

# Introducing the Industry Representative



## Malcolm Weir

(Industry Representative,  
Biochemical Society Council of  
Trustees; Heptares)

The Biochemical Society is committed to bringing together molecular bioscientists and supporting our members across the community. To this end there has been a renewed focus on those working in the industrial, biotechnology and academic drug discovery sectors. By way of background, the Society's membership has historically been largely made up of academics, with a smaller number of members working in industry. In 2015 an Industry Strategy was developed by the Head of Membership Engagement with the aim of providing a platform for collaboration, facilitating innovation and supporting links between academia and industry.

As part of the Society's Industry Strategy, an objective was set to increase the number of industry representatives on committees and an Industry Representative was introduced as a Trustee role as part of the Governance Review which took place in 2016. I became the Industry Representative on the Council of Trustees in 2017 and I work with the wider team at the Society to broaden our involvement with industry and to address the needs of members working in industry. I am a biochemist by background (both my BSc and PhD are in the discipline) and I am still deeply involved in molecular bioscience research. From PhD, I entered the pharmaceutical industry (GlaxoSmithKline) and after 17 years in drug discovery I moved into the entrepreneurial world of biotechnology, as CEO of Inpharmatica (bio/chemoinformatics) and then co-founding the MRC spin-out Heptares, now upon acquisition a part of Sosei Group, where I continue as R&D Director. At Sosei Heptares, we have transitioned molecules invented by structure-based design into clinical development. Academic interactions continue to be crucial to our success. I still look back with fondness at the important role the Biochemical Society played in my early career, especially Harden conferences and other meetings. Seamless interaction with industry is critical to making the most of cutting-edge academic research, and I hope my experience can support the work of the Society's Industry Strategy and ensure that industry interests and skills are represented at every level of the Society, including at Trustee level. At June 2018, 10.7% of the Society's governance structure is occupied by members from 'Industry'. Work around the Society's Industry Strategy is also supported by the Industry Advisory Panel, a small and informal network of members and non-members who provide ideas and feedback on various industry facing initiatives.

The overarching objectives of the Biochemical Society's Industry Strategy are to increase:

1. the representation of industry within the structure and governance of the Biochemical Society including Council, Boards, Committees and Panels
2. the number of members from an industry background

In turn, it was felt that that this would ensure that the needs and interests of those working in biochemical and related industries were met, in line with the overall Biochemical Society's objective of advancing the molecular and cellular biosciences, both as an academic discipline and to promote its impact on areas of science including biotechnology, agriculture and medicine. Over the last 20 years, biochemistry has evolved to become an integral part of industrial research and development, in particular in the pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors, but also reaching well beyond biomedical sciences into other areas of business. Traditional barriers between industry and academia have happily been eroded and translation from basic science to societal and economic impact greatly improved.

Discussions at the Society's Strategy Retreat in November 2017 determined that industry will remain a key area of strategic focus for the Society as it moves to closer alignment with and expands its activities to serve the wider community. Initially within this theme, molecular bioscientists working in industry will be a priority group and this focus on industry will form a cornerstone of the Society's next Strategic Plan for 2019–2021. At present, the Society's various committees are considering how they can support the

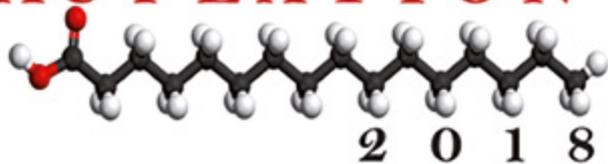
expansion and strengthening of networks so that the Society can move beyond being a primarily academic community and expand to serve those with both professional interests in the molecular biosciences. From 2019–2021 this is likely to include the development of membership offerings for apprentices and technicians and expanding our careers support and information, promoting the opportunities offered by biochemistry and molecular biology through academic and vocational pathways. Other options being explored include providing professional development for technicians (for example, through the Society's online training portal), introducing professional registration, continuing to support teachers at all levels, to

develop their skills and knowledge and to facilitate encounters with industry and academia for teachers and students, and continuing to use the Industry and Academic Collaboration Award to increase dialogue with those working in a commercial setting and to grow awareness of the Society and its relevance to those working in non-academic settings.

You can read about some of the ways we are currently supporting industry on our website at: [www.biochemistry.org/Membership/SupportingIndustry](http://www.biochemistry.org/Membership/SupportingIndustry).

If you have ideas about industry-facing initiatives or opportunities that you think the Society could be exploring, please email Laura Woodland, Head of Membership Engagement ([laura.woodland@biochemistry.org](mailto:laura.woodland@biochemistry.org)). ■

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