

Department for Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy  
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29 September 2021

RE: Independent review of research bureaucracy call for evidence

1. With about 45,000 members in over 100 countries and a knowledge business that  
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chemical scientists, supporting and representing our members and bringing together  
chemical scientists from all over the world. Our members include those working in  
large multinational companies and small to medium enterprises, researchers and  
students in universities, teachers and regulators
2. :H ZHOFRPH WKH JRYHUQPHQW¶V FRPDLWHQW WR WDNLQJ  
unnecessary bureaucracy in research, and believe there are steps that could be taken

## Greater alignment between funders

5. The RSC recognises the assurance and accountability requirements placed on funders, but greater alignment between funders in the UK landscape would reduce the complexity of application and reporting processes, freeing up time for researchers on the ground. The UK research and innovation system currently places a diverse range of requirements on researchers and research organisations which often seek to collect the same information in a number of different ways. This places additional burden on researchers during the application and delivery of research.
6. This significantly impacts chemistry researchers because chemistry has applications in such a wide range of fields: recent RSC research, [Science Horizons](#), which captured the views and experiences of over 750 active chemical sciences researchers around the world found that 90% had collaborated in the last five years with people outside their field or subfield. This interdisciplinarity is also evident in the fact that, even within UKRI, chemistry receives some level of funding from almost every research council, with different information requirements for each.
7. The RSC has commissioned the Enterprise Research Centre to carry out a research [SURM HFW ZRUN RQ μ: KDW to Gather Evidence on Chemistry SMEs](#) [Zgath New Role on Chemistry SMEs](#) [Q ¶](#) SMEs and their R&D and innovation activities, including the key drivers and barriers to innovation. This research is indicating that there are some bureaucratic burdens for SMEs which can be a barrier to applying for public funding. One of these is that criteria [DUHQ ¶ W DOZD \V FOH DU 7KH UHVH DUFK LV FXUUHQW O \ DW](#) happy to discuss findings with you pre-publication.

## Where the burden falls

8. We believe that resourcing processes designed to support EDI have demonstrated great value in supporting a more holistic understanding of the research landscape. The RSC has brought together 44 publishing organisations in a joint commitment that sets a new standard to ensure a more inclusive and diverse culture within scholarly publishing, including commitments to better understand our diverse community. However, it is impor-3(m)-3(i)e /F2 11.04 7 350.45 Tm 0 gackn 1 0 02 /F2 11.04 7 350.45 Tm 0 ga

## Protecting national datasets

10. The RSC recognises the burden placed on research organisations in the collection and consideration of EDI data in the research sector. However, reducing the amount of information collected risks negatively impacting progress in this area. page 1 b.92 re sh32 841.6(e)1
11. An evidence-led approach to EDI ensures organisations and individuals can reflect on their practice and be held accountable for progress against their own EDI commitments, alongside their legal obligations. In order to achieve this, it is essential that the right data is collected at the right time. Although we welcome commitments to supporting EDI, we are keen to reinforce the importance of ensuring continued improvements in the national equality and diversity data collected. Reducing the bureaucratic burden must be achieved through improved processes, rather than a reduction in the information collected.
12. For example, recent changes made to data collection by the Office for Students has resulted in data about technicians being re-categorised as a voluntary rather than required data item. Over time this will reduce the comprehensiveness of the data available on the research workforce, making it difficult to plan and mitigate for potential shortages, and widen the ever growing technical skills gap. This is of particular concern in heavily lab-based subjects like chemistry where technical expertise is an essential, underpinning skillset within the research and innovation pipeline of future workers and will risks undermining efforts to develop skills needed to achieve net zero and to deliver increased research and development activity.

## Understanding the health of the landscape

13. The RSC recognises the needs and benefits of streamlining duplicate grant schemes to simplify the application and management of awards. In reducing burden on researchers and research organisations it is important to consider the role of place as well as disciplines and interdisciplinarity and how this can be interrogated from the data and information available. Characteristic tagging including discipline, region and EDI would be a legitimate ask for substantive value.
14. The UK research landscape demonstrates strength across disciplines and can collaborate effectively internationally because of this breadth and vitality. When