

Science and Research: Ways of Working with the National Boards

Background

At present there is no proposal to continue with the science and education committees within the PLB. The loss of these committees (together with the industrial pharmacy/academic/veterinary pharmacy group committees) represents the loss of an important resource for the new PLB.

This situation is compounded by the fact that there is no proposed education function within in the PLB (i.e. no designated staff resource) and only a very small science function (i.e. one and a half people).

Although there are reserved places for an academic and industrial member of the English Boards, neither the Scottish nor the Welsh Boards have reserved places. The Assembly has reserved places for an academic and pharmaceutical scientist member.

Purpose

At present there is no proposal as to how the National Boards and the Assembly will ensure that they have the necessary resource to be able to provide the PLB with the scientific strategy, and scientific leadership and advocacy required to ensure that it fosters good science and maintains and develops the science of pharmacy.

The PLB is setting up an Expert Advisory Panel (see attached) that will be able to provide the expert advice to the Boards and Assembly. As yet no ways of this group working with the Boards and Assembly have been decided.

The purpose of this document is to stimulate discussion at the next board meeting as to possible ways of working with the Expert Advisory Panel.

Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel

Background:

There is a wealth of expertise amongst pharmaceutical scientists in the UK. The recent 2008 RAE exercise confirmed that UK pharmaceutical science is world leading. It is essential that if the new professional body is to inform and influence the pharmacy and science agenda on the national and international stage then it needs to harness this expertise and utilise it to its advantage. However the advantage would act both ways as benefit would also be gained by the pharmaceutical science community which would have a united voice which they lack at present.

Therefore, to support the work of the Professional Leadership Body (PLB), a comprehensive data base of pharmaceutical scientists is being developed that includes their contact details, their areas of expertise and their willingness to get involved in the new professional body, in respect to sitting on committees/expert panels, responding to consultations, getting involved in PR work.

The database will draw from a wide range of settings including academic centres, clinical, industrial and regulatory. Schools of Pharmacy have been contracted as the distribution list is readily available, the database will also be rolled out further, for example, to industrial and clinical settings.

The medium term ambition is to develop a comprehensive contact database which will be fully integrated with PLB's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. However, the purpose of this paper is to explore how the PLB might, from this database, develop a Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel who are identifiable as leaders with regard to Pharmaceutical Science in all its guises from 'bench to bedside'.

Purpose:

The Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel would consist of individuals who are experts in their field (pharmacists and non-pharmacists) and willing to contribute to:

- **Scientific strategy (horizon scanning, intelligence gathering, planning and priorities)** - acting as a core body of scientific advisors, providing commentary and expertise across the range of sciences relevant to the Professional Leadership Body and also acting as antennae to help pick up new developments to inform the Assembly (and National Boards) in shaping scientific strategy.
- **Scientific assessment and review** – play a key role in the identification of research excellence by acting as a pool of experts for peer review e.g., informing the definition of research questions and methods before commissioning work, and the evaluation of quality and impact of science. By putting in place a clear system of current contacts the PLB could expand the depth and breadth of expertise and identify and address gaps, making use and access easier across the PLB and bringing the resource together in one place.

- **Scientific Leadership & Advocacy** – encouraging/advancing scientific excellence across pharmacy.
 - **Scientific Influence** – influential voice for pharmacy by providing expert input to national, GB wide and international consultations (including a sense check or challenge on draft papers or outline ideas), as well as supporting media and press campaigns.
- [- Expert advice at short notice]

The benefit to the PLB from a Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel would be in building a broad community that reflects a wide range of perspectives, including unorthodox viewpoints, as well as developing wider contacts with scientists across all relevant backgrounds, particularly any that are currently under-represented. There will also be reputational benefits for the PLB in being regarded as a 'scientific' body.

What could it look like?

Bring the science community (all disciplines) who have an interest in pharmaceutical science together by creating a Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel: members of international standing, drawn from the world of pharmacy. The membership would include non-pharmacists and non-UK residents.

Areas of expertise sought could be determined – if the PLB has a strong vision from which it would be possible to derive key areas of expertise required - the Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel could be subdivided into these subject disciplines. However, as a minimum, the PLB should identify as many disciplines as it believes sit within Pharmaceutical Science – to ensure that individuals are clear that it is a wholly inclusive definition of Pharmaceutical Science.

Further consideration needs to be given to the size of the panel. One possible option is that the panel remains small in number, but that it has a responsibility to identify (from the expert database) key individuals where specific knowledge/expertise is required on an ad hoc basis.

Further consideration also needs to be given to the devolved nature of the PLB's governance structure and how a expert advisory panel might best support the work of the National Boards. Advice has been support from the Professional Body Governance Advisor.

Selection criteria/Quality control:

The Australian Research Council provides a useful set of selection criteria which is a good starting point from what you might expect "a pharmaceutical science expert" to look like:

1. Research excellence (nationally and internationally recognised research achievements and expertise, as well as attracting grants from competitive granting bodies - nominees should be at the forefront of research in their area).

2. Broad discipline expertise (broad knowledge and expertise in a relevant specialty research area and/or multidisciplinary experience in two or more discipline areas is desirable – specialists and generalists).
3. Professional and academic standing and reputation (a high level of involvement in institutional/organisational roles and professional organisations).
4. Organisational and administrative leadership skills (administrative experience and leadership, committee/team skills such as forward planning skills, advocacy skills and skills in the management of research; personal qualities of fairness, impartiality, integrity and the ability to work effectively under tight timeframes).
5. Relevant experience in industry, voluntary or public sector organisations.
6. Experience in coordinating research activity including an understanding of the needs of end users in higher education, business and industry, both nationally and internationally.

These criteria could be tailored to meet the needs of a Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel – some of the criteria being core (essential) and others being ‘desirable’.

Process for entry to the Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel:

Entry to the Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel could be based on a nomination process. Nominations from end-users across the private, public and not-for profit sectors would be encouraged. But it might be anticipated that the majority of nominations would come from the nominees’ primary employer – reflecting their willingness to allow that individual to use a proportion of their time on this activity.

Self nominations could also be considered, if suitable references support the nomination.

Nominations could be considered on an annual basis, an initial group of members could be identified and approached by the PLB in the first instance. The Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel would then meet annually for a networking/priority setting conference and to consider nominations to the Panel. This would be less resource intensive than a continuous process of receiving nominations throughout the year.

Activity of the Panel could be managed virtually apart from the annual meeting. Panel members would be annotated as such on the expert database.

Time commitment & remuneration:

A contract could be developed which outlines the responsibilities of a member of the Panel. This could include, for example, a commitment of up to 5 working days per annum to be dedicated to the activities of the Panel (whether it be peer review, consultation response, media activity etc).

There would be no remuneration for members of the Panel other than reimbursement of direct expenses.

Panel members would not have tenure, but would commit to 3 year term on the panel, with the option for a 2 year extension.

What would be in it for members of the Panel?

- Scientific Networking - annual meeting to discuss matters of common interest and concern.
- Scientific Leadership and Influence – the opportunity to bring knowledge and expertise to bear on policy making.
- Aspirational/CV enhancing – encouraging individual pharmacists to meet the criteria to achieve personal excellence in science and become a recognised leader within the profession.

Resources:

It is anticipated that this would require a 0.5FTE administrator to build upon and up date the expert database and provide administration support to the Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel and organise the annual meeting, with some input from Senior Staff (approximately 0.05FTE – 1 day a month).

Conclusion:

These are preliminary thoughts and ideas regarding the establishment of a Pharmaceutical Science Expert Advisory Panel. Further work is planned to:

- incorporate comments from the professional body governance advisor (Michelle Savage/Tony Ashmore);
- liaise with the MHRA regarding the role and remit of their expert advisory group to inform the development of the expert panel concept; and
- give consideration to key areas/disciplines of expertise required (utilising the vision document).

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