

Research News Digest

Research Councils

RCUK Response to the European Commission's Horizon 2020 Proposal

RCUK has published its response to the Horizon 2020 proposal. It is supportive of the proposed three-pillar structure and the strong emphasis on excellence throughout the programme. RCUK also supports the better use of Structural Funds for research and innovation-related development. RCUK also supports the central role of frontier research and bottom-up activities, as proposed under the 'Excellent Science' pillar and the proposed increase in the number of the ERC's flagship schemes (Advanced Grants and Starting Grants) as well as the continuation of the newer schemes (Proof of Concept and Synergy Grants). However, RCUK has cautioned against expansion beyond the core schemes to ensure that the ERC remains both straightforward in operation and focused on excellence. RCUK was also pleased to see that Marie Curie and Research Infrastructures remain an integral element despite budget increases considerably below that proposed for the ERC. RCUK consider that the proposed a move towards a 'partnership' approach will only work if there is an understanding of the role of different partners, and if all potential partners are included from the outset in the debate. As such RCUK wants to maintain a dialogue as the details of these mechanisms are worked out. RCUK supports continuation of the Joint Programming Initiatives introduced in FP7. RCUK also supports the challenge-based approach proposed for Horizon 2020. However, it does have reservations about the configuration of the 'Inclusive Innovative and Secure Societies' challenge, considering that the activities are disparate and may lack coherent or effective. While welcoming the inclusion of social sciences and humanities there is concern that their importance and contribution are not sufficiently well articulated in the original proposal. RCUK also believes that the introduction of a single flat rate for reimbursement of indirect costs is a regressive move. RCUK also supports the approach of bringing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology into the framework of Horizon 2020.

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/submissions/RCUKHorizon2020.pdf>

Pathways to Impact Case Studies

RCUK has published a series of case studies which provide personal accounts from RCUK funded researchers in regards to their approaches and experiences of Pathways to Impact. The case studies also provide guidance, top tips and best practice for helping researchers to realise the impact of their research. A common top tip included in the case studies is avoiding potential pitfalls, such as focusing only on past activities instead of making sure the Pathway to Impact is forward looking and explores the potential impact of the current project. The case studies are grouped into four categories; Policy, Business, Voluntary and Charitable and Public Engagement. The case studies include Margot Braziers work on how the criminal justice system is used to resolved ethical conflicts in the delivery of healthcare and Lucio Piccirillo's work (funded by the internal EPSRC Windfall Funds) on low-temperature electron magnetic resonance.

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/brief/impactcase/Pages/home.aspx>

NERC Fellowship Review

NERC Council has decided to streamline the provision of responsive mode Fellowships into a single scheme - the NERC Independent Research Fellowships (IRFs) - that will replace the previous schemes

(Postdoctoral Fellowships and Advanced Fellowships). The new scheme is designed to develop scientific leadership among the most promising early-career environmental scientists, by giving all Fellows five years' support, which will allow them sufficient time to develop their research programmes, and to establish international recognition. As part of this scheme, NERC will expand its fellowship networking and training activities, working with host institutions, to support the development of future leaders in NERC science. The first closing date for NERC Independent Research Fellowships will be 1 November 2012.

<http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/fellowships/irf.asp>

Government/Funding Council

Advancing the Industrial Application of Synthetic Biology

The Technology Strategy Board, BBSRC, EPSRC and the ESRC are to invest £6.5m to encourage businesses to explore innovative industrial applications of synthetic biology. Projects must be collaborative and business-led. Up to £6.5m is available to support early stage feasibility demonstrator studies with a maximum project size of up to £500k for a duration of between 12 and 18 months. Projects will identify a commercial opportunity to which synthetic biology can be applied and test the feasibility through a program of experimentation. Projects may also contain elements of research which explore the potential societal impacts and regulatory landscape relevant to the area of work proposed. However, the main output of the project will be technical evidence to inform future development. The competition opens on 8 October and the deadline for registration is 14 November with a deadline for applications on 21 November. A briefing event for potential applicants will be held in London on 15 October.

http://www.innovateuk.org/_assets/0511/Synthetic_biology.pdf

HEFCE Review of Philanthropic Support for Higher Education in the UK

HEFCE has commissioned a review will look at the current state of philanthropic support and address challenges for the next decade. The review is led by a board chaired by Professor Shirley Pearce, Vice-Chancellor of Loughborough University. The board have now launched a consultation with closing date for submissions of 7 June.

http://www.morepartnership.com/system/files/052012/4fb6810bee075c4e430000eb/original/Open_Consultation.pdf?1337360651

Europe

ERC calls: what's new?

A number of changes are envisaged in the upcoming ERC calls for proposals. At this stage the information below is indicative only and is expected to be formally confirmed on 9 July when the European Commission is expected to adopt the ERC's next work programme. The main changes include the introduction of the "ERC Consolidator grant." The previous ERC Starting grant scheme will be divided into two separate calls, Starting grants for researchers who have been awarded their first PhD at least 2 and up to 7 years prior to the publication date of the call and Consolidator grants for researchers who have been awarded their first PhD over 7 and up to 12 years prior to the publication date of the call. A Consolidator grant is worth up to €2 million. There will be one single deadline for each call, and not different deadlines for the three domains as in the past. The publication of the next Advanced grant call will be on 10 July with the deadline for applications in the autumn (not in spring as in the past). The planned deadlines for all upcoming calls are:

Starting Grant	17 October 2012	
Advanced Grant	22 November 2012	
Synergy Grant	10 October 2012	10 January 2013
Consolidator Grant	7 November 2012	21 February 2013
Proof of concept	24 April 2013	3 October 2013

http://erc.europa.eu/important-information-upcoming-erc-calls-whats-new?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=ERC+News+Alert&utm_source=Newsletter+December+2011&utm_term

Statistics

HE Business and Community Interaction Survey 2010/11

The results of the 2010/11 HE Business and Community Interaction Survey show that HEIs made £1.1 billion through research contracts with businesses and non-commercial organisations. A further £1.4 billion of income was derived from consultancy contracts, facilities and equipment, CPD courses, intellectual property, and regeneration and development programmes. Non-public sources also contributed an additional £200 million to research via collaborative research involving public funding. These are research projects funded by a combination of public and private non-academic sources. The survey results also show the number of spin-off companies associated with UK HEIs started in 2010/11. Over 200 spin-offs were started with some HEI ownership and over 2,500 graduate start-up companies were formed in 2010/11

<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/content/view/2458/161/>

Published patent applications filed by universities between 2002-11

The University of Sheffield	88
The University of Cambridge	47
The University of Oxford (Isis Innovations)	47
The University of Southampton	47
Sheffield Hallam University	43
Imperial College (Imperial Innovations)	36
King's College London	30
Cardiff University	29
The University of Dundee	27
Cranfield University	26
De Montfort University	26
The University of Warwick	26
The University of Surrey	25
The University of Bristol	23
The University of Manchester	22
The University of Edinburgh	21
The University of Lancaster	21
The University of Glasgow	20
University College London	20
The University of Nottingham	19

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmhansrd/cm120524/text/120524w0004.htm#1205256000030>

Other

Open letter from the UK funding bodies to improve design and reporting of animal research

The Chief Executives of the BBSRC, MRC and the Wellcome Trust have written an open letter to Vice-Chancellors, urging them to ensure that their scientists observe guidelines designed to improve the reporting of animal research. The three funding bodies have all signed up to the [ARRIVE](#) guidelines which were developed by the National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research (NC3Rs). The guidelines include a checklist of information which should be included in scientific publications describing animal research and have already been adopted by close to 100 journals.

<http://ht.ly/b4j2d>

Dou Kell's Blog

Is available at <http://blogs.bbsrc.ac.uk/>

New Calls

MAJOR & CROSS-FACULTY RESEARCH INITIATIVES

Deadline	Funding Body	Scheme/Bid	URL
18 June	EPSRC	Additional Sponsorship	
4 July	EPSRC	Catalysis Technology Hubs	http://tinyurl.com/cqllm3d
10 July	Royal Society	Wolfson Research Merit Awards	http://tinyurl.com/3s5kwzh
16 August	EPSRC	SUPERGEN Hydrogen & Fuel Cells Challenge	http://tinyurl.com/codjwuk
17 Oct	ERC	Starting Grants	
22 Nov	ERC	Advanced Grants	
10 Jan 2013	ERC	Synergy Grants	
21 Feb 2013	ERC	Consolidator Grants	
24 Apr 2013	ERC	Proof of concept	