

Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant responses

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In what capacity are you submitting your response?	Organisation
Your organisation (if applicable)	University of the Highlands and Islands
Your full name	Professor Donna Heddle, acting Vice Principal Research and Impact
Telephone	1856569247
Email	donna.heddle@uhi.ac.uk
Overarching issues	
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?	This might be a useful initiative but would affect smaller universities with less financial reserves adversely.
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>When the results of the 2021 REF are announced, SFC funding for HEIs that do less well financially than in 2014 should be protected across at least 2 years, in the same way that some universities were protected from the full impact of their funding cuts after the 2014 REF.</p> <p>REG needs to be more consistent across the full REF period. Instead, in each successive RAE and REF, the funding agreed at the start changes year-on-year and nearly always works in favour of the research intensives over time. This is not a helpful situation.</p>
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.	SFC should undertake a mapping exercise which demonstrates the alignment of equality and diversity action plans across the Scottish HEIs, thereby securing maximum impact.
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?	Dual support is a key factor to maintain, but this is a 'minimum' provision in Scotland. More investment is needed if the Government's aims and objectives for economic stimulus are to be delivered along with the growth of a knowledge economy from increased GDP investment, which is required. This is essential to the viable competitiveness of Scottish HEIs with their UK and international counterparts. We should align to both UKRI and Scottish Government

	priorities.
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?	The balance of funding needs to reflect the changing landscape and exhibit greater flexibility and social context. Funding needs a more fundamental re-think than REG/RPG alone, at a full UK level, and involving UKRI. 3.5 years support for PhD funding is the average but tending closer to 4 years but institutions also now have to cover for sickness leave etc. There needs to be a greater funding allocation for PGR training.
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Q6. Views are sought on the principles proposed for REG and on whether the proposals within this paper are consistent with the principles.	Supporting funding 'excellence wherever it is found' is a key principle that should be retained, but there is also the need to address the pipeline of researcher talent development. Furthermore, with the move towards 'all staff in' in the 2021 REF, it is time to revisit funding for 2*-rated research, even if only at a modest level.
Q7. What are your views on whether the current quality weightings for 3* and 4* REF scores are fit for purpose?	We agree that funding should not be concentrated further. We also expect that there is likely to be a significantly increased proportion of 4* outputs in the research-intensive institutions, given the reduction to an average of 2.5 outputs per person submitted. As well as acting to the disadvantage of the less research-intensive universities in respect of resultant likely funding, the joint Funding Councils need to consider what message this level of 4*-rated performance will mean at the international level, as regards the apparent world-leading standard of UK research that will be claimed as a result of the results. It could pose a serious reputational risk to UK Higher Education Research if the results appear to show an unrealistically large amount of 4* research output. However, this is more a function of the volume of research output than the REF now seeks to assess, and it is less a case that the rating scale is incorrect. However, for non-output-based elements of the REF, it is suggested that in the future separate scores for Vitality and Sustainability should be recorded and reported and not an aggregate of the 2. Also, given that interdisciplinarity is something we have to note per input, a rating for this in future REF exercises would allow for the measurement of the development of thematic interdisciplinary research.
Q8. What are your views on aligning the proportions of REGa allocated and the proportions of REF score elements?	The proportions of REGa should be allocated as per the proportion of REF score elements, with the added proviso that, given that interdisciplinarity is noted for each output, a score should be awarded for interdisciplinarity across a UoA and resources allocated accordingly. This would be in line with strategic moves towards interdisciplinary and thematic research,
Q9. We would welcome your views on the balance	The consultation document mentions the Income multiplier and funding for competitively won

<p>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>charities income (para 36), but UHI would not be in favour of the latter which simply bolsters the funding for research intensive HEIs at the expense of other HEIs whose access to competitively won grant income from all sources is under severe challenge.</p>
<p>Research Postgraduate Grant</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>The proposed principles in paragraph 45 need clarification. What we actually need is a healthy balance of disciplines and not only economically driven ones.</p> <p>The key question to be answered here is: what should be the contribution to the real costs of research degree studies, and the associated HEI environment, that needs to be provided-for by the Funding Councils? What are HEIs expected to cover/provide for PGR students as a minimum, and who is expected to cover the costs of this? The SFC (like other funding bodies) cannot simply expect that this will be covered by other sources, particularly without being precise about what those other sources are and the fact that all HEIs would have access to these. Clarification here would be useful. Also a look again at subject weighting would be of benefit as we move to more interdisciplinary focussed research..</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>Costs of delivery of PGR students' training and development needs, as well as support for a range of areas (e.g. mental health and personal support plans tailored to research students' specialists needs), are going up and up, as well as salaries of supervisory staff and their associated costs, which are increasingly interdisciplinary and cross-institutional, and where grace-and-favour supervision no longer is the norm. This has all been exacerbated by Covid-19 and continuing overarching funding for research students whose studies have been interrupted by Covid should be in place for at least the next two years.</p> <p>Core money needed by HEIs should not be diverted into things that are perceived as added value. Instead, RPG should make separate provisions for added value activities such as placements etc. That will allow for individual instiotutions and collaborations between HEIs to respond to the changing landscape.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>Create an SFC Universities working group to take this forward in the first instance.</p>
<p>Q12a. We are seeking views on how the RPG could</p>	<p>A proportion of RPG could be a fund for geographically distanced students to access resources and</p>

<p>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>	<p>training opportunities in person. Covering the costs would be socially inclusive and would allow underrepresented groups such as carers to attend these events which are readily available to students in urban HEIs.</p>
<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.</p>	<p>It is important to note that REG (in its PGR element) only accounts for doctoral level students, but there is a growing call for Masters by Research provision, which is completely ignored. More support for this type of PGR could help to widen access and participation and should be specifically detailed in the RPG criteria.</p>
<p>Other comments</p>	
<p>Q13. Please make any other comments relevant to this consultation.</p>	
<p>Publication of responses</p>	
<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>

