Cancer Research UK’s response to the Scottish Funding Council’s Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant consultation

January 2015

Cancer Research UK
Cancer Research UK is the world’s leading cancer charity dedicated to saving lives through research. We support research into all aspects of cancer: from exploratory biology to clinical trials, as well as epidemiological studies and prevention research. This is achieved through the work of 4,000 scientists, doctors and nurses.

In 2013/14, we spent around £34m on research in Scotland. Furthermore, we have set out an ambition increase our total spend on research in the UK by 50% over the next five to 10 years1. We receive no Government funding for our research, however Government investment is critical to partnering and supporting our investment in research in Scottish universities and in the NHS.

Cancer Research UK funds a wide range of research projects in Scottish universities, as well as the Edinburgh Cancer Research Centre, the Beatson Institute in Glasgow and the Cancer Research UK Formulation Unit at Strathclyde, which manufactures and prepares experimental anti-cancer drugs for clinical trials in the UK.

Executive Summary
We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Scottish Funding Council’s (SFC) consultation. Our response focuses on the proposal to change the allocation of the Research Excellence Grant (REG).

- We fully support the SFC intention that the REG should uphold the principles of dual support, including contributions to the full-economic costs of charity income. We also support the SFCs strategic plan, which aims to allow universities to attract increasing resource from charities.
- We recognise that by separating the REG into three separate grants, the SFC aims to increase transparency over the extent to which the REG supports charity income in Scottish institutions.
- We are extremely concerned that by fixing the total amount of REGc the SFC will lose the ability to ensure that its support of charity funded research is proportional to the research investment that charities make in Scotland.
- A fixed REGc that is unable to fully support charity funded research would have a disproportionate impact on Scottish institutes that are particularly successful in winning charity research grants and would disincentivise Scottish institutions from seeking these grants. Such a scenario would likely result in decreased charitable investment for research in Scotland. This investment is significant. In 2013, Scotland attracted 13% of the £1.3 billion invested in health research by members of the Association of Medical Research Charities2

We recommend that if the REGc grant is introduced:
- Its initial budget is set to a level that supports charity research to at least the same extent that the current REG allocation model provides.
- Its budget is reviewed annually to ensure that it matches any change in charity investment in research in Scotland.

1 http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/funding-for-researchers/how-we-deliver-research/our-research-strategy
The principle of supporting charity research income

We support outcome 7 in the SFC’s strategic plan which aims to enhance Scotland’s ability to attract economic investment and enable universities to attract increasing resources for the UK Research Councils, the European Commission, charities and other funders of research.

Investments in medical research produce substantial returns to the economy. Each pound invested in cancer-related research by the taxpayer and charities returns around 40p to the UK every year. By investing in science, the Scottish Government leverages investment from charities and industry, both in the UK and from overseas, generating further scientific and economic growth. Research is often supported by multiple funders: two thirds of cancer research publications acknowledging external support have relied on multiple funders, while just under half benefited from overseas funding and almost a fifth are also supported by industry.

The activities and funding of the charity, public and private sectors are complimentary and mutually reinforcing, delivering returns that are greater than the sum of their parts. UK medical research in particular benefits from a unique model of diverse funding. Recent research commissioned by Campaigning for Science and Engineering (CaSE) has shown that universities that receive higher levels of public funding generate more research income from other sources (such as charity, industry and overseas).

It is critical that the REG supports charitable research income. We are pleased that the SFC has recognised this through its intention to re-state the principle that the REG should uphold the principles of the dual support system, including contribution to the full economic costs from Research Council, charity, European and other research income to retain confidence in the Scottish university research base. We fully support the SFC re-stating this principle as an underlying requirement of the REG.

Cancer Research UK’s concern over the proposed REG model

We are concerned that the main driver behind the proposal to change the allocation model of the REG is to provide stability to the support provided for ‘quality’ and ‘volume’ via a fixed proportion of the overall REG allocation, so-called REGa. Whilst we agree with the principle to support quality research and understand the fixed proportion, this should not come at the expense of supporting charity investment in Scottish universities.

We recognise that by separating the REG into three separate grants, the SFC aims to increase transparency over the extent to which the REG supports charity income in Scottish institutions. However, we are extremely concerned that by fixing the total amount of REGc the SFC will lose the ability to ensure that its support of charity funded research is proportional to the research investment that charities make in Scotland.

A fixed REGc that is unable to fully support charity funded research would have a disproportionate impact on Scottish institutes that are particularly successful in winning charity research grants such as Edinburgh and Glasgow, both of which were Scotland’s highest ranked universities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2014/15.

Cancer Research UK funded researchers in Scotland have expressed concern that the SFCs proposals would disincentivise Scottish institutions from seeking charity funding and could lead to a culture

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1 Health Economics Research Group (Brunel University), RAND Europe, and King’s Policy Institute, 2014, Estimating the returns to UK publicly funded cancer-related research in term of the net value of improved health outcomes.
2 OHE and SPRU, 2014, Exploring the interdependencies of research funders in the UK.
4 http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/
whereby researchers are discouraged from applying for charity funded grants. Such a scenario would likely result in decreased charitable investment for research in Scotland. This investment is significant. In 2013, Scottish universities and hospitals attracted 13% of the £1.3 billion invested in health research by members of the Association of Medical Research Charities\(^7\). It is important that the SFC recognises this contribution and encourages institutions to attract charitable investment.

As stated, we support the SFC intention that the REG should uphold the principles of dual support, including contributions to the full-economic costs of charity income. We also support the SFCs strategic plan, which aims to allow universities to attract increasing resource from charities. In order to meet these objectives, it is crucial that if the SFC goes ahead with its proposal to separate the REG into the three grants as outlined, that the SFC ensures:

- REGc fully supports charity funded research - the initial budget set for REGc should be sufficient to ensure that charity funded research is supported to at least the extent that the current REG allocation model provides.
- REGc is responsive to charity investment in research in Scotland - the REGc budget should be reviewed annually to consider changes in charity investment in Scotland and should be amended to match any changes.

We strongly recommended that the SFC incorporates the above principles for the REGc component of the REG allocation to ensure that charity funded research is fully supported in Scottish institutions. This will be necessary to incentivise Scottish institutions to seek charitable investment and reassure charities of their investment in Scottish research.

For any further information please contact Dr Hollie Chandler, Senior Policy Adviser, Cancer Research UK, hollie.chandler@cancer.org.uk or 0203 469 5337.

Review of REG and RPG: NUS Scotland submission

Introduction and summary
NUS Scotland welcomes this opportunity to respond to the review of REG and RPG. On the basis of many statistics, Scotland has a research base and output of which we can all be proud, clearly punching above our weight in terms citations and competitive funding awards, in comparison to not just the UK but also further afield. However, NUS Scotland believes that the way the research environment and funding currently operates means it often benefits only a select few institutions, perpetuating a divide between ‘older’ and ‘modern’ universities, and could exacerbate inequalities within wider higher education. Ultimately, we believes that any review of the allocation of research funding, both at an institutional and a PG researcher level, provides an important opportunity to examine how we can ensure greater diversity among academics and research students, which for too long we believe has been at unacceptably low levels.

In summary, we believe:
- Funding concentration in Scotland, and the wider UK, is among the most concentrated of ‘high performing’ countries and this could harm the reputation, research-teaching linkages, and output of all our universities.
- Serious consideration needs to be given to reforming the REG methodology to restore funding for, at least, 2* research within the weighting, if not also 1*.
- On the basis of the evidence, women and other groups, continue to be underrepresented within academia and the funding system can often be set up in such a way as to, inadvertently, exacerbate existing inequalities.
- The SFC should implement a duty on institutions and departments that receive REG funding to outline their current recruitment patterns by protected characteristic, and where applicable, to outline plans to improve equality within recruitment patterns.
- The SFC could introduce an equalities condition of grant for REG funding.
- The SFC could introduce a ring-fenced portion of REG funding to fund research or improved practice in diversifying recruitment.
- The SFC should introduce a duty on institutions and departments that receive RPG funding to outline their current recruitment patterns for research postgraduate students, and where applicable, plans to see greater equality in recruitment.
- The SFC should ensure a set proportion of RPG funding is used to investigate and address barriers to recruitment of research postgraduates among under-represented groups.
Underrepresented groups in academia

Student inequalities
Each year, the Equality Challenge Unit produces a statistical report on equalities in higher education, for both staff and students, the most recent of which covers 2013.¹ This report shows that, in common with the UK, and further afield, women have made significant steps forward in their representation in higher education, and now comprise the majority of students in higher education (56.9%). However, as we will see later with staff numbers, this masks a number of underlying inequalities.

Looking at the level of their studies, women students make up the majority of first degree, other undergraduate, and postgraduate taught students; however, their representation among postgraduate research students drops to 46.2%. Similarly, when we look at the subject studied, women are far more highly represented in non-STEM subjects (60.3%) compared to STEM (50.9%), with the latter also masking extremes between 79.5% of AHP students being women compared to 15.7% of engineering and technology students. As we discuss later, both subject studied and level of study inequalities are important factors when looking at potential ways to reform the research postgraduate grant.

While for the purposes of this response our main focus is on gender, where the most obvious (at least in statistical terms) inequalities follow a similar trend for BME students, at least in terms of the decrease between first degree and other undergraduate students (6.1% and 6.4% respectively, broadly in line with, if not higher than, national demographics) and postgraduate research students (3.2%). For disabled students there is a general decrease between first degree and other undergraduate students (9.8% and 8.2%) and both taught and research postgraduate (6.1% and 5.5%).

Staff equalities
These statistics show that, while it would seem that women are equally represented among staff in Scotland (with a figure of 54% women and 46% men) this masks greater inequalities according to function. Whereas women make up 62.3% of professional and support staff they are 44.5% of academic staff. Moreover, existing inequalities are compounded when we look at contract type. When part-time staff are excluded from the figures, women’s representation across all occupational groups decreases, except for secretaries, typists, receptionists and telephonists occupational group.

As with the statistics on student inequalities, there is a similar trend among staff in STEM subjects where the clear majority are men (59.6%) and within this, for example, 86.2% of electrical, electronic and computer engineering academics being men.

These statistics then converge in an even more unequal fashion when we look at the level of academic staff, and their salaries. As the ECU’s reports notes, the overwhelming majority of professors are male (79.5%). This holds across both part-time and full-time staff, and across STEM and non-STEM subject areas. The gender difference was most prominently observed in full-time professorial roles in STEM, where men comprise 84.0% of staff. This in turn means 69.3% of academic staff (72.0% of full-time and 57.4% of part-time) earning over £50,000 are men, and the proportion of male academic staff earning over £50,000 was nearly double that of female academic staff (32.8% compared with 18.1%), with twice the proportion of men compared to women binging in a salary at the highest grade of £55,908 and above (22.3% of men academics compared to 10.1% of women).

Most worryingly, but by no means unique to higher education—however, something we believe we believe higher education needs to be at the forefront of tackling—this means that there is a striking pay gap between men and women, with Scotland having the highest mean pay gap of all the home nations for staff, at 22% compared to 19% across the UK. Similarly, among professors, Scotland has the highest median pay gap (7.2% compared to 6%).

We have chosen to look in detail at the statistics on staff and students as part of this response as we believe that, as in many other areas of further and higher education, the funding system can often be set up in such a way as to, inadvertently, exacerbate existing inequalities. We believe that reforming research funding, both for the institution and the individual, could lead to greater numbers of staff and students reaching higher levels of academic, and equally importantly, across all subject areas.

Reforming the methodology for research to support diversity

Concentration of research funding
Scottish universities have a record on research that we should rightly be proud of, with our institutions punching above their weight in attracting research funds to Scotland and in citations compared to population. However, we remain sceptical of the benefits of continued funding concentration, and developments in recent years which have seen this increase, and we are of the view that it continues to perpetuate a divide between the modern and older universities.
In the past few years, we have seen certain examples of universities closing entire departments which were high performing (in teaching, student experience and satisfaction terms) and at times even unique in Scotland close due to a perceived lack of research output or income. This has been particularly obvious within humanities and social sciences, despite our belief that the 21st century will require a strong inter- and multi-disciplinary approach to research. We remain very concerned that many institutions ‘chase’ research ratings based on historically higher performing departments while neglecting other departments, either through research development or supporting high quality teaching.

We are concerned that concentrating the vast majority of research at only a handful of institutions could damage the student experience and threaten the principle that all universities should be both research and teaching institutions. Scottish universities should be able to link research to teaching so that Scottish graduates benefit from teaching which incorporates the cutting edge research being undertaken at the institution, and we would urge any reform of research funding to explore this issue in greater detail.

Moreover, research funding concentration is not necessarily found in other, high (and higher) performing research intensive countries. As the University Alliance note2, by most measures the United States is the world leader in research, yet has a significantly lower level of funding concentration than the UK. In the United States, the concentration of research funds for science and engineering held by the top twenty institutions has remained relatively static over the last decade, at around 30%. For non-science and engineering funding it is at a similar level (36%).

In the UK, however, the top twenty institutions receive 75% of mainstream funding, and over 90% of research council funding. Even more starkly, analysis by the Million+ groups shows that, in 2012/13, 25% of the UK’s total recurrent research funding was allocated to just five universities; 50% to twelve universities; 75% to thirty one universities; and, the remaining 130 universities shared the remaining 25%.3

Analysis by NUS Scotland, shown below, indicates a similar trend in Scotland.

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2 Research excellence in the 21st century: funding a healthy research ecosystem
3 Million+, The Innovation Challenge: a new approach to research funding, 2014
### Comparison between institutional share of REG funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEI</th>
<th>2008/09 REG (£)</th>
<th>2009/10 REG (£)</th>
<th>2014/15 REG (£)</th>
<th>% share REG 2008/09</th>
<th>% share REG 2009/10</th>
<th>% share REG 2014/15</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen</td>
<td>15,229,000</td>
<td>19,342,000</td>
<td>22,391,000</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>9.15</td>
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<td>747,000</td>
<td>571,000</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.23</td>
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<td>19,219,000</td>
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<td>9.98</td>
<td>9.10</td>
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<td>1.13</td>
<td>1.12</td>
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<td>1,551,000</td>
<td>2,033,000</td>
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<td>9,785,000</td>
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<td>4.63</td>
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<td>Queen Margaret University</td>
<td>571,000</td>
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<td>392,000</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.16</td>
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<td>Robert Gordon University</td>
<td>335,000</td>
<td>2,419,000</td>
<td>2,037,000</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>0.83</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCS</td>
<td>169,000</td>
<td>169,000</td>
<td>167,000</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.07</td>
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<td>St Andrews</td>
<td>15,883,000</td>
<td>16,212,000</td>
<td>18,946,000</td>
<td>8.04</td>
<td>7.68</td>
<td>7.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stirling</td>
<td>8,973,000</td>
<td>7,380,000</td>
<td>5,686,000</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.32</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strathclyde</td>
<td>18,748,000</td>
<td>17,239,000</td>
<td>17,546,000</td>
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<td>8.17</td>
<td>7.17</td>
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<tr>
<td>UHI Millennium Institute</td>
<td>610,000</td>
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<td>1,424,000</td>
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<td>0.75</td>
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<tr>
<td>West of Scotland</td>
<td>529,000</td>
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<td>976,000</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>0.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>197,543,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>211,127,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>244,678,000</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above shows the amount of REG funding awarded to each Scottish HEI over three academic years – the most recent year of funding (2014/15), the first academic and funding year following RAE2008 (2009/10), and the academic and funding year during RAE2008, before results were announced (2008/09).

This shows that, much like the situation across the UK, research funding in Scotland is highly concentrated in a select few institutions. One institution accounts for over a third of funding (Edinburgh); two account for over 50% (Edinburgh and Glasgow); and, three account for almost three quarters (Edinburgh, Glasgow, St Andrews and Aberdeen). Moreover, it is a funding situation which has remained relatively unchanged over the period.

Equally, there is evidence to suggest that the modern universities suffer most disproportionately as a result of concentration. This is particularly the case when we look at the amount of funding received per student, with student numbers being, generally, higher at modern universities yet their share of recurrent research funding being far lower. Figures from Million+ show that the ‘sum per head’ received by modern universities, according to postgraduate student numbers, was £661 compared to a figure of £8,136 at the Russell Group.

Further analysis by NUS Scotland (below) again shows this to be the same in Scotland.

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4 Excludes SRUC, Edinburgh College of Art and OU Scotland
Comparison between institutional share of REG and PG students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>PG Students (n)</th>
<th>REG (£)</th>
<th>% PG students</th>
<th>% REG</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Aberdeen</td>
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<td>9.17</td>
<td>2.67</td>
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<td>509,000</td>
<td>0.80</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dundee</td>
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<td>20,263,000</td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>9.09</td>
<td>-0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh Napier University</td>
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<td>1,488,000</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>-3.37</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
<td>8565</td>
<td>81,402,000</td>
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<td>0.78</td>
<td>-4.03</td>
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<tr>
<td>Glasgow School of Art</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>1,790,000</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
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<td>43,386,000</td>
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<td>19.45</td>
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<td>Heriot-Watt University</td>
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<td>9,550,000</td>
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<td>4.28</td>
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<tr>
<td>Queen Margaret University</td>
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<td>St Andrews</td>
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<td>Stirling</td>
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<td>2.27</td>
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<td>0.39</td>
<td>-2.59</td>
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<td>Total(^5)</td>
<td>52760</td>
<td>223,026,000</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>100.00</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above shows the number, and corresponding share, of postgraduate students at Scottish HEIs in the year for which figures are most recently available (2012/13) along with the amount of REG funding received in that same year and the share of this held by each institution. As with the research funding concentration shown above, we can see that a select few institutions benefit disproportionately to their peers, in relation to the number of research students they have to the share of REG they receive.

Both of these disparities have been further exacerbated as a result of the weighting changes seen across the UK, first with the withdrawal of funding for 1* research and significant reduction in 2* weighting, and then ultimately the withdrawal of 2* research from the weighting. Following these changes, the Million+ show that this resulting in an increase in funding for Russell Group universities of 2.4% and a decrease at all other universities of 2.64%; this was amplified at the modern universities who saw a collective reduction in funding of 7.28%.

We believe on the basis of the evidence that research funding concentration poses ultimately one serious problem: it continues to benefit the older universities and perpetuates a divide between the ‘modern universities’ and the ‘research intensives’. We believe that serious consideration needs to be given to reforming the REG methodology to restore funding for, at least, 2* research within the weighting, if not also 1*.

Research funding and equality

\(^5\) Excludes Edinburgh College of Art, SRUC and OU Scotland.
NUS Scotland remains concerned that, due to the way that the REF (and formerly the RAE) is designed, and the implications this has for the REG allocation, inequalities in recruitment within UK-funded research could be exacerbated if the REG does not consider this issue. Chief among concerns with the RAE/REF is the number of women being submitted, and the underlying reasons for this.

In 2009, following the results of the previous year’s RAE results, HEFCE undertook a detailed study into how various protected characteristics related to inclusion of staff in the RAE. That study showed that, within the ‘permanent academic staff’ pool, 67% of men were included in RAE compared to 48% of women. When age was considered as a factor within this the difference was most stark within the 30-50 age range. The report notes that, while this could be due to a lower proportion of women having the necessary research record (considered below) it could equally be due to deep rooted inequalities across men and women’s research careers.

One reason for the proportion of women being included in RAE/REF which has been mooted is the lower rates of women who receive competitive research grants, and therefore their level of output. This has been researched previously by the National Centre for Social Research who found that, while there was little difference in the success rates of grant applications between men and women, women were less likely to apply in the first instance; this could be influenced by underlying inequalities. Many of the reasons for the differences in grant application would seem to be related to underlying gender inequalities, particularly:

- **Seniority:** Women are less likely to be in the most senior jobs (and particularly at professor level) who submit the greatest number of applications. This can even have a further impact on REF submission via multi-authored papers – where they come from the same institution, only one academic can submit it which may tend to be the more senior one, who are proportionately more likely to be a man.

- **Employment status:** Full-time academics are more likely to apply for grants than those on part-time contracts. Equally part-time academics are more likely to be women. Again, employment status has further consequences for REF, and in particular impact. Given the number of case studies available to support impact will be limited, those working within similar units cannot all be included. In such instances, it would seem obvious to use further metrics which could often include participation at conferences, public lectures, etc; i.e. activities which will more than likely be undertaken by full-time staff, who are disproportionately likely to be men.

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6 Selection of staff for inclusion in RAE2008, HEFCE, 2009
7 Who applies for research funding, National Centre for Social Research, 2000
• **Tenure:** Those with permanent contracts are also more likely to submit grant applications; however, women are more likely than men to be on fixed-term contracts. Again, this can have consequences for REF via impact and the ‘additional activities’ mentioned above, depending on the workload of such staff.

• **Career break and family circumstances:** Those who have had a career break in the past ten years (e.g. maternity leave) and women with children (even compared to men with children) are less likely to apply for grants. While REF policy was changed for 2014, to allow a reduction of one output for each period of maternity leave taken during the REF period, there have been concerns raised that some institutions (and grant awarding bodies) do not themselves have adequate maternity policies. Moreover, a reduction in output in REF merely takes accounts of childbirth and maternity leave as existing concepts, and not the wider and ongoing responsibilities of childcare.

As such, we are concerned that inequalities within research and academia more generally then continue to have negative influences on funding. We believe that, given the sums of money involved and the more general ideal that Scottish higher education promotes equality and access, funding methodologies should attempt to rectify some of these inequalities. A simple, metric/assessment based, system simply cannot, by its very definition, achieve that. Linked to this, we would have concerns round the potential equalities impacts of removing the ‘other activity indicators’ from the weighting methodology, but particularly so in relation to the number of research assistants and students. As noted previously, there is an extremely high attrition rate between undergraduate and postgraduate, and this is particularly pronounced among women and other underrepresented groups. We believe that by ensuring universities are recruiting greater numbers of research assistants and students, by including them within the methodology, we can ensure that universities are investing much more in developing and supporting young researchers.

We would welcome working with the SFC and wider stakeholders to develop solutions for this, and secure a way of making research funding more equitable and take account of underlying barriers faced by women and underrepresented groups. For example, the SFC could introduce a duty on institutions/departments that receive REG funding to outline their recruitment patterns by protected characteristic, and where applicable, to outline plans to bring greater equality across protected characteristics in terms of recruitment.

Furthermore, the SFC could introduce a separate equalities condition of grant for recurrent REG research funding which would aim to address many of these issues and ensure that, even if institutions continued to be apportioned money on the basis of assessment that it did so while at the same time as tackling the issues presented above. Alternatively, a portion of recurrent funding could be ring-fenced as an equalities fund
which institutions could bid into on the basis of equality and diversity work they wished to undertake, or projects that could evidence progress on the issues.

The need for greater evidence on the part of institutions was highlighted by the Equality Challenge Unit who undertook a study among 32 institutions of their equality work related to RAE2008. One of its findings was that only 22 provided evidence of having undertaken an equality impact statement and they concluded that “there were significant variations in the quality of this documentation and, save for a few notable exceptions, the quality of the EIAs provided was poor.” We believe that there is merit, and basis, for greater intervention by funders, including SFC, to ensure that research funds are being deployed in an equitable way which addresses many of the issues we have identified.

**Recommendations:**

- The SFC should implement a duty on institutions and departments that receive REG funding to outline their current recruitment patterns by protected characteristic, and where applicable, to outline plans to improve equality within recruitment patterns.
- The SFC could introduce an equalities condition of grant for REG funding.
- The SFC could introduce a ring-fenced portion of REG funding to fund research or improved practice in diversifying recruitment.

**Research postgraduate grant**

As with the overall funding mechanism for research, we have concerns that the way in which RPG is calculated and granted means that it could continue on many of the issues we have highlighted there. In particular, given the cost weighting is higher for STEM subjects it means that those departments which, on the basis of the evidence, are more heavily populated by men than women, a system of male dominance in research could be carried on, particularly as the majority of PGR students are within STEM, furthering any funding divide.

As shown previously, there is a high attrition rate among women (and particularly within STEM, which attracts the highest funding). As the former UKRC (UK Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology, now incorporated into the Wise Group) has noted, in Scotland, 27% of women STEM graduates work in a STEM related field, compared with 52% of male graduates. This means that of the 56,000 female STEM graduates in Scotland, just over 15,000 continue to work in the sector.

We would like to see the SFC introduce a similar duty to that suggested above for REG funding, meaning institutions and departments in receipt of RPG funding would have to...

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8 Equality Challenge Unit, The impact of the process to promote equality and diversity in the Research Assessment Exercise 2008, 2009
outline their current recruitment patterns for research postgraduates and where applicable outline plans to deliver greater equality in this area.

We believe that a set proportion of the RPG should be utilised by institutions to investigate and remove any structural barriers to women’s participation in research and encourage more women to move from undergraduate to postgraduate, and potentially on to academia. This could extend beyond gender to the full range of protected characteristics. As the statistics show, there remains a chronic underrepresentation of women at progressively higher levels of academia. Ensuring that institutions are doing much more, starting with undergraduates and providing targeted investment and support into postgraduate, would provide a much larger talent pool for these positions and start progress to a much more representative sector.

As we noted above, seniority often plays a role in the eligibility of women to apply to apply for research grants. As such, ensuring we do much more, earlier in the system, to encourage more women into academia and ensure promotion and development opportunities exist, then this will simply carry on later into the system, including appearing as an inequality in the outcomes of REF and as such the recurrent funding an institution receives.

This funding could be used to provide enhanced studentships for high performing women, and other underrepresented groups, invested into mentoring schemes for postgraduate students, and support recruitment, development and training of greater numbers of women and underrepresented groups. Given RPG exists to support the environment for ‘high quality research development and training’, such a move would seem a natural progression for this funding, ensuring that it is deployed in a much more targeted and beneficial way.

**Recommendations:**

- The SFC should introduce a duty on institutions and departments that receive RPG funding to outline their current recruitment patterns for research postgraduate students, and where applicable, plans to see greater equality in recruitment.
- The SFC should ensure a set proportion of RPG funding is used to investigate and address barriers to recruitment of research postgraduates among under-represented groups.

For more information on anything contained within this submission, contact:

Philip Whyte | Senior policy and public affairs officer
Philip.whyte@nus-scotland.org.uk
Professor Paul Hagan  
Director, Research, Innovation and Outcome Agreements  
Scottish Funding Council  
97 Haymarket Terrace  
Edinburgh  
EH12 5HD  

TEL: +44 (0)20 7611 8888  Direct: 8421  
FAX: +44 (0)20 7611 8545  Direct: 8735  
E-MAIL: j.farrar@wellcome.ac.uk  

14th January 2015

Dear Paul,

RE: Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant Consultation

I am writing in response to the SFC review of Research Excellence Grants (REG) and Research Postgraduate Grants. The Wellcome Trust is the UK’s largest charitable foundation and we invest more than £700 million a year in science, the humanities and social sciences — a figure that we hope to increase over the next 5 years.

The research that we fund in Scotland is world-leading and highly valued. Since 2009, we have invested over £311 million in Scottish institutions and over 1000 people are employed through Trust funding. Last year, Scotland secured 20% of our grants to UK universities — this equates to £81 million, more than ever before. We also support a number of important centres including the Dundee Drug Discovery Unit, Edinburgh’s Wellcome Trust Centre for Cell Biology, and Glasgow’s Wellcome Trust Centre for Molecular Parasitology.

Is it essential that the model supports charitable research income?

We are pleased to see that the importance of the dual support system, including contributions to the full economic cost of research, has been reaffirmed. The combination of SFC block support alongside grant income underpins Scotland’s varied, internationally competitive research base. It allows institutions to take strategic decisions and provides flexibility to undertake blue skies research and respond to new opportunities. It is also a sound investment — each pound of public or charitable funding for medical research returns around 40 pence to the UK every year1.

We welcome the continued focus on quality and volume in the allocation of REGs. Support for charity-funded research via REGs is also critical. In UK universities, the Trust funds in partnership with Government. We fund the full directly incurred costs of research on all awards, but as a charity, we expect the general running costs to be provided by Government. Funding streams like REGs also help leverage investment and encourage donations by giving the public confidence that their money will be spent directly on research.

We welcome the uncoupling of REGs and REGCs so that charity support is allocated in proportion to the amount of income received by an institution. However, we urge the SFC to give further consideration to how the split between these different components will work in practice. Any erosion of REGCs could mean that insufficient support is available for charity-backed research, potentially decreasing Scotland’s attractiveness as a hub for science and limiting its ability to

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215 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE, UK  
T +44 (0)20 7611 8888  F +44 (0)20 7611 8545  www.wellcome.ac.uk

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secure increasing resources from this sector in the future.

We also note your plans to exclude numbers of PhD students and research assistants from funding model calculations. While a simple and transparent process is important, metrics must also be in place to recognise the valuable contribution of early-career researchers.

The Trust is proud of the programmes it supports in Scotland, and a meeting with the SFC and the Scottish Government to discuss the biomedical science landscape in Scotland is imperative. We will be in touch to arrange this.

Yours Sincerely

Dr Jeremy Farrar
Director, Wellcome Trust