

**THE ALLOCATION OF SCIENCE AND
RESEARCH FUNDING**

2011/12 TO 2014/15

**INVESTING IN WORLD-CLASS SCIENCE
AND RESEARCH**

DECEMBER 2010

Annex A: Statement on the Haldane Principle

The Haldane Principle means that decisions on individual research proposals are best taken by researchers themselves through peer review. This involves evaluating the quality, excellence and likely impact of science and research programmes. Prioritisation of an individual Research Council's spending within its allocation is not a decision for Ministers. The Coalition Government supports this principle as vital for the protection of academic independence and excellence. We all benefit from its application in the UK.

Over the years there has been some uncertainty over the interpretation of the Haldane Principle. After consulting senior figures in the science and research community, the Government now offers this further clarification.

This statement on the Haldane Principle applies to science and research which the Government funds through the Research Councils and National Academies. HEFCE has statutory independence¹¹. The Haldane Principle does not apply to the research

budgets of government departments, which are used to fund research to support their departmental policies and objectives. That said, departments work closely with the Research Councils to ensure that the research they fund is aligned with that funded by the science and research base and delivers maximum value to the taxpayer. More generally, Research Councils need to ensure that the views of those with an interest in the potential outcomes of the research are sought when setting their overall priorities.

The Government does, however, need to take a view on the overall level of funding to science and research and has decided to protect and to ring-fence the science and research budget for the next four years. This decision is evidence that the Government recognises the strategic importance of science and research to our future growth, prosperity, culture and heritage.

There are areas where Ministers should have no input: Ministers should not decide which individual projects should be funded nor which researchers should receive the money. This has been crucial to the international success of British science.

At the other end of the spectrum there are decisions that ultimately must be for Ministers, albeit informed by external advice; these include the overall size of the funding

¹¹ The Further and Higher Education Act 1992 states that the Secretary of State may not attach terms and conditions on grants to HEFCE which are framed by reference to: particular courses of study, programmes of research, the criteria for the selection and appointment of academic staff or the admission of students.

for science and research and its distribution between the Research Councils, the National Academies and Higher Education research funding.

In addition, every Government will have some key national strategic priorities such as addressing the challenges of an ageing population, energy supply or climate change. The research base has an important role to play in addressing such priorities and the Research Councils, with the support of independent advice, have proposed research programmes to tackle them. It is also appropriate for Ministers to ask Research Councils to consider how best they can contribute to these priorities, without crowding out other areas of their missions. But it is for the Research Councils to decide on the specific projects and people to fund within these priorities, free from Ministerial interference.

Similarly, Ministers have a legitimate role in decisions that involve long term and large scale commitments of national significance. These include the construction of large research facilities, where Ministers have to approve business cases, and involvement in international research treaties. Public funding from the Research Councils for both these categories of research spending must be dedicated to supporting excellent

research, irrespective of its geographical location. In many cases the location will be an obvious decision, given clusters of relevant research capability. Ministerial views on such business cases should be formed with the aid of advice from the Research Councils.

It is important that Ministers, where they are involved in making strategic decisions on the funding of research, take account of advice from a wide variety of expert sources including academia and industry, both nationally and internationally.

The Government recognises the contribution to our national life and to the UK economy made by research and teaching in the full range of disciplines including physical sciences, social sciences, life sciences, environmental sciences, engineering and the arts and humanities.

The Government values the multiplicity and variety of sources of funding from the public, private and charitable sectors. These contribute to the provision of a rich and diverse environment supporting the research community across all disciplines.

Overall, excellence is and must remain the driver of funding decisions, and it is only by funding excellent research that the maximum benefits will be secured for the nation.