From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

Chris Skidmore MP
Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0ET

7th March 2019

Dear Chris,

Quantum technologies
Thank you for your department’s response to our Report on quantum technologies. We are pleased that the Government continues to support this important sector given the potential advantages it has for the UK’s economy and security, as well as the benefits to society that these technologies promise. We welcome the Government’s broad agreement with the principles of many of our recommendations, and look forward to monitoring the progress of the second phase of the National Quantum Technologies Programme and the work of its new Executive Board. Given that the National Programme is now transitioning into its second phase, it is vital that the new Executive Board is established as soon as possible.

There are a few aspects of your department’s responses to specific recommendations that we made on which we would appreciate further clarification.

Recommendation 2 (paragraph 52)
Your response indicated that the Executive Board will be expected to review the innovation ecosystem to determine what more is needed, and that Innovate UK will engage with industry shortly to discuss “industry appetite for innovation centres”. I would be grateful if you could provide further information on:
- when you expect decisions on potential Innovation Centres to start being made;
- whether these decisions will be made by the Executive Board; and
- if the Executive Board determines that Innovation Centres are important for the development of the UK quantum technologies sector, what resources would be available for their establishment?

Recommendation 4 (paragraphs 67 and 68)
We recommended that UK Research and Innovation should take into account ‘in kind’ contributions from industry as it looks to industry to play an equitable role in supporting quantum technologies. Your response indicated that “to be in a position to do so UKRI would need to be assured that these were compliant with state aid rules, quantifiable and with businesses making in-kind contributions being able to demonstrate a genuine and sustainable commitment to a project”. I would be grateful if you could:
confirm that UKRI will review the potential for accepting in kind contributions in order to ascertain such assurance, and that it will seek to accept such contributions as far as is possible;

- set out what funding the Government expects to be available for fundamental research in quantum technologies as the National Quantum Technologies Programme develops.

Recommendation 9 (paragraph 89)
Your response noted the recent EPSRC competition for Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) in quantum technologies, as well as other mechanisms offering doctoral training in this area, as examples of training programmes to be delivered in the next phase of the National Quantum Technologies Programme. I would be grateful if you could:

- specify the number of doctoral studentships for research into quantum technologies that you now expect to be supported at CDTs, and across all available mechanisms;
- set out how the CDT studentship and overall training place figures requested above compare to those for the previous phase of the National Quantum Technologies Programme;
- set out what steps have been put in place to improve the ability of industrial partners to engage with CDTs after their new funding period has started; and
- state what proportion of the £315m awarded to the next phase of the Programme will be allocated to training.

Recommendation 14 (paragraph 115)
Your response stated that the Government was organising a workshop to discuss the need for training and guidance on the threat to national security that could arise from collaboration between UK universities or businesses and researchers affiliated with foreign militaries, and related matters. Please could you provide more detail on:

- when this workshop will take place;
- what outputs are expected from the workshop;
- the extent to which these will be made public; and
- what you expect the follow-up actions from the workshops to be.

We would be grateful if you could respond to these points by Tuesday 26 March.

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Chair