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EPSRC Response to the Wakeham Review



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Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council

Summary

- EPSRC provided data for the review, which is available for all to access
- EPSRC contributed to the RCUK initial response to the Wakeham review and is now developing specific actions in response to the recommendations made which are in EPSRC's power to influence
- EPSRC is pleased with the overall conclusions of the review that confirm that physics in the UK is a strong, healthy, and internationally respected discipline producing world-class scientific outcomes. It is important to maintain current levels of funding to ensure we maintain this position.
- EPSRC is grateful to Bill Wakeham and the review panel for their endeavours in producing this report

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EPSRC particularly recognises that:

- the breadth and diversity of research in some physics departments needs to be increased for the benefit of UK physics as a whole
- a lot of physics research is not undertaken within physics departments and this research needs full recognition
- better engagement between physics and other disciplines is needed

Some Facts and Figures (2006/7 data):

- Total EPSRC spend on physics per financial year:
£136.9m (23.9% of whole EPSRC spend)
- Total EPSRC spend on physics in physics depts per financial year:
£64.3m
- Total no. of patents, licences and spin outs from physics programme:
9



Council observations and recommendations:

- Proposals that are not 'pure physics' tend to struggle in the peer review process – more work needed here
- EPSRC is reviewing peer review and current funding panel structures
- EPSRC must be proactive in encouraging key physics departments/ universities in UK to provide leadership within the physics community, broaden their expertise and engage with other disciplines better.
- Opportunities with the formation of the Physical Sciences Programme to build on synergies within the discipline
- Physicists should be encouraged to utilise varied funding opportunities, including through EPSRC's mission programmes
- EPSRC should use managed activities to stimulate areas of physics where UK is currently underperforming (e.g. signposting the physics – life sciences interface in responsive mode)
- Doctoral Training Centres concept used to broaden student exposure to other areas and promote more cross disciplinary work; EngD concept extended across the portfolio (IndD)





RCUK actions

- To work together with the funding councils, universities and the Institute of Physics to develop the future strategy:
 - To encourage more people to study physics at school and at undergraduate level
 - To ensure the training of physicists in the UK continues to be of high calibre and internationally competitive, both for the health of the discipline and for the benefit of UK society and economy
 - To ensure that the physics research base in the UK continues to be strong, whilst increasing its breadth and diversity and links to other disciplines
- Conduct a review of nuclear physics and nuclear engineering in early 2009