broken, and would consider extensions on a case-by-case basis. The Durham University i-CONN team have communicated with the Project Officer at the REA and she has indicated that they ESRs should still start their contracts by September 2020 at the latest (i.e. so that they can complete 36 months of their contract before the end of the grant). The Project Officer also approved ESRs starting their recruitment remotely if COVID-19 imposes travel restrictions.

There was a clear preference in the network to retain the start dates already verbally agreed with the ESRs rather than delay the start date of all ESRs to September. PIs were concerned that the network may lose some of the chosen candidates if ESRs are requested to accept a delayed start.

The Board agreed that a start date for ESR contracts of June 1st be maintained as far as possible with flexibility to suit individual institutions, as long as all ESRs are in place by the beginning of September.

The possible impact of recruitment freezes at individual institutions and possible impacts on visas for some ESRs was discussed.

Action: Everyone to check both the impact of distance working on national visa conditions if relevant and the impact of recruitment freezes and to keep the Durham team updated.

Action: Everyone to keep the Durham team updated about both recruitment freezes and visa issues, if relevant.

Action: Everyone to consider the impact of remote working on the early months of each ESR project (secondments; training; fieldwork etc) for discussion at a future meeting of the Board.

4. September Network Meeting and Training

Currently the details of the September training and network meetings are as follows:

ESR training in Durham : Monday 14th & Tuesday 15th September (arrive on Sunday)

Network Meeting in Durham: Wednesday 16th – Friday 18th September (arrive Tuesday evening, leave Friday evening or Saturday).

Supervisory Board: Friday 18th September (afternoon)

Training at Windsor, Greater London, for ESRs: Tuesday 22nd – Friday 25th September inclusive.

The Management Board discussed the possible impact of COVID-19 but agreed that these meetings would remain scheduled and be re-assessed in July. As a precaution, the viability of delivering any of these events virtually will be investigated. No travel plans should be made for these meetings.

Action: Re-assess the delivery of these training and network events in June (Management Board).

Action: DU Team to investigate the viability of delivering these courses and meetings remotely.

5. Date of next meeting

A meeting will be held by video-conference in late April 2020

Action: Project Manager to arrange.

6. Any Other Business

The Board discussed whether the mobility and family allowances are subject to tax. This varies from country to country. The actual amount of money that any ESR receives will be dependent on local taxes and procedures. The gross value of the salary (with country coefficient) and the allowances should be as designated by the REA.

Action: Ronald Pöpl to advise the other Austrian partners.

