

## Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant responses

<b>Date / time response submitted</b>	<b>11/01/2022 10:13</b>
In what capacity are you submitting your response?	Organisation
Your organisation (if applicable)	Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
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<b>Overarching issues</b>	
Q1. If it were necessary, what would be the implications of delaying implementation of REF 2021 results and changes to REG until AY 2023-24?	On balance, it would be preferable to implement the REF 2021 results sooner: the REF and REG always reflect an historic, rather than current, assessment of quality and it would be wise to avoid a further differential between the past performance that drives the funding and the current work it supports. At the very least, clear indications of future allocations late in AY 21-22 would enable more secure strategic planning for the next period, as we emerge from the pandemic.
Q2. Should SFC seek to limit downward changes in REG experienced by individual universities post REF2021 and, if so, what should be the scope of any adjustments made?	<p>Probably not. REG should continue to be linked to REF outcomes and there is a danger that the grant becomes ossified if no downward movement is possible. The 3-year implementation process adopted in 2014 could be a useful mitigant to potential volatility in REG on account of the revised inclusion arrangements for REF 2021, but even this approach has the downside of slowing the development of emergent areas for research.</p> <p>Following REF 2014, a considerable differential opened up between the Conservatoire's funding for research and the funding received through QR by our direct sectoral SSI competitors in RUK - with those with smaller submissions and/or less excellent quality profiles receiving more QR, more quickly, than the Conservatoire did in REG. This was partly due to difference in the respective formulae for QR and REG, partly due to the different subject weighting, and partly due to the 3-year phasing in of additional funds, but it has placed us at a continued competitive disadvantage throughout the period.</p>
Q3. You are invited to comment in your answers throughout the document on opportunities for and	These mainly relate to our responses to the RPG.

barriers to advancing equality and achieving inclusion. Overarching comments related to the aims of the public sector duty in the context of this review should be made here.	
Q4. How important (or otherwise) is it that the Scottish approach to underpinning research funding is in step with the rest of the UK? What elements of consistency (or distinctiveness) in SFC's approach influence Scottish HEIs' research competitiveness?	We support the SFC's right to pursue a different path and benefit from that in a number of material ways - but please see our comments in Question 2 above.
Q5. In the changing research landscape, is the balance of funding between SFC's underpinning support for research and underpinning support for PGR training & environment optimal?	This is difficult to judge from our perspective as a monotechnic institution, submitting to a single UoA. Supporting PGR training and environment more strongly could be a wise investment for future quality - even if the balance of funding were tweaked only minimally. Please see our comments below on the RPG.
<b>Research Excellence Grant</b>	
Q6. Views are sought on the principles proposed for REG and on whether the proposals within this paper are consistent with the principles.	We consider the proposal to be wholly consistent with the principles set out.
Q7. What are your views on whether the current quality weightings for 3* and 4* REF scores are fit for purpose?	We broadly support the current quality weighting for 3* and 4* research, and consider it important that 3* research continues to be supported. As a developing research environment, we are especially mindful that today's 'internationally excellent' research is tomorrow's 'world-leading' research.
Q8. What are your views on aligning the proportions of REGa allocated and the proportions of REF score elements?	We would argue that REGa should continue to be determined by the overall profile, rather than the individual elements, in recognition of the fact that the three elements considered in REF - outputs, environment and impact - each contribute in distinct but complementary ways to the overall research base and are already weighted in the REF process itself.
Q9. We would welcome your views on the balance between the elements of the REG formula. Within the income-driven elements, we welcome your views on whether we have included the correct income sources.	The Conservatoire receives very small allocations from the income-driven elements on account of its limited external research income. As a monotechnic, the sources of external income available to us are more limited (and those sources tend, themselves, to have smaller budgets and make smaller awards). However, we still pursue external income vigorously, and have to meet real and opportunity costs in doing this from our REGa allocation. For this reason, we do not support a significant rebalancing of REG towards REGb and REGc.
<b>Research Postgraduate Grant</b>	
Q10. Are the proposed principles for RPG	We consider the proposal to be mostly consistent with the principles set out.

appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the grant and the changing PGR landscape?	
Q11a. We are seeking views on the purpose of RPG and its future role in supporting Scottish institutions to respond – individually and collaboratively – to the changing landscape.	We have found it difficult to understand the allocation of RPG in the context of an SSI that receives the minimum ‘baseline’ allocation. Our RPG population has grown substantially in recent years, but this has not yet been reflected in an increase in RPG, meaning that the same financial resource now supports many more students. We are uncertain when (or whether) this is likely to change as we continue to grow and this affects our strategic planning for RPGs.
Q11b. We are seeking views on taking forward increased accountability for RPG, for example by linking to shared objectives or outcomes, and how SFC and the sector could work in partnership to achieve this.	We are broadly supportive of a ‘shared objectives’ approach having pursued a similar approach in the activities supported by the UIF.
Q12a. We are seeking views on how the RPG could play an increased role in improving participation of underrepresented groups within Scotland’s PGR community, particularly within specific research areas where under-representation is most extreme.	<p>Related to our response to Question 11, it is possible that an adjusted RPG model could support institutions to support underrepresented groups within the PGR community. At the beginning of the current AY, the Conservatoire had 52 students registered (headcount) - including those under examination or completing corrections - but of these, 56% were part-time, meaning that the FTE number of students was considerably lower - at 37.5 FTE. Of course, a part-time student does not take half the resource of a full time student, and creates the same administrative load etc. etc. as a full time student. While this is easily ‘mopped up’ in a PGR environment where the majority of students are FT, it is an additional drag on a small community that includes many PT students.</p> <p>If the RPG were adjusted to support part time students better, there could be positive outcomes in terms of underrepresented groups. For example, at the Conservatoire, with its high proportion of PT students, 58% of RPGs are female, as compared to 48% nationally; almost all PT students are active economically and many are self-supporting.</p> <p>Basing the RPG on headcount, or adjusting the assumption that a part time student is requires only 50% of the support of a full time students, would support more diverse RPG communities across the sector.</p>
Q12b. We are seeking views on how SFC’s focus on widening access and participation could be supported by RPG in the postgraduate research student context.	See above.
<b>Other comments</b>	
Q13. Please make any other comments relevant to	We have no further comments.

this consultation.	
<b>Publication of responses</b>	
<p>We may publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves. Published responses may be attributed to an organisation where this information has been provided but will not contain personal data. When providing a response in an individual capacity, published responses will be anonymised. Please confirm whether or not you agree to your response being included in any potential publication.</p>	<p>Publish information and excerpts from this survey response INCLUDING the organisation name.</p>

