

12 July 2006



FAO

Chair: Sir David Cooksey
Consultation Response
Cooksey Review Secretariat
HM Treasury
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

CREDO

(Commercialisation, Research &
European Development Office)
The Robert Gordon University
Schoolhill
Aberdeen
AB10 1FR
United Kingdom
Tel: 01224 262023
Email: innovation@rgu.ac.uk
www.rgu.ac.uk

Fax 01224 262759

Dear Sir Cooksey,

**RE: The Robert Gordon University's Consultation Response to
Cooksey Review of UK Health Research**

Please find below a collated response of some of our prestigious academics. We appreciate this opportunity to voice our concerns and ideas. Many thanks.

1. Breadth of HEI's contributions to health R&D from all subject disciplines.

RGU is heavily involved in health R&D a wide range of subject disciplines, from basic science to practice and health care delivery. There is particular emphasis on research into the contribution of the allied health professions to care of the patient. The University would therefore be applying to the merged fund to support research in all of these areas.

2. Governance arrangements for the new merged fund and the principles for its implementation.

The key question is what guarantee would be given that the money available to the merged fund would be used to support research to the same extent as the two separate funds currently provide, and not be used to support the flagging economy of the National Health Service? A proper checks and balances system needs to be put into place to ensure that this does not happen. Moreover, the monies available must be used efficiently to increase research capacity and not fund the development of a further bureaucracy that would stifle it. Evidence of how the monies are spent must be transparent and readily available.

3. Priorities for the type of research funded under the new arrangements, including capacity building.



Regarding specific major health priorities, such as cancer and heart disease, the funds should be used to build interdisciplinary, multi-centred teams with at least ten years funding guarantee. This would increase the critical mass and capacity of the research and would result in major advancement. Meanwhile, other health problems (e.g. asthma) that present a significant burden to health in the UK and world wide, but which are not classed as immediate priorities should not be ignored. In addition, the approach to funding would need to ensure that in any programme of research a balance between basic science and clinical research is maintained, commensurate with the needs of the field.

4. Eligibility for funding from the merged budget.

This is the key area of concern. What impact would the merged funding have on the eligibility of Institutions that do not have a medical school? Similarly, what would be the position of the post-1992 Universities that are currently investing substantially in building research infrastructure and developing a sound research base, but are not as yet recognised by the Research Councils as centres of excellence? If all the funding is focused on Institutions that are already in receipt of Research Council Funding, then the newer institutions will be unable to break across these barriers. Since research underpins the need to provide students with the most up to date information, there could be a serious impact upon the quality of teaching in Universities that receive less research funding. In addition, less widespread funding could result in a greater concentration of research into narrow areas, which could limit the inventiveness of our researchers in the long term. Finally, there is the real possibility that this funding model would also disadvantage the newer Universities in terms of capacity building.

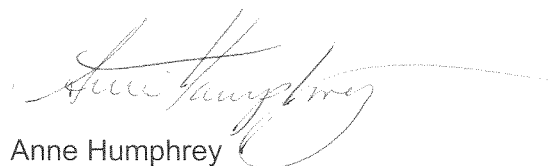
5. The impact of the funding changes upon the devolved administrations.

It is not clear from the Investment Framework document whether or not a similar merge will happen in devolved areas. In particular it is essential to know whether or not there would be a top-sliced amount from the MRC budget to match with the Scottish Source of NHS funding.

6. Career Structures for Research Scientists

How much of the funding will go into the development and encouragement of our brightest science students who are contemplating a career in research and teaching? Clear career structures need to be put into place to make this profession more appealing to students.

Kind regards,



Anne Humphrey

Contracts Officer CREDO

Cc: Michael Pittilo, Principal
Jim Penman, Vice Principal
Helen Mill, CREDO Manager