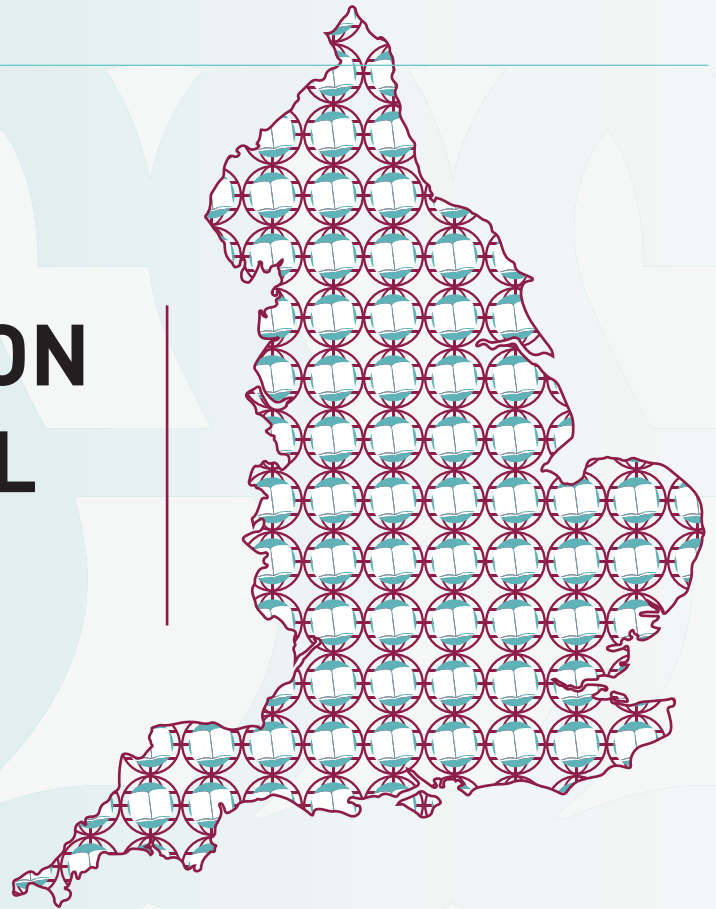




HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL FOR ENGLAND



Deputy Chief Executive, **Steve Egan** highlights the overarching objectives of HEFCE and explains how research impact is becoming a core consideration for higher education institutions and funding bodies

Could you provide a brief overview of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and its key roles?

The purpose of HEFCE, as set out in our business plan, is to create and sustain the conditions for a world-leading system of higher education that transforms lives, strengthens the economy and enriches society. We distribute public money for higher education to universities and colleges in England, and we ensure that this financial support is used to deliver the greatest benefit to students and the wider public. Our funding is therefore dedicated to three main activities: learning and teaching, research, and knowledge exchange. We fund 130 universities and higher education colleges, and directly fund courses at over 200 further education colleges (as well as many more via indirect arrangements). In addition to funding, HEFCE is the lead regulator for the higher education sector, and we aim to adhere to this responsibility in an intelligent way that respects the autonomy of universities and colleges.

How has your background prepared you for the role of Deputy Chief Executive, and what motivated you to become involved in higher education funding?

For HEFCE to be effective it must be trusted by the institutions we fund as well as government and other stakeholders. We must behave impartially when we distribute money; provide objective, evidence-based advice to government; and deliver assurances to students and others that they can fully rely upon. I have worked in the public sector, or quasi-public sector, for most of my career. The public sector values

are ones that motivate me and are essential for HEFCE to perform. Higher education makes a huge difference to people's lives and to their local communities. It also generates new ideas that transform the way we live. I believe HEFCE's role is to help our higher education sector fulfil its purpose as effectively as possible. If we at HEFCE are even partially successful it is immensely satisfying and rewarding.

In what ways does the Council support leadership, governance and management in higher education?

Universities are multi-million pound enterprises and need skilled professional leadership, governance and management to be successful. Working with the sector, we have invested directly in developing good practice in leadership, governance and management. Our prime support is now through the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, which we helped establish to develop and improve the management and leadership skills of existing and future leaders of higher education. We also support the Committee of University Chairs to develop and promote high standards in university governance.

How does HEFCE allocate funding in such a competitive and changeable research environment?

The vast majority of our funding is allocated by formulae, of which there are three: one for learning and teaching, one for research and one for business/university interaction. The model we use for research funding is based on the principle that we fund the highest quality research wherever

it is found. We use the results of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), an objective and robust peer-review process, to assess research quality, and subsequently take account of the volume of high-quality research and different costs associated with research across numerous academic disciplines. All of our formulae are open and transparent, so everyone can see exactly how we have calculated our funding.

Can you outline HEFCE's involvement in the development of case studies that monitor research impact in higher education institutions?

The case studies of the impact made by academic research were a new feature of the 2014 REF. The impact of research was assessed alongside the quality of its outputs and the environment in which it was conducted. The Framework looked at the impact of research on the economy, society, culture, public policy and services beyond academia. Though the REF is a UK-wide process, it is managed by a team based at HEFCE.

How does the Council encourage the effective translation of research for the development of marketable services and products?

We have a number of support activities including the Catalyst Fund and Higher Education Innovation Funding, which support and develop a broad range of knowledge-based interactions between universities and colleges and the wider world, resulting in economic and social benefit to the UK. Institutions are free to use these funds to pursue their knowledge exchange strategies and develop relationships with business and other organisations, which enhances the process of taking ideas 'from bench to market'.

The four UK higher education funding bodies have introduced an open-access requirement in the post-2014 REF. Why has this become a priority?

The UK higher education funding bodies believe that the products of publicly funded research should be as widely and freely accessible as possible. Open access allows: research to be disseminated quickly and widely; the research process to operate more efficiently; and increased use and understanding of research by business, government,

charities and the wider public. The global move towards open access has been developing steadily for some time but in the last two years it has become a government priority, and HEFCE and the other higher education funding bodies have been keen to support this.

In what manner does the Council ensure that research outputs submitted are as widely accessible as possible?

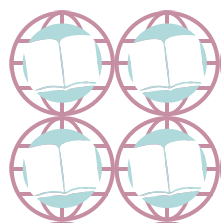
To be eligible for submission to the next REF, research outputs must be made open access by uploading a copy of the paper to an open-access repository. This eligibility requirement covers journal articles and conference proceedings only, though we will provide extra credit to institutions that can go above and beyond it. The requirement was developed through a two-stage consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, ensuring that it is achievable and flexible while delivering substantial increases in the volume of UK research that is available freely to those who need it.

The total quality-related research funding for the 2014-15 academic year is £1.6 billion and the HEFCE grant available is £3,883 million. How do these figures compare with funding available in other years?

By far the greatest change in HEFCE funding in recent years has been the shift from the way most teaching funds are now provided: from annual grants offered by HEFCE, to students' fees paid as loans by the UK Government. This change came about in 2012 and, since then, the total available to us to distribute has reduced as we give out less each year for learning and teaching. However, the amount available to us for research has remained constant for the past three years.

What are HEFCE's goals for the next five years?

The results of the 2014 REF show that UK universities are at the top of an internationally competitive research community. Universities have demonstrated how their excellent research has made positive impacts on economic growth, health and social wellbeing, and improved our quality of life. Over the next few years, it is vital we support universities in building on these strengths and developing them further.



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STUDENTS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

HEFCE highlights the need for equal opportunities in accessing higher education. Steve Egan explains how this endeavour is affected by student number control plans limiting enrolment

Over the past few years, the control on student numbers has been eased, and from 2015-16 the cap on student numbers has been completely removed. Even during the years when they were controlled, the proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds continued to increase. We are building on the progress already made to boost participation of students from more disadvantaged communities in higher education. We have recently launched a scheme called National Networks for Collaborative Outreach which will help make sure that young people have the right information and guidance. This will mean that they can consider higher education as a choice and understand how it could support their career ambitions. We must ensure that social background does not inhibit access to, and success in, higher education and that the country's economy can draw on the widest pool of talent.

It is too early to say what impact there will be on widening participation following the complete removal of the student number control. Our aim is to ensure that people have helpful information about higher education so that they choose the right course and institution to meet their goals.

THE RIPPLE EFFECT

HEFCE'S VIEWPOINT ON RESEARCH

'We aim to develop and sustain a dynamic and internationally competitive research sector that makes a major contribution to economic prosperity, national wellbeing and the expansion and dissemination of knowledge.'

IMPACT CASE STUDIES

As part of the 2014 REF exercise, 6,975 case studies demonstrating research impact on wider society were submitted by higher education institutions. The information supplied will be invaluable to a greater understanding of the importance and effectiveness of UK research.

HEFCE commissioned Digital Science to develop a free-to-access online database of the impact case studies in collaboration with the following partner organisations:

- Scottish Funding Council
- Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
- Department for Employment and Learning (Northern Ireland)
- Research Councils UK
- Wellcome Trust

The database will enable additional analysis and automated text mining of the case studies submitted, making them available in different formats to the PDFs published as part of the REF submission data. In turn, national and international organisations will have access to further analyse the case studies and learn about the impact of research in the UK.

2014 REF: the facts

**154 UK universities
submitted their research
for evaluation**

The overall quality of submissions was assessed to be:



46%
internationally
excellent



30%
world-leading



20%
recognised
internationally



3%
recognised
nationally