

Research Excellence Grant and Research Postgraduate Grant responses

Date / time response submitted	10/01/2022 17:03
In what capacity are you submitting your response?	Organisation
Your organisation (if applicable)	[REDACTED]
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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?	<p>Our intelligence on the progress of the assessments of REF21 units of assessment is that the process is on schedule and the risk of the outcomes being delayed beyond May 2022 is low, so there is no rationale to delay on this basis. However, as the consequences of implementing the changes suggested in the consultation could be far reaching it would seem sensible to delay the implementation of the funding outcomes from REF21 until 2023/24.</p> <p>Any financial uncertainty caused by this will be less than that HEIs will be continuing to manage because of the COVID pandemic.</p>
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?	We are supportive of SFC limiting downward changes to REG that may be experienced by individual universities. We would recommend transition/phasing in of changes to help institutions adjust to any steep reductions.
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.	As an organisation committed to equality and inclusion across our whole organisation across all aspects of our activities, students, teaching staff, research staff and support staff we welcomed these and applied them rigorously across our submission. While ensuring E&I in research creates some specific challenges, we will continue to work to address these irrespective of our REF21 outcome and the timing of the funding arising from this. Therefore, we do not consider and impacts positive or negative from the topics raised by the consultation.
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	We believe this to be essential. It needs to be recognised that Scottish HEIs are competing for UK, European and increasingly international research funding with universities based elsewhere in the UK. Any inconsistency in the funding mechanism that resulted in a lower level of REG funding to Scottish

elements of consistency (or distinctiveness) in SFC's approach influence Scottish HEIs' research competitiveness?	HEI compared to other areas of the UK would be detrimental to our ability to compete, potentially leading to a negative impact on research performance. Of course, the opposite is also true, and inconsistency that resulted in a higher level of REG funding to Scottish Universities would enhance our ability to compete.
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?	Considering the following questions and SFC's aspirations for the PGR environment and landscape in Scotland, Â£36M in RPG is too little to achieve this. However, it would cause significant damage to our UK competitiveness were funding move from REG to RPG, see comments in response to Q4.
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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.	<p>We are in broad agreement and agree that the current distribution of REG is consistent with these principles, however, as noted in our response to Q1, as the consequences of the implementation of proposals are unknown, it is not possible to give a view on the continuation of that consistency. We would also suggest including the following statement (bullet point 4), to further expand on the REG dual purpose.</p> <p>REG supports institutions to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> â€¢ Sustain an excellent research environment and a thriving research culture. â€¢ Consolidate and/or expand existing excellence to attract global investment and talent to Scotland. â€¢ Respond flexibly to changing priorities and invest in new and emerging areas of research ensuring that the research base is in a position to respond to the challenges of the future. â€¢ Advances equality and inclusion in researchers by underpinning a positive research culture.
Q7. What are your views on whether the current quality weightings for 3* and 4* REF scores are fit for purpose?	We believe the current quality weightings are fit for purpose and any change or shift of the balance might affect SFC ability to support the current breadth and depth of research across the sector.
Q8. What are your views on aligning the proportions of REGa allocated and the proportions of REF score elements?	We would be content with this alignment.
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	We are in agreement with the income sources but suggest a change in weighting to 70%, 20%, 10%, which we feel is more consistent with an impact-led approach in terms of supporting research activities.

income sources.	
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Q10. Are the proposed principles for RPG appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the grant and the changing PGR landscape?	<p>Yes, with a suggested minor amendment below (extension of bullet point 2)</p> <p>The RPG exists to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> â€¢ Invest in a collaborative environment for research training and development that values positive culture, inclusivity and exposure to high-quality research as central to the postgraduate research experience. â€¢ Secure a pipeline of skilled postgraduate researchers and support their career development in a way that meets the needs of the Scottish Economy and Scottish society.
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.	The consultation highlights the publication of UKRIs People and Culture Strategy. All HEIs in receipt of UKRI funding will need to respond to this and many of the necessary actions are consistent with the objectives of the RPG. The existence of the RPG is therefore a useful source of financial support in this respect.
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.	RPG funding could also be further aligned to support proposed changes to the next generation pooling and blueprint for researchers highlighted in the SFC Coherence and Sustainability: A Review of Tertiary Education and Research report. Although we would advise against RPG funding being diluted and used to support these proposed changes, rather RPG being used in complimenting any additional funding.
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.	We would first note our response to Q5 where our view is that the Â£36M in RPG is too little and our view that it would cause significant damage to our UK competitiveness were funding move from REG to RPG. The RPG could be expanded to assist the widening access and participation as well as broader equality and diversity aims in the postgraduate research student context.
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 response to Q12a
Other comments	
Q13. Please make any other comments relevant to this consultation.	

Publication of responses	
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.	Publish information and excerpts from this survey response EXCLUDING the organisation name.

