

## RESEARCH EXCELLENCE GRANT AND RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE GRANT: A RESPONSE TO THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL

# Summary

While this consultation focuses on the future operation of the Research Excellence Grant (REG) and Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG), we believe there is a timely opportunity to use it and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, alongside the results from the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 assessment, once published, to develop a coherent strategy for research in Scotland. The Scottish Budget for 2022-23 means that Scottish universities continue to face a real-terms reduction in funding for teaching and research, with implications for the SFC and universities in their ability to implement the findings from the SFC Review. It is also important to note that the SFC has limited decision making autonomy in this area given the intergovernmental basis of the UK REF assessment.

Given that the REF 2021 results will not be available until May 2022, there is a potential for significant unintended consequences if the SFC has to incorporate at very short notice the REF results into funding models for universities for AY 2022-23. Delaying the implementation of REF 2021 results and changes to REG until AY 2023-24 is both persuasive and sensible. Any transition period and mitigation measures to minimise funding destabilisation should last only as long as necessary. The SFC should ensure that over the transition period each institution has clear sight of the transitional funding arrangement so that it can plan its overall budgets accordingly.

The UK dual support system for research funding means that it is crucially important that Scotland remains aligned with UK-wide research developments to maintain and, where possible, increase Scottish HEIs' research competitiveness at the UK level. Notwithstanding, the SFC and Scotland's HEIs should continue to take up opportunities that meet Scotland's distinctive research and innovation needs. This would include new mission-orientated research, refreshed research pools with a focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting research culture and the postgraduate research experience, and building on the work of the Scottish Innovation Centres.

There is merit in considering an increase to the proportion of funding allocated to RPG given the importance of developing future generations of researchers which are necessary for the sustainability of Scotland's research base. This would, however, require careful consideration, particularly if any increase in RPG is likely to result in a corresponding reduction to REG given the lack of additional funding available.

The principles outlined for REG should be extended to reflect the broader institutional and cultural aspects of research excellence. They need to explicitly cover research impact, and the infrastructure, environment, practice and culture within which research is undertaken.

A key purpose of the REG is to ensure Scottish universities are well placed to win competitive Research Council funding. However, investment in REG has failed to keep pace with inflation and with UK Research Council funding. Scotland's success in winning competitive UK-level research funding has reduced from over 15.7% in 2013-14 to less than 13% in 2019-20. It remains to be seen how the SFC can help provide the funding sustainability for research given the continuing real-terms decline in university funding.

The current quality weightings for 3\* and 4\* research in Scotland appear to be appropriate in the context of the current distribution of funding. Even very small adjustments to the weightings are likely to produce significant shifts in how REG is distributed between HEIs given the sensitivity of the REG formula. Any prospective change to the weightings therefore needs to be carefully considered and modelled by the SFC at both the system level and at the level of individual institutions in order to generate a fuller understanding of the impact of any potential changes.

The RSE supports the SFC proposal to introduce greater accountability for RPG so that HEIs are required to demonstrate how the RPG they receive is being used to support the postgraduate research environment and culture. As well as generating a better understanding of how RPG is being used, this would enable HEIs to share good practice.

Research students need to be supported so that they are able to engage in research widely with Scottish society, beyond academia and industry, including policy makers, civil society, NGOs and charities, among others. Such an approach could help open up a wider range of research careers as well as increasing the ways in which research can inform and stimulate activity in diverse sectors and areas in Scotland.

## Introduction

1 The Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), Scotland's National Academy, is pleased to respond to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) consultation on the Research Excellence Grant (REG) and Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG). We recognise that the SFC is particularly keen to hear from individual universities. While the RSE champions and supports research through its wide-ranging research awards programme and is supported by Scottish Government and the SFC among other partners, it does not receive REG or RPG funding.<sup>1</sup> It is therefore well placed to provide an independent perspective on the issues raised by this important consultation. We have elected to focus our comments in this response on matters of principle and purpose relating to the REG and RPG, recognising that individual universities will provide

detailed responses covering the implications of the proposals for institutions individually and collectively. This response has been prepared by a working group of RSE Fellows and members of the RSE Young Academy, chaired by the RSE's Vice President for Physical Sciences. The RSE would be pleased to discuss its response further with the SFC should this be considered useful.

2 More broadly, and relevant to this response and the SFC plans for taking forward the recommendations from its Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability, the RSE and the Young Academy are currently undertaking a joint project on Tertiary Education Futures, which is considering the future of tertiary education in Scotland through a wide-ranging programme of roundtables and engagement with diverse perspectives. More information about our project is available from the RSE website.<sup>2</sup>

1 RSE Research Awards Programme <https://rse.org.uk/funding-collaboration/>

2 RSE and YAS Tertiary Education Futures Project <https://rse.org.uk/expert-advice/tertiary-education-futures-project/>

## Overarching comments

- 3 While we broadly agree with the principles which the SFC has set out for both the REG and the RPG, the consultation is quite operational in nature, focusing on how REG and RPG funding models could be adjusted, particularly in the context of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021 assessment, the results of which will be published in May 2022. We recognise that this is the first of a series of consultations that the SFC will be undertaking following its Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability. Building upon this extensive Review, there is therefore an opportunity to use this follow-up activity, and the results of the REF 2021 assessment to develop a coherent, strategic approach for research in Scotland. This would also connect to the development of the new National Impact Framework on the outcomes and impacts expected of universities which the Scottish Government and the SFC are prioritising.
- 4 We recognise that the SFC has limited decision making autonomy in this area given that the UK REF assessment is taken forward on an intergovernmental basis, with SFC having discretion primarily in relation to how the results of REF can be used to distribute funding to Scottish HEIs. We are, of course, aware that a separate programme of work involving the UK Government, the Devolved Administrations and their respective higher education funding bodies has been launched to explore possible approaches to the future assessment of UK higher education research performance, including evaluating the REF 2021 exercise.<sup>3</sup> The RSE has had preliminary discussions with Research England which is leading this work and we look forward to contributing to the formal consultation process in due course.
- 5 In December 2021, the Scottish Government published the Scottish Budget for 2022-23.<sup>4</sup> Analysis shows that it will result in a real-terms reduction in funding for teaching and research in universities, exacerbating the year-on-year real-terms cuts experienced by the sector since 2014-15. The Budget settlement therefore has significant implications for the SFC and universities in relation to their ability to implement the findings from the SFC Review, including the research-specific actions.

## Consultation Questions

### Timing

*Question 1: If it were necessary, what would be the implications of delaying implementation of REF 2021 results and changes to REG until AY 2023-24?*

- 6 Individual institutions are likely to provide the SFC with detailed responses to this operational question. Given that the REF 2021 results will not be available until May 2022, and with the new academic and financial year for universities commencing in August 2022, there is a potential for significant unintended consequences if the SFC has to incorporate at very short notice the results of REF 2021 into funding models for universities for AY 2022-23. It also means that universities will have very little opportunity to consider and plan for how changes to REG will impact on their budgets ahead of the new academic year. In this context, delaying the implementation of REF 2021 results and changes to REG until AY 2023-24 is both persuasive and sensible. We comment upon possible transition arrangements in our response to question two.

### Funding volatility

*Question 2: 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?*

- 7 Individual institutions are likely to provide the SFC with detailed responses to this question. Universities require stability and certainty in their funding arrangements to enable them to develop and take forward their institutional strategies, investments and activities. Given the fragility of university finances, including the ongoing real-terms reduction in public funding for Scottish universities, individual universities are unlikely to be able to tolerate anything other than a small, unexpected change in SFC income over the short term. Clearly, there is a concern that a reduction in REG funding would result in universities being less able to invest in and support excellent research, including the culture, environment, infrastructure and collaborative opportunities that are central to Scotland's research system. Research culture, including equality, diversity and inclusion, training and public engagement is integral to research quality. It would therefore be important that the SFC considers options to ensure that these elements do not lose out from any potential reduction in funding.

<sup>3</sup> Future Research Assessment Programme <https://re.ukri.org/research/future-research-assessment-programme/>

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Budget 2022-23 <https://www.gov.scot/budget/>

8 In the consultation the SFC makes clear that while it is committed to implementing the REF 2021 results, the design changes implemented in REF 2021 following the Stern Review could lead to substantial volatility within REF results and consequently to REG allocations. However, the actual consequences of REF 2021 cannot be properly modelled by SFC until the results are published in May 2022. This question is therefore really about the length of any transition period in implementing REF 2021 and how long any mitigations to minimise funding destabilisation should endure. Since REF is the means for assessing research quality and REG represents the SFC approach to distributing funding based on that assessment of quality, any continuing approach that would seek to minimise downward changes in REG experienced by HEIs post REF 2021 could potentially break the link between REG and research quality as assessed through REF. Therefore, any transition period and mitigation measures should last only as long as necessary.

9 It will be important to avoid unintended consequences that incorporation of the REF 2021 results within REG may have, particularly where they may have a disproportionate impact on the funding that some institutions will receive. The SFC should seek to ensure that over the transition period each institution has clear sight of the transitional funding arrangement so that it can plan its overall budgets accordingly. This would help to provide stability and certainty to institutions in line with the total funding envelope for research within which SFC is operating.

## Public Sector Equality Duty

*Question 3: 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.*

10 It will be important that the SFC undertakes and publishes equality impact assessments on potential changes to be made to REG and RPG funding as a consequence of this consultation and

REF 2021 developments. Both the SFC and HEIs will need to ensure that any changes made do not create additional barriers to advancing equality, achieving inclusion and public engagement in research. Building on our previous responses, it will also be important that the SFC considers the potential of disproportionate impacts for individual institutions and subject areas arising from any prospective changes to research funding so that these can be taken into account as part of SFC modelling and scenario planning.

## Alignment with rUK

*Question 4: How important (or otherwise) is it that the Scottish approach to underpinning research funding is in step with the rest of the UK? What elements of consistency (or distinctiveness) in SFC's approach influence Scottish HEIs' research competitiveness?*

11 The dual support system for research funding which operates across the UK means that it is crucially important that Scotland remains aligned with UK-wide research developments in order to maintain and, where possible, increase Scottish HEIs' research competitiveness at the UK level. This alignment on research with the rest of the UK is important for the following key reasons: to ensure that Scottish researchers are not disadvantaged when bidding for competitive research grants at the UK level; for the reputation and benchmarking of Scottish HEIs alongside their UK counterparts; and to ensure that Scottish HEIs continue to be able to attract and retain academic talent.

12 While a strong correlation between Scotland and the rest of the UK for research continues to be important, the SFC with support from Scotland's HEIs and research partners should continue to take up opportunities that meet Scotland's distinctive research and innovation needs. This would include, for example, taking forward key developments from the SFC's Review of Coherence and Sustainability, including new mission-orientated research, refreshed research pools with a focus on interdisciplinary collaboration, supporting research culture and the postgraduate research experience, and building on the work of the Scottish Innovation Centres.

**13** The RSE has been pleased to work with the SFC and the Scottish Government over many years in supporting a diverse portfolio of research awards that are a distinctive part of the Scottish research landscape. This includes the establishment in 2021 of the SFC and RSE Saltire Research Awards for Scottish and European research, funded by the Scottish Government, with a focus on supporting the next generation of researchers.<sup>5</sup> Subject to successful evaluation and feedback, we hope this partnership approach can be maintained as a distinctive and recurrent feature of Scottish Government and SFC support for research in Scotland.

## Balance of funding

### *Question 5: 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?*

**14** The balance of funding at the moment, as stated in the consultation document, is £242.9M (REG) and £36M (RPG). This translates as 12.9% for the RPG. There is merit in considering an increase to the proportion of funding allocated to RPG given the importance of supporting early career researchers and developing future generations of researchers, which are necessary for the sustainability of Scotland's research base. The implications of increasing the proportion of funding for RPG would, however, need to be carefully considered, particularly if any increase in RPG is likely to result in a corresponding reduction to REG given the lack of additional funding available. In our responses to questions 10 and 11 relating to the RPG we recommend that HEIs should be expected to account for how they are using RPG funding.

## Principles of REG

### *Question 6: Views are sought on the principles proposed for REG and on whether the proposals within this paper are consistent with the principles.*

**15** The SFC proposes the following principles for REG:

- A sustainable framework to support ambitious and excellent research across the Scottish higher education institutions.
- A robust and transparent allocation method based on clearly defined criteria and avoiding unnecessary complexity.

**16** The RSE recognises the importance of supporting excellent research wherever it is found and irrespective of disciplinary area. It is, however, necessary to reflect on further what 'excellent research' comprises since it can be interpreted in many different ways. It can, for example, refer to the excellence of the academic research itself, and/or to the excellence of the practice, environment and culture that generate that research.

**17** It will therefore be important to ensure that the first bullet point of the principle explicitly covers research impact, and the infrastructure, environment, practice and culture within which research is undertaken. This would include consideration of equality, diversity, inclusion and engagement which, appropriately given their importance, are attracting greater prominence, and have implications for the appointment and retention of diverse research talent. This principle should therefore be extended to reflect these broader institutional and cultural aspects of research excellence. This approach would help to ensure a balance between the SFC's responsibilities for rewarding excellent research and for facilitating the provision of excellent research. Explicit reference to these broader elements of research excellence in the way suggested would also help to align SFC developments with those at the UK level, including the R&D People and Culture Strategy as part of the UK R&D Roadmap.<sup>6</sup> The SFC and the HEI sector will also need to consider how these broader elements of excellence can be objectively assessed. The R&D People and Culture Strategy is instructive in this regard since it sets out initial steps for increasing our understanding of, and evaluating, research culture in the UK.

**18** The principles underpinning REG also draw attention to the UK-wide context of the Research Excellence Framework and the broader research funding landscape, and the implications that these have for SFC decision making and the setting of research funding policy in Scotland. SFC has limited influence over REF and the extent to which REF shapes research policy across the UK. For example, the REF profile comprises 60% outputs, 25% impact and 15% environment which will influence the ways in which institutions interpret excellence, yet there is limited opportunity for SFC to alter the REF profile.

<sup>5</sup> RSE Saltire Awards <https://rse.org.uk/the-rse-invests-1-8m-in-the-future-of-research/>

<sup>6</sup> R&D People and Culture Strategy; BEIS; July 2021 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-and-development-rd-people-and-culture-strategy>

**19** In addition, while the SFC has constructive and productive relations with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), the SFC and the research funding councils and bodies in the other devolved nations are not formally represented in UKRI decision-making structures. This limits their ability to influence the strategic direction of UK research funding policy. Through the Celtic Academies Alliance, the RSE, along with the Royal Irish Academy and the Learned Society of Wales have consistently called for the research funding bodies within the devolved nations to have a more formal voice in UKRI decision-making structures.<sup>7</sup>

**20** A key purpose of the REG is to enable Scottish universities to achieve leverage and to ensure that they are well placed to win competitive Research Council funding. A key principle of REG is to support the sustainability of Scotland's research system. As the SFC Review makes clear, however, Scottish universities are under-funded for research by £328m per year, and that institutions recover, on average, 80% of the full economic costs of undertaking research. A key issue is therefore how the SFC, through REG, can support institutions to increase the recovery of the full economic costs of undertaking research: carrying out research at a loss raises questions of sustainability for individual institutions and the sector as a whole.

**21** Investment in the REG has failed to keep pace with inflation and with UK Research Council funding. As highlighted by the SFC Review, Scotland's success in winning competitive UK-level research funding has reduced from over 15.7% in 2013-14 to less than 13% in 2019-20. Meeting the costs of research is reliant on cross-subsidy from other income, including international tuition fees which are themselves volatile. It remains to be seen how the SFC can help secure the funding sustainability for research for Scottish HEIs given the continuing real-terms decline in university funding for teaching and research as set out in the Scottish Government's Budget for 2022-23.

## REG Allocation method

### *Question 7: What are your views on whether the current quality weightings for 3\* and 4\* REF scores are fit for purpose?*

**22** Scotland's universities need to be financially supported to enable them to succeed in the dual support funding system, and they need to be able to use SFC funding to leverage other sources of funding to support research. As noted in our response to question six, Scotland's success in winning competitive UK-level research funding has declined from 15.7% in 2013-14 to less than 13% in 2019-20. REG therefore needs to be allocated in such a way so as to ensure that Scottish HEIs are able to successfully compete with their UK counterparts for competitive UK Research Council funding and other sources of external research funding.

**23** The current quality weightings for 3\* and 4\* research in Scotland appear to be appropriate in the context of the current distribution of funding. Some adjustment may be required as a consequence of the changes to REF submission requirements as a result of REF 2021 implementing the Stern Review recommendation that all research-intensive academic staff should be returned in the REF and changes in the number of 'outputs' submitted per staff member. Any change to the quality ratings for 3\* and 4\* research will have differential impacts on Scottish HEIs given their distinctive research missions and profiles. Even very small adjustments to the weightings are likely to produce significant shifts in how REG is distributed between HEIs given the sensitivity of the REG formula. For example, increasing the 4\* quality rating ratio from 3.31:1 to 4:1 in line with the position in England would, other things being equal, likely result in larger HEIs in Scotland receiving a larger proportion of the available funding which could lead to an even greater concentration of research funding among a small number of Scotland's largest HEIs, which could have dramatic consequences for smaller institutions.

**24** Any prospective change to the weightings therefore needs to be carefully considered and modelled by the SFC at both the system level and at the level of individual institutions in order to generate a fuller understanding of the impact of any potential changes.

<sup>7</sup> Celtic Academies Alliance <https://rse.org.uk/expert-advice/celtic-academies-alliance/>

**Question 8: What are your views on aligning the proportions of REGa allocated and the proportions of REF score elements?**

**25** The SFC currently uses the overall REF quality profile in allocating REGa. SFC is exploring whether, in order to give appropriate weight to the elements assessed in REF, REGa funds should be allocated in proportion to the elements which make up the REF profile (60% outputs, 25% impact and 15% environment). While doing this would provide clarity and consistency as to how an HEI's REG was derived from its REF profile, it may result in a focus on research output given the current composition of the REF profile. However, it is recognised that if there are material differences in scoring between the different elements of the assessment then it would be appropriate to adjust the weighting accordingly. As we have set out in our earlier comments, the assessment of excellence needs to go beyond outputs to encompass culture, practice and infrastructure. It will be important that the SFC takes advice on this from members involved in REF subpanels since each subpanel has its own operating approach to scoring research, including how it assesses and balances outputs, impact and research environment. The RSE would be pleased to put the SFC in contact with RSE Fellows involved across a diverse range of REF subpanels should this be considered useful.

**Income-driven element: REGb and REGc**

**Question 9: 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 income sources.**

**26** Currently 72% of available REG funds are allocated primarily on the basis of staff volume and quality (REGa), with the remainder based on non-charity research funding won (REGb 17%) and competitively won income from charities (REGc 11%). The SFC is exploring the relative weighting of REGa, REGb and REGc, including whether the share of REG funding allocated by reference to REGb and REGc should increase. While the suggested increases to the proportion of funding allocated to REGb and REGc may be a means of HEIs increasing the recovery of the full economic costs of research, it will be crucial that the proposed changes are carefully modelled to ascertain their impact on individual HEIs and for Scotland's research system as a whole prior to any adjustment being made. Nevertheless, enabling Scottish universities to target charity funding by increasing their full cost recovery

through increasing REGc will help sustain the competitiveness of the Scottish research base.

**27** An active area of discussion relates to how industry funding is treated. While industry funding, along with Research Council funding and charity funding is a key part of the dual support system, industry funding can also be provided on a commercial basis. Business and industrial research funding will be essential to meeting the UK's ambitions of increasing UK investment in R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. This is particularly the case in Scotland where there is a longstanding need to increase business and industry R&D investment to complement public R&D investment.

**Research Postgraduate Principles**

**Question 10: Are the proposed principles for RPG appropriate and consistent with the purpose of the grant and the changing PGR landscape?**

**28** The SFC proposes the following high-level statement of the principles underpinning the RPG:

- To 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.
- To secure a pipeline of skilled postgraduate researchers and support their career development in a way that meets the needs of academia, industry and society.

**29** Given its explicit links to research culture as well as career development, RPG provides a direct means of enhancing research culture. Although, as per our response to question six, we believe there is a need to embed through the REG principles greater consideration of the breadth of what comprises excellence, including research culture and practice. It is therefore important that REG and RPG complement one another in this regard. Care should be taken to address any potential misconception that REG is associated with research output only while RPG deals with research culture.

**30** Institutions have been able to deploy RPG funding flexibly to develop and support postgraduate research training that reflects the circumstances of the individual institution. The RSE is supportive of the recommendation of the SFC Review that greater accountability be introduced for RPG so that HEIs are required to demonstrate how the RPG they receive is being used to support the postgraduate research environment and culture. However, greater accountability should not come at the cost of reduced flexibility.

**31** Research students need to be supported so that they are able to engage in research widely with Scottish society, beyond academia and industry, including policy makers, civil society, NGOs and charities, among others. Such an approach could help open up a wider range of research careers as well as increasing the ways in which research can inform and stimulate activity in diverse sectors and areas in Scotland, so retaining and deploying research talent in Scotland in new ways. This could have the additional benefit of uncovering new areas of research and new directions in disciplinary and interdisciplinary endeavour. This will require a sustained and holistic approach to attract, develop and retain research students and to stimulate increased research demand in sectors of the economy where this is currently negligible and/or not realising its full potential.

## Research Postgraduate Principles

*Question 11: 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.
- 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.

**32** The RSE supports the SFC proposal to introduce greater accountability for RPG so that HEIs are required to demonstrate how the RPG they receive is being used to support the postgraduate research environment and culture. This would help generate a better understanding of how RPG is being used by individual institutions, as well as enabling HEIs to share good practice and to work towards the achievement of shared objectives and outcomes. However, greater accountability should not compromise the ability of institutions to use RPG flexibly in ways that meet their needs. The Outcome Agreements between the SFC and the individual institutions could be used to enable deeper discussion on an institutional and sectoral basis of how RPG can most effectively be deployed.

**33** Careful consideration will need to be given to accountability expectations, requirements and metrics to be used, particularly for matters related to research culture that are likely to be challenging to assess properly and objectively. The SFC could consider convening a forum or working group to develop thinking and proposals in this area. This should be linked to the Vitae Researcher Development Framework and the UK R&D People and Culture Strategy.

**34** Currently, the RPG is entirely volume-based, with funding to universities based on postgraduate research student enrolment numbers. The SFC does not propose to change the allocation method. The SFC might find it useful to consider the position in England where financial support to HEIs for postgraduate research students includes a quality element. Including a quality element in the allocation of RPG might help support the move to greater accountability for receipt and use of RPG in Scotland. The implications of this would need to be carefully considered as we would want to ensure that RPG remains inclusive and supports the research environment across Scotland's diverse HEIs.

## RPG: Supporting equality, diversity and inclusion

*Question 12: 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.
- 35** There is no simple solution to this; the reasons for under-representation are complex and intersectional, and different solutions will be required for different groups, different subjects, and different regions within Scotland. SFC should undertake a detailed analysis to fully understand the baseline data and encourage universities to use the RPG in a way that supports an inclusive approach to engaging the widest possible talent within the PGR community. One tool for doing this could be the reporting required for institutional Outcome Agreements. Good practice should be shared among HEIs. Another way could be greater emphasis on the use of RPG to address issues of social justice and using the 'engaged university' and principles of placemaking to involve citizens in co-creation of PGR-focussed research.
- How SFC's focus on widening access and participation could be supported by RPG in the postgraduate research student context.
- 36** To date widening access and participation have focused on the undergraduate Scottish-domiciled population. There is no reason why these could not be extended proportionately to the PGR population. Where appropriate, HEIs could be encouraged to ringfence RPG funds to support upskilling, scholarships and/or fee waivers to increase participation in PG research among under-represented cohorts.

### Additional Information

This Advice Paper has been signed off by the General Secretary of the RSE.

Any enquiries about this Advice Paper should be addressed to Mr William Hardie (email: [whardie@theRSE.org.uk](mailto:whardie@theRSE.org.uk))

Responses are published on the RSE website (<https://www.rse.org.uk/>)

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