



Department
for Business
Innovation & Skills

Triennial Review of the Research Councils: Call for Evidence

The Triennial Review of the Research Councils is one of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) reviews of non-departmental public bodies (NDPBs), in accordance with the coalition government's commitment to review public bodies, with the aim of increasing accountability for actions carried out on behalf of the state.

The review is occurring as scheduled during the second year of the programme (2012-13) and was announced by David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science, by Written Ministerial Statement on 9th January.

The review is being conducted in two stages in accordance with Cabinet Office guidance which is available at:http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/triennial-reviews-guidance-2011_tcm6-38900.pdf

- Stage 1 will consider the core functions of the Research Councils, assess the need for these functions to continue and the structural options for continued delivery of these functions.
- If the conclusions of Stage 1 are that the Research Councils should continue as Non-Departmental Public Bodies, then Stage 2 will examine corporate governance arrangements.

Please note that this is not a review of the government's underlying policy on the funding of the research base, but of the structures for its delivery.

During the course of the review government hopes to receive evidence from a wide variety of stakeholders. We would therefore be pleased to receive any information that any party with an interest in the subject wished to submit the review. Topics on which we would be particularly grateful to receive evidence to inform the review include:

- The structure, governance and coordination of the Research Councils and the extent to which this contributes towards the successful delivery of their functions.

- The relationship between the Research Councils and other funding bodies, including governmental, private and third sector funders.
- The relationship between the Research Councils, those they fund, the 'customers' of research and the wider public and the extent to which these relationships enable the functions of the Research Councils to be delivered with maximum impact.

A detailed list of the questions we are seeking answers to may be found in the Annex, below. Please feel free to answer either some or all of the questions in your response.

Any responses to this call for evidence should be sent to the Triennial Review mailbox RCTriennialReview@bis.gsi.gov.uk by **28 February 2013**.

Annex: Questions for Respondents

Theme	Questions
Purpose	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do the Royal Charter objectives for the Research Councils (below) need to continue to be delivered? 2. How well aligned do you think Research Council priorities are with these Royal Charter objectives? 3. How closely are and should Research Council research objectives be aligned with those of government?
Effectiveness and efficiency	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. How effective are the Research Councils at delivering their objectives? 5. Are the current disciplinary divisions appropriate to allow the Research Councils to foster excellence and innovation in the research base? 6. To what extent is there duplication between the functions of the Research Councils (from promoting and support research through to advancing and disseminating knowledge, generating awareness and providing advice) and other providers in the sector? 7. What is your view on whether seven Research Councils is the right number?
Interaction and coordination	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. How effective do you consider RCUK to be and why? 9. Are there any functions currently performed by RCUK that you think should be performed at Research Council level or vice versa? 10. Where do the Research Councils need to work in partnership and how good are the Research Councils at doing this? 11. How good are the Research Councils at challenging the status quo – both in the sectors they support and in government? 12. Do the Research Councils have effective ways to share best practice?
Dissemination and communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 13. How do Research Councils ensure that use of research is maximised, including by those in other Councils, the private, public and third sector?

Theme	Questions
	<p>14. How well do you think the funding mechanisms are understood by applicants (existing and new)?</p> <p>15. How well do you think Research Councils communicate with the general public?</p>
Funding mechanism	<p>16. Is the funding mechanism appropriately open to a range of institutions/researchers, including new entrants as well as incumbents?</p> <p>17. Does Research Council funding work well alongside block grants to institutions?</p>
Economic Impact	<p>18. How good is the UK at attracting private investment and human talent into research in comparison with other countries? What factors influence this?</p> <p>19. How effective is the funding mechanism at delivering value for public money and deciding the best targets for new research?</p> <p>20. How easy is it for UK businesses, individuals and policy makers to access the research base?</p>

Royal Charter objectives:

- Promote and support research
- Advance knowledge, understanding and technology and provide trained researchers to meet needs and contribute to UK competitiveness, effectiveness of public services and policy, and to enhance quality of life and creative output of the nation
- In relation to this:
 - (i) generate public awareness;
 - (ii) communicate research outcomes;
 - (iii) encourage public engagement and dialogue;
 - (iv) disseminate knowledge; and
 - (v) provide advice.

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