

## Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant responses

<b>Date / time response submitted</b>	<b>12/01/2022 11:08</b>
In what capacity are you submitting your response?	Organisation
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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?	Not answered.
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?	While not being in a position to define the scale of adjustments, UCU would agree with the funding council seeking to reduce substantial losses in income to individual institutions as a result of the 2021 REF. Stability of funding and the avoidance of large-scale fluctuations are important for avoiding negative consequences for employment and jobs. Significant downward changes, exacerbated by them coming late to institutions as a result of the delay in the REF results, should be avoided.
Q3. You are invited to comment in your answers throughout the document on opportunities for and 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.	<p>The inclusion in the consultation documents of a summary of the PGR population in Scotland by protected characteristics is welcome, but the findings are both, sadly, unsurprising and depressing reading. The continuing inequality is particularly galling given the strong calls in the 2015 review for equality requirements as a prerequisite for funding.</p> <p>In 2017 UCU published a report into the experience of BAME postgraduate researchers detailing at length, at a UK level, the experience and the challenges faced. These included the interplay between personal, economic and social factors including ethnicity, racism, and marginalisation.</p> <p>In summer 2021 UCU launched a major campaign for postgraduate researchers to be given the same protection as university staff. The campaign includes a manifesto which has significant detail on the current problem and outlines what steps should be taken to remedy the situation. Treating PGRs as staff rather than students would mean that they would be entitled to the</p>

	<p>same employment rights as other staff, which should enhance their standing. While there are many equalities shortfalls for university staff (indeed the current dispute between employers and UCU has the gender, race, and disability pay gaps at its heart) some additional rights over the way PGRs are both regarded and treated should provide some redress against the current inequalities faced.</p>
<p>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?</p>	<p>See answer to question 12*</p>
<p>Q5. In the changing research landscape, is the balance of funding between SFC's underpinning support for research and underpinning support for PGR training &amp; environment optimal?</p>	<p>Not answered.</p>
<p><b>Research Excellence Grant</b></p>	
<p>Q6. Views are sought on the principles proposed for REG and on whether the proposals within this paper are consistent with the principles.</p>	<p>Not answered.</p>
<p>Q7. What are your views on whether the current quality weightings for 3* and 4* REF scores are fit for purpose?</p>	<p>UCU has long argued that the current weightings are too concentrated, with two star rated research receiving no public funding despite being of sufficient quality to be recognised internationally, and the ratio in funding terms between three and four star being too large. The gap leads to an overly competitive system based on a winner takes all approach that has a significant impact both on individual academics, and the funding income in university departments. The rating system devalues research that is important and of significance but not rated as four star, and can create barriers for early career researchers. It also leads to women academics being under-represented on the impact side of REF (Davies, J., Yarrow, E. and Syed, J., 2020. The curious underrepresentation of women impact case leaders: Can we disgender inequality regimes?. <i>Gender, Work &amp; Organization</i>, 27(2), pp.129-148). What is considered to constitute 3 and 4* research is informed by the epistemological and ontological biases held by reviewers, ie what is valid to research and how. In putting together this response to the consultation, UCU has also heard from members with their insight that neither does the REF deal well with disability.</p>

	<p>Additionally, there is an increasingly widespread perception that REF 2021 is a process subject to institutional game playing such as attracting 4* researchers with high salaries, or re-classifying staff to get them in or out of REF. A survey, conducted by Research England, found that the majority of researchers (85% of respondents to the survey) believe that the REF has increased game playing (including on staff recruitment and embellishing impact) in the research community; and that the majority of researchers believe that the REF has decreased the authenticity and novelty of research.</p>
<p>Q8. What are your views on aligning the proportions of REGa allocated and the proportions of REF score elements?</p>	<p>Not answered.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Not answered.</p>
<p><b>Research Postgraduate Grant</b></p>	
<p>Q10. Are the proposed principles for RPG appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the grant and the changing PGR landscape?</p>	<p>Not answered.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>11A&amp;B answered together: UCU would like to see the scope of the RPG widened to provide additional adequate support to self-funding PGRs. In our answer to question 12, we reference the UK Government's 'new deal' for postgraduate research. The UCU manifesto for PGRs calls for enhanced protections as part of this new deal, largely by calling for PGRs to be regarded as staff rather than students but also, at a UK level, for additional support for self-funding PGRs such as happened during the pandemic. UCU also welcomed the additional money for research from the Scottish Government announced in May 2020 and particularly the focus on early careers. Widening the scope of the RPG to include more, currently, unfunded PGRs would enhance Scottish institutions' attractiveness as destinations for PGRs comparative to the rest of the UK and support PGRs from currently marginalised groups, given that we know that they make up a smaller percentage of those receiving research council funding than within the overall PGR population. Clearly there would be a financial implication on the Scottish Funding Council but given the possible direction of travel elsewhere in the UK with the 'new deal'; the potential impact on supporting the PGR community including those from marginalised groups, then calls for additional funding from Scottish Government to allow this is something UCU</p>

	would support.
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.	See 11A.
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>12A&amp;B answered together: As indicated briefly in response to question four and 11, UCU is currently campaigning for postgraduate researchers to be given the same rights as university staff. The campaign includes a manifesto which incorporates significant detail on the current problem and outlines what steps should be taken to remedy the situation including treating PGRs as staff members, meaning they would be entitled to additional rights. Even with additional rights as staff members, many PGR workers would still face casualised and low paid working conditions which should be addressed by the use of fractional long-term or annualised hours rather than ad hoc zero-hours contracts. We know that there is a link between equality and precarity; and that you are more likely to be casualised if you're BAME and/or a woman.</p> <p>Additionally, as shown in the 2017 report referenced in question three on the experience on BAME PGRs, one of the major issues faced is the lack of support. The UCU PGR manifesto calls for PGRs to be fully 'supported, trained and enabled to participate in the university community'. Further detail on the level of support is in the manifesto, but a requirement for a university to agree to provide adequate support in order to receive RPG funding could begin to improve participation among underrepresented groups.</p> <p>The UK government has announced its commitment to a new deal for post graduate research and UKRI are consulting on what a new deal would mean for postgraduate researchers. Assuming that the findings from that review are beneficial for PGRs and for widening participation then there may be lessons that can and should be applied by the SFC to the RPG. *While some divergence in approaches in a dual system is unavoidable and not necessarily detrimental as long the system is coherent overall, we would want to see best practice in Scotland including learning from other funding bodies in the UK where appropriate.</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	See 12A.

student context.	
<b>Other comments</b>	
<p>Q13. Please make any other comments relevant to this consultation.</p>	<p>A number of documents are referred to in our answers but I've been unable to link to them in the answers above. I've therefore copied links to some below. If you need any further links or information then please be in touch.</p> <p>Q3. 2017 report into BAME postgraduate researchers: <a href="https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8633/BME-doctoral-students-perceptions-of-an-academic-career/pdf/JA_BME_doc_students_report_Jun17.pdf">https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/8633/BME-doctoral-students-perceptions-of-an-academic-career/pdf/JA_BME_doc_students_report_Jun17.pdf</a></p> <p>Q3 and elsewhere. Postgraduate researchers as staff campaign manifesto: <a href="https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11623/Postgraduate-researchers-as-staff-manfesto-2021/pdf/UCU-PGRs_as_staff_manifesto_Jun21.pdf">https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/11623/Postgraduate-researchers-as-staff-manfesto-2021/pdf/UCU-PGRs_as_staff_manifesto_Jun21.pdf</a></p> <p>Q7: Survey on researcher attitudes to the REF: <a href="https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8542/1/understanding-perceptions-of-the-research-excellence-framework-among-uk-researchers.pdf">https://repository.jisc.ac.uk/8542/1/understanding-perceptions-of-the-research-excellence-framework-among-uk-researchers.pdf</a></p>
<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>

