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**RESEARCH CAREERS IN THE UK:
A REVIEW**

Executive Summary

- i. Researchers form a fundamental element of the supply of skills which will be required if the UK is to maintain its leading position in the world.
- ii. The UK government is concerned that research careers are not always perceived as attractive by the best graduates. This review seeks to establish whether this is the case and, if so, why the situation exists and what can be done to improve matters.
- iii. Although the review concentrates on researchers working within higher education, it recognises that the UK's research base is diverse, consisting of researchers not only in academia but also in the public sector, business and industry and the third sector.
- iv. The evidence suggests that it is crucial for government, research councils, universities and industry to understand that the supply and development of the next generation of world class researchers is affected both by the initial attractiveness of research careers *and* the retention and the advancement of the most talented researchers (from the UK and overseas) at subsequent levels.
- v. Equally, the evidence shows that today's researchers are part of a research architecture which spans the globe. Researchers are more mobile than ever before and a "brain drain" of both promising and elite researchers from the UK continues to be a clear and present danger. The report highlights that international competition will continue to intensify and the UK may be left vulnerable if it does not take more decisive action in certain areas.
- vi. The review adopts a longitudinal approach to research careers starting from when pupils in school start to make early choices about the direction of their career through to the influences on the careers of the most senior researchers.
- vii. The review focuses most attention on the early stages of research careers, paying special attention to the influences on pupils' in secondary schools, continuing through the higher education experience, into doctoral research, finally focusing on early and mid-career researchers.
- viii. The Review concludes that the current system is working reasonably well. Thus it does not propose a complete overhaul, nor does it seek to override any of the developments currently in train. Rather, the review attempts to identify those pinch points at which the current system is not as effective as it might, and a set of policies which might improve the situation.
- ix. In particular, the review identifies a need for the UK government, universities and research councils to establish a more sophisticated understanding of the supply and demand of researchers across all sectors and disciplines so that policies can be better targeted.
- x. The message of the review is straightforward. Many initiatives are currently either in place or being put in place but they need stitching together and supplementing in order to provide coherent policy that covers all stages of the research career. For the health of the UK research base 15 years from now, it is imperative that this process is started.

Recommendations for Government

- 1) Government should establish mechanisms to develop a more sophisticated long-term understanding of the supply of and demand for researchers across all sectors and disciplines.
- 2) Government should work through existing programmes and international relationships between universities, learned societies and professional bodies to identify and support talented young scholars from around the world.
- 3) Government should work in partnership with universities and industry to extend existing scholarships for high-quality international postgraduate students wishing to study in the UK.
- 4) Government should establish a working group comprising senior stakeholders with an interest in university-business collaboration, and specifically the transferability of researchers, to take forward a Lambert Agreement Round 2.
- 5) Government should consider the introduction of industry match-funding awards for early career researchers.

Recommendations for Research Councils, Grant-Awarding Bodies and Subject Associations

- 1) Subject associations should work in partnership to promote careers in research at an early stage by working more intensively with school teachers to inform them of the possibilities for their pupils.
- 2) Research councils should work with universities, research institutes, charities and industry to develop a national Research Experiences Programme for undergraduate students.
- 3) The Roberts funding for universities should be sustained over the long-term to ensure high-quality researcher development programmes become embedded across the sector.
- 4) The research councils should develop consistent mechanisms to record the demographic characteristics of their researcher communities and track successful early career researchers across specific disciplines in order to inform future funding strategies for early career researchers.
- 5) Research councils and grant-awarding bodies should consider the provision of awards of longer-duration for early career researchers, providing high-quality performance is demonstrated.

Recommendations for Universities

- 1) Universities should consider whether the widening participation agenda applies to postgraduate study and, if so, what might realistically be done to improve matters.

- 2) There should be wide dissemination of the good practice which already exists in some universities with regard to holistic support for postdoctoral and early career research staff.
- 3) Universities should consider whether they could do more to encourage greater transferability of researchers between academia and industry where appropriate.