

**NURSE REVIEW OF RESEARCH
COUNCILS**

Call for evidence

MARCH 2015

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Nurse review of Research Councils: Call for evidence

This call for evidence invites you to submit views and information for consideration as part of Sir Paul Nurse's review of Research Councils. The call is relevant to the research community in universities, research institutions, Government and industry.

1. Introduction

Government Ministers have asked Sir Paul Nurse to lead an Advisory Group to review, with Research Councils, how they can evolve to support research in the most effective ways.

This review follows the recent Triennial Review of the Research Councils which found that "individually they are operating from a position of strength", also highlighting important questions about their structure and function - in particular that the Councils might take a more proactive role "both in responding to and also proactively challenging and shaping the Government's long term research agenda."

The Research Councils are highly respected organisations here and around the world. However, all organisations need to keep pace with the changing environment within which they operate, and it is right to consider how they may need to evolve to ensure they are as effective as they can be going forward.

Sir Paul Nurse, Chair of the review, has said:

"The aim of the Research Councils review is to look at overall questions relating to UK research funding, and build on the findings of the recent more focussed Triennial Review. Through this review we will seek to ensure that the UK continues to support world-leading science, and invests public money in the best possible way."

The questions that Ministers have asked Sir Paul to look at are set out in the published terms of reference for the review and are included at **Annex A**.

2. Call for Evidence

This review follows the Triennial Review of Research Councils, and will take into account evidence already submitted as part of the Triennial Review process. However this call provides an opportunity for organisations and individuals with an interest in the subject to provide any additional evidence that they feel is relevant.

Submissions of evidence addressing the following broad themes, and picking up on the questions in the review Terms of Reference, are invited from organisations and individuals with expertise and interest in this area:

1. **Strategic decision-making:** For example, views are invited on how funding decisions are made; how society and government can engage with science funding decisions; how good decision-making can be encouraged at different levels; and how Research Councils can make the best decisions to ensure research drives economic growth and promotes health, quality of life and environmental sustainability.

The following questions from the review Terms of Reference may be relevant here:

- How should the Research Councils take account of wider national interests including regional balance and the local and national economic impact of applied research?
- Is the balance between investigator-led and strategically-focused funding appropriate, and do the right mechanisms exist for making strategic choices?
- Within each Research Council is the balance of funding well-judged between support of individual investigators, support of teams and support of equipment and infrastructure?

2. **Collaborations and partnerships:** For example, views are invited on the effectiveness of the Research Councils' interactions with each other and with external organisations, as well as the Research Councils' role in supporting collaborations and partnerships between institutions and between disciplines, and the links between Research Council-funded activities and other academic, industrial, European and global R&D activities.

The following questions from the review Terms of Reference may be relevant here:

- How can the RCs catalyse collaboration between institutions?
- How should the work of the research councils integrate most effectively with the work of agencies funding innovation, such as Innovate UK, and with the work funded by Departmental research and development budgets?
- Should the funding of Research Councils be directed almost exclusively to the university sector, with organisations such as the Meteorological Office, the Health and Safety Laboratories and the National Physical Laboratory out of scope?
- Do they adequately support interdisciplinary research?

- Are the right arrangements in place to ensure optimal funding for research that crosses disciplinary boundaries?

3. **Balance of the funding portfolio:** For example, views are invited on the Research Councils' role in delivering an appropriately balanced portfolio of investments in science in the UK, taking into account factors such as government priorities / grand challenges, discovery and applied research, and geographical distribution.

The following questions from the review Terms of Reference may be relevant here:

- Are the divisions of scientific subject areas between the research councils appropriate?
 - Is the balance of funding between different Research Councils optimal?
 - What are the gaps or holes in the funded portfolios of the research councils?
 - How should the Research Councils take account of wider national interests including regional balance and the local and national economic impact of applied research?
 - Is the balance between investigator-led and strategically-focused funding appropriate, and do the right mechanisms exist for making strategic choices?
 - Within each Research Council is the balance of funding well-judged between support of individual investigators, support of teams and support of equipment and infrastructure?
4. **Effective ways of working:** For example, views are invited on how the Research Councils can operate most effectively within the wider science and innovation system, recognising what works well and identifying opportunities for improvements. You may wish to consider issues such as the strategic leadership provided by the Research Councils, how Research Councils engage with their communities, and the operation of the peer review system.

All comments are welcome and we particularly encourage submission of evidence from the research community in universities, research institutions, Government and industry.

Responses received in answer to this call of evidence will be used by Sir Paul Nurse and the Advisory Group as they take forward the review of Research Councils, which is expected to report in summer 2015.

3. How to respond

Please respond to this call for evidence by completing the form at **Annex B**. This form is available separately as a Word document at

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nurse-review-of-research-councils-call-for-evidence>. Please email or post the completed response form to:

Email: nursereview@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Postal Address:

Nurse Review Secretariat

Research Councils Unit

5/ Victoria 1

Department for Business, Innovations and Skills

1 Victoria Street

London SW1H 0ET

This call for evidence will close on Friday 17 April 2015 at 23:45.

All comments are welcome and we particularly encourage submission of evidence from the research community in universities, research institutions, Government and industry.

Please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If you are responding on behalf of an organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

Please provide your response in Microsoft Word format. In order to be considered, submissions should be no longer than 3000 words.

4. Confidentiality and Data Protection

The information you send us may need to be passed to colleagues within the Department for Business Innovation and Skills, published in a summary of responses received and referred to in the published independent report.

Information provided in response to this call for evidence, including personal information, may also be subject to publication or release to other parties or to disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004). If you want information, including personal data that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

5. Help with queries

Questions about this call for evidence can be addressed to:

Chris Chudziak, Laura Notton or Ling Xu

Nurse Review Secretariat

Research Councils Unit

5/ Victoria 1

Department for Business, Innovations and Skills

1 Victoria Street

London SW1H 0ET

Tel: 0207 215 5000

Email: nursereview@bis.gsi.gov.uk

6. What happens next?

Responses received in answer to this call of evidence will be reviewed after the closing date. They will be used by Sir Paul Nurse and the Advisory Group as they take forward the review of Research Councils, which is expected to report in summer 2015.

Annex A: Nurse Review Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Nurse Review is to examine, and provide recommendations on, how Research Councils can evolve to support research in the most effective ways, reflecting the requirements to secure excellence, promote collaboration and allow agility, and in ways that best contribute to sustainable growth.

Questions which Sir Paul Nurse has been asked to consider as part of his review are:

- How should the Research Councils take account of wider national interests including regional balance and the local and national economic impact of applied research?
- Is the balance between investigator-led and strategically-focused funding appropriate, and do the right mechanisms exist for making strategic choices?
- Within each Research Council is the balance of funding well-judged between support of individual investigators, support of teams and support of equipment and infrastructure?
- Do they adequately support interdisciplinary research?
- Are the right arrangements in place to ensure optimal funding for research that crosses disciplinary boundaries?
- Are the divisions of scientific subject areas between the research councils appropriate?
- Is the balance of funding between different Research Councils optimal?
- What are the gaps or holes in the funded portfolios of the research councils?
- How can the RCs catalyse collaboration between institutions?
- How should the work of the research councils integrate most effectively with the work of agencies funding innovation, such as Innovate UK, and with the work funded by Departmental research and development budgets?
- Should the funding of research councils be directed almost exclusively to the university sector, with organisations such as the Meteorological Office, the Health and Safety Laboratories and the National Physical Laboratory out of scope?

Annex B: Nurse Review response form

NOTE: This response form is available separately as a Word document at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/nurse-review-of-research-councils-call-for-evidence>.

Please state whether you are responding as an individual, or on behalf of an organisation:

Please write here your name/ the name of your organisation and contact details. This would help us to contact you if we have further questions.

Please provide evidence and views in relation to the following themes:

1. Strategic decision-making

2. Collaborations and partnerships

3. Balance of funding portfolio

4. Effective ways of working

5. Any other comments?

The closing date for responses to this call for evidence is **Friday 17 April 2015 at 23:45**.

Please provide your response in Microsoft Word format. In order to be considered, submissions should be no longer than 3000 words.

Please email or post the completed response form to:

Email: nursereview@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Postal Address:

Nurse Review Secretariat

Research Councils Unit

5/ Victoria 1

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1 Victoria Street

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