



House of Commons
Science and Technology
Committee

**The Work of the
Economic and Social
Research Council**

First Report of Session 2004–05

*Report, together with formal minutes, oral and
written evidence*

*Ordered by The House of Commons
to be printed 8 December*

HC 13
[Incorporating HC 1122-i, Session 2003-04]
Published on 20 December 2004
by authority of the House of Commons
London: The Stationery Office Limited
£14.50

The Science and Technology Committee

The Science and Technology Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of Science and Technology and its associated public bodies.

Current membership

Dr Ian Gibson MP (*Labour, Norwich North*) (Chairman)
Paul Farrelly MP (*Labour, Newcastle-under-Lyme*)
Dr Evan Harris MP (*Liberal Democrat, Oxford West & Abingdon*)
Kate Hoey MP (*Labour, Vauxhall*)
Dr Brian Iddon MP (*Labour, Bolton South East*)
Mr Robert Key MP (*Conservative, Salisbury*)
Mr Tony McWalter MP (*Labour, Hemel Hempstead*)
Dr Andrew Murrison MP (*Conservative, Westbury*)
Geraldine Smith MP (*Labour, Morecambe and Lunesdale*)
Bob Spink MP (*Conservative, Castle Point*)
Dr Desmond Turner MP (*Labour, Brighton Kemptown*)

Powers

The Committee is one of the departmental Select Committees, the powers of which are set out in House of Commons Standing Orders, principally in SO No.152. These are available on the Internet via www.parliament.uk

Publications

The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/s&tcom
A list of Reports from the Committee in the present Parliament is included at the back of this volume.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are: Chris Shaw (Clerk); Emily Commander (Second Clerk); Alun Roberts (Committee Specialist); Hayaatun Sillem (Committee Specialist); Ana Ferreira (Committee Assistant); Robert Long (Senior Office Clerk); and Christine McGrane (Committee Secretary).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Science and Technology Committee, Committee Office, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general inquiries is: 020 7219 2793; the Committee's e-mail address is: scitechcom@parliament.uk

Contents

Report	<i>Page</i>
Summary	3
1 Introduction	5
2 Background	6
Origins and structure	6
Mission and aims	6
Income and expenditure	8
3 Strategy and mission	9
Consultation on strategic framework	9
Relationship with Government	9
Concordats with Departments	9
Evidence-based policy making	11
Regional Development Agencies	12
International agenda	13
4 Support for research	14
Funding modes	14
Research Centres	14
Grant application success rates	16
Interdisciplinary research	19
Full economic costs	19
Research concentration	20
Grant administration	21
Peer review	21
Impact of the Research Assessment Exercise	22
Research resources	23
5 Cross-Council collaboration	25
Arts and Humanities Research Council	25
Harmonisation of administration	26
6 Support for researchers	27
Postdocs and fellowships	27
Support for young researchers	27
Postgraduate training	28
3+1 awards	28
Quota system	28
Demographics	30
7 Skills shortages	32
International reviews	34
8 Knowledge transfer and user engagement	35

2 The Work of the Economic and Social Research Council

Science and society	35
Availability of research results	36
Engagement with industry	36
Advanced Institute of Management	37
9 Conclusion	38
Conclusions and recommendations	39
Formal minutes	43
Witnesses	44
Written evidence	44

Summary

This inquiry represents the final instalment of the Committee's rolling programme of scrutiny of the seven Research Councils. We sought to examine all aspects of the Economic and Social Research Council's (ESRC's) work, including: its support for research and researchers; interaction with other Research Councils, industry and Government; and response towards skills shortages in social science subjects.

ESRC has recently undertaken a major consultation on its new strategic framework and future priorities. It is now important that ESRC makes use of this feedback to inform the development of its forward strategy and operating plan. In particular, ESRC needs to increase the proportion of funding available for responsive mode research. We propose that this should be achieved in part through a reduction in the proportion of funding devoted to Research Centres. ESRC should also follow the example of other Research Councils by introducing a fund to support new investigators. In addition, we urge the Research Councils to continue working to reduce barriers to interdisciplinary research, for example by harmonisation of their grant administration processes.

ESRC has taken welcome steps to strengthen its engagement with its research and user communities in both the public and private sector. It has Concordats with many Government Departments and is now developing relationships with Regional Development Agencies. ESRC researchers have also had some useful interactions with industrial partners. We commend ESRC's attempts to enhance its links with the public and private sector and encourage it to continue to support such activities.

We are extremely concerned about the skills shortages in quantitative social science disciplines. ESRC has introduced some measures, such as prioritising studentships in key subjects, in an effort to address these shortages. However, ESRC's budget is limited and the shortages of skilled personnel in quantitative subjects affect all the scientific disciplines. A cross-Council approach to resolving the problems of skills shortages is therefore essential. We recommend the establishment of a Strategic Capabilities Fund to address these skills shortages and to ensure geographical coverage in key subjects.

1 Introduction

1. This Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of the Office of Science and Technology (OST) and its associated public bodies.¹ These “associated public bodies” are not clearly defined: the non-Departmental Public Bodies associated with the OST are, strictly speaking, sponsored by its parent Department, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) rather than by OST itself. We have taken the term to mean the seven Research Councils and the Council for Science and Technology, and (in part) the Human Genetics Commission and the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission.²

2. As part of our scrutiny of the Research Councils, we have been holding separate scrutiny sessions with each of the Councils, with the objective of calling in all seven over the course of the Parliament. So far, we have published Reports on the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC), the Medical Research Council (MRC), the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) and the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC). We announced our inquiry into the remaining Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), on 30 June 2004 and invited evidence from interested parties.

3. We received seven memoranda of written evidence and held one oral evidence session on 20 October 2004 with the Chief Executive of ESRC, Professor Ian Diamond; the Director for Research, Training and Development, Adrian Alsop; the Director of Policy and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, Glyn Davies; and an ESRC Council Member, Professor Patricia Broadfoot. We subsequently received further memoranda of evidence from ESRC in answer to supplementary questions. The evidence received and a transcript of the oral evidence session are published with this Report. The Committee previously held an introductory oral evidence session with Professor Diamond on 22 January 2003 following his appointment to the post of Chief Executive of ESRC.

4. We are very grateful to all those who submitted evidence to this inquiry and to ESRC for the co-operative manner in which staff there have provided information in response to our many requests.

1 House of Commons Standing Order No. 152

2 The Human Genetics Commission is jointly sponsored by OST and the Department of Health. The Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Commission is jointly sponsored by OST and the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

2 Background

Origins and structure

5. ESRC's forerunner, the Social Science Research Council, was founded in 1965 under a Royal Charter. In 1983 the Council became the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). ESRC's governing council includes members of the private, public and voluntary sectors, as well as the academic community. ESRC's strategy is delivered by boards with responsibility for research priorities, resources, grants and training. The boards, which report to the council, consist of senior social scientists and research users and are chaired by council members.³

Research Grants Board	Responsible for responsive mode funding i.e. in response to ideas from the social science research community.
Strategic Research Board	Responsible for the pro-active, or directive, mode of funding primarily through programmes and centres.
Research Resources Board	Responsible for infrastructure, data resources, large-scale surveys and research methods.
Training and Development Board	Responsible for doctoral training, postdoctoral fellowships and researcher career development.

Source: ESRC

ESRC also has an audit committee, a research evaluation committee, an international advisory committee and an external relations advisory group. The current Chairman of ESRC is Ms Frances Cairncross and the Chief Executive is Professor Ian Diamond.

Mission and aims

6. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) summarises its role as follows:

- to promote and support, by any means, high-quality basic, strategic and applied research and related postgraduate training in the social sciences;
- to advance knowledge and provide trained social scientists who meet the needs of users and beneficiaries, thereby contributing to the economic competitiveness of the UK, the effectiveness of public services and policy, and the quality of life; and
- to provide advice on, and disseminate knowledge and promote public understanding of, the social sciences.⁴

7. In the past, ESRC made strategic decisions about its research agenda on the basis of seven thematic priorities.⁵ In 2003–04 ESRC adopted a new mechanism for making long-

3 www.esrc.ac.uk

4 ESRC, *Annual Report and Accounts 2003–04*, HC 686

5 The seven thematic priorities are: Economic Performance and Development; Environment and Human Behaviour; Governance and Citizenship; Knowledge Communication and Learning; Lifecourse, Lifestyle and Health; Social Inclusion and Exclusion; and Work and Organisations.

term strategic decisions. ESRC told us in its written submission: “The themes will remain as a useful description of the work we support across broad topic areas but future funding decisions will instead be driven by the four priority categories of Capacity, Research, Engagement and Performance”.⁶

Capacity	To ensure the availability of sufficient first class capacity i.e. expert researchers, data and methodology for the UK to undertake top class social science.
Research	To fund only cutting edge and excellent research that focuses on pushing back the frontiers of science and on areas of major national importance.
Engagement	To communicate its research findings as widely as possible; to engage with its audiences and to get its research into practice.
Performance	To evaluate the quality and impact of its research and perform its work efficiently and effectively.

Source: ESRC Operating Plan 2004–05

8. ESRC told us that its work “covers a wide and disparate range of disciplines and topics, perhaps more than any other research council, ranging from economics through psychology to anthropology, and including management and education, and from issues such as environmental sustainability and international security to youth crime and family welfare”.⁷ ESRC also claims to have the largest research community of all the councils, accounting for around 25% of staff returned in the last Research Assessment Exercise (RAE).⁸ Despite this, ESRC has the smallest budget of all the Research Councils (see Table 1).

Table 1: Provision for Research Councils in the Science Budget 2003–04

Research Council	Resource	Capital
	£ million	
MRC	415.3	14.6
BBSRC	267.9	-2.8 ⁹
NERC	256.6	7.5
EPSRC	468.1	0.4
PPARC	249.0	1.8
ESRC	94.0	0.6
CCLRC	98.9	20.1

Source: Science Budget 2003–04 to 2005–06, DTI/OST

6 Ev 18

7 Ev 17

8 As above

9 Negative figure resulted from planned disposal in 2003-04.

Income and expenditure

9. The total expenditure of ESRC in 2003–04 was £100m, of which £67m was spent on research, £26m on postgraduate training and the remainder on communications activities, evaluation and administration. As a result of the overall increase in the Science Budget in the 2002 Spending Review, ESRC's budget is set to increase further over the next few years from £119m in 2004–05 to £130m in 2005–06.^{10,11} ESRC supports at any one time approximately 2000 doctoral students, 700 grants and fellowships, 350 projects within 20–30 managed programmes, and 30 large-scale research and resource centres.¹² In addition to the members of staff leading the research, approximately 1500 researchers are employed on these awards.¹³ A summary of ESRC's income and expenditure for 2003–04 is given in Table 2.

Table 2: ESRC Income and Expenditure for 2003–04

£M Gross	Operating plan	Outturn
Income		
Resource Provision	93.87	90.85
End Year Flexibility Allocated	2.20	0.00
Other Income	11.75	11.26
Total Income	107.82	102.11
Expenditure		
Responsive inc. Fellowships	19.86	18.67
Priorities	34.16	29.12
International/Policy/Evaluation	0.95	1.93
Resources	12.43	11.62
Teaching and Learning	3.27	3.45
User Engagement	0.88	1.01
Joint Infrastructure Fund	4.66	3.24
<i>Total Research</i>	<i>76.21</i>	<i>69.04</i>
Postgraduate Training	26.80	25.62
Administration	4.53	4.66
Depreciation and Capital Costs	0.16	0.59
Corporate Information Services	0.12	0.12
Total Expenditure	107.82	100.03¹⁴
Total Income	107.82	102.11

Source: ESRC, *Operating Report 2003–2004*, p 25

10 Ev 18

11 The allocations under the 2004 Spending Review were not known at the time this Report was published.

12 Ev 18

13 Ev 18

14 The underspend in 2003–04 arose due to delays in commissioning new initiatives and readjustment of postgraduate expenditure arising from the introduction of the "1+3" studentship model. The extra funds are being carried forward and ESRC has been taking steps to accelerate the commissioning of new initiatives.

3 Strategy and mission

Consultation on strategic framework

10. ESRC launched a consultation on its future priorities in Spring 2004, inviting responses from universities, learned societies, Government Departments, organizations in the private, public and voluntary sectors and other key stakeholders. The responses to the consultation are now being considered and final decisions on strategic plans will be taken at ESRC's council meeting in April 2005. The Science Budget allocations are expected to be made in March 2005, raising the question of how ESRC is co-ordinating its decisions on strategic priorities with its bid for the Spending Review. Professor Diamond told us in oral evidence that the timing had been “seamlessly” planned: “The choice of timing is so that we can work very much with the OST timing and be able to respond very quickly”.¹⁵ Since the Science Budget allocations are unexpectedly late this year—normally they have been made by late autumn—and ESRC must have planned its timetable for the stakeholder consultation well in advance, we find this claim surprising. It is important that ESRC co-ordinates major strategic decisions with its Spending Review bid.

11. The evidence received was generally supportive of ESRC's new approach to developing strategic priorities and particularly praised the level of consultation with the research community. The Political Studies Association said: “We would like to commend the ESRC for the attention it has given under its current leadership to developing relations with professional associations [...] In particular, we consider that there has been extensive consultation about the ESRC's new strategic framework and priorities for 2004–5”.¹⁶ The Development Studies Association (DSA) also told us: “The four new organising dimensions of ‘capacity, research, engagement and performance’ appear to offer a more realistic and balanced view of the key elements that the ESRC must pay attention to in pursuit of their objectives. The DSA particularly welcomes the explicit recognition of the capacity dimension of the ESRC's responsibility and the ways that this is now being thought through in the ESRC”.¹⁷ The Association did, however, note that “there remains some work to clarify the ways in which the broader academic community will continue to be involved in the decisions over research priorities”.¹⁸ **The positive feedback from the social science community about the way in which ESRC conducted the consultation on its new strategic framework is a credit to the Council. ESRC needs to build on this good work by continuing to engage with its community in its forward planning.**

Relationship with Government

Concordats with Departments

12. The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is atypical of the Research Councils in the number of Government Departments that it collaborates with. Some, but not all, of

15 Q 28

16 Ev 34

17 Ev 36

18 As above

these interactions take the form of a Concordat between ESRC and the particular Department. ESRC's current Concordat partners are listed below; the absence of a Concordat with the Department for International Development is discussed in paragraph 19.

ESRC Concordats

- Cabinet Office
- Department for Education and Skills
- Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
- Department of Health
- Department of Trade and Industry
- Department for Transport
- Department for Work and Pensions
- HM Treasury
- Home Office
- Northern Ireland Executive
- Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
- Scottish Executive
- Welsh Assembly Government

Source: ESRC

13. The Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) told us that it had established a Concordat with ESRC in 1993 in response to “the commitment in the SET White Paper 1993—‘Realising our Potential’—stating that the Department and the Research Councils should have Concordats in place to put their co-operation on an institutional footing and ensure regular contact”.¹⁹ DTI said that this arrangement had “been of real practical value to policy makers and the DTI is keen to build on this relationship”.²⁰ However, it appears that the commitment involved in the Concordat is minimal: “The ESRC-DTI Concordat binds the two parties to an annual meeting to explore each other’s activities and identify potential areas for collaboration”.²¹ Joint DTI-ESRC activities have included “lunchtime

19 Ev 16

20 As above

21 Ev 16

seminars that provided valuable discussion platforms on programmes which affect industry and the consumer, and are of interest across the Department”.²²

14. Other Concordats involve significant investment of funds by the Government Department. ESRC told us that “Joint funding is an increasingly regular feature of the Concordats and is routinely discussed”, and noted that “joint studentships between the ESRC and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the ESRC and the Welsh Assembly Government are funded equally”.^{23,24} ESRC also commented that in some cases, such as the Concordat with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), Concordats “have been sought by a government department which has heard of the benefits of a formal collaborative agreement from other departments”.²⁵ DWP remarked on the fact that “Over the last year, with the appointment of its new Chairman [Professor Diamond], the ESRC has become more outward looking and DWP officials have found a much greater willingness to engage with government concerns than previously”.²⁶ DWP told us that it was examining with ESRC “the possibilities for developing opportunities for:

- secondments between academics and government researchers;
- for 50:50 funding for postgraduate studentships to work on projects guided by DWP longer term research needs; and
- short term placements for postgraduate students.”²⁷

15. ESRC also told us that it had noted increasing “interest in ongoing professional development opportunities for government research staff”, as well as “an increased desire [on the part of Government Departments] for regular interaction with academic social science researchers”.²⁸ **It is encouraging that ESRC is building strong relationships with a wide range of Government Departments. We believe that this interaction should strengthen the quality of policy making in these Departments. We nevertheless urge ESRC to exercise caution to ensure that its work programme does not become overly focussed on meeting Government priorities at the expense of giving researchers with strong proposals the freedom to pursue issues that they believe are important.**

Evidence-based policy making

16. We were curious to know whether the appointment of Departmental Chief Scientific Advisers (CSAs) had had a discernible impact on the use of social science by Government Departments. ESRC told us that it had “observed a greater demand for its research in the past five years” but although CSAs had “encouraged a positive approach to the benefits of social science”, the increased demand was more likely attributable “to standards set by government for transparent decision making and the use of evidence in policy

22 Ev 16

23 Ev 39

24 Ev 39

25 Ev 39

26 Ev 33

27 Ev 32

28 Ev 38

formulation”.²⁹ We also asked whether ESRC had undertaken any assessments of the extent to which Government policy was based on evidence, especially in view of the fact that it sponsors a network on evidence-based policy making.³⁰ Professor Diamond told us that it was not something that ESRC had done to date but said it was “a very interesting idea and [...] one that I guarantee we will consider”.³¹ **In view of ESRC’s interest in, and the Government’s stated commitment to, evidence-based policy making, we believe that there would be significant merit in ESRC conducting periodic appraisals of the extent to which specific Government policies in areas within ESRC’s remit are based on sound evidence. This would remind Government of its commitment to evidence-based policy making and would also be a useful indicator of the relevance and value of ESRC-sponsored research.**

Regional Development Agencies

17. Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) are being given an increasingly important role in regional policy development but in our Report on Government investment in nanotechnology in 2004 we commented on the “patchy nature of scientific expertise in RDAs”.³² In addition, witnesses to the 2003 inquiry by the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee into science and the RDAs expressed concerns about their lack of scientific and innovation based expertise, and that Committee called for RDAs to review their capabilities in that area.³³ ESRC told us that “Formal arrangements with Regional Development Agencies are not yet as developed as with Government departments and the Devolved Administrations”, although it was “increasingly interacting with RDAs”.³⁴ ESRC also stated that it was holding a joint conference with the Association of Regional Observatories on regional policy which had attracted more than 180 participants from regional bodies, and that this was indicative of a strong demand for research in this area.³⁵ As discussed in paragraph 15, ESRC has to be prudent in directing its limited funds and needs to guard against skewing its research priorities too far in favour of central or regional Government policy. However, **we encourage ESRC to ensure that research of relevance is disseminated widely to the Regional Development Agencies and advise Regional Development Agencies to make more use of ESRC expertise in planning and conducting research to underpin policy making.** The development of the new ESRC “Information Centre” described in paragraph 70 could assist in this process.

29 Ev 38

30 The Evidence Based Policy and Practice network at Queen Mary, University of London.

31 Q 18

32 Fifth Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2003–04, *Too little too late? Government Investment in Nanotechnology*, HC 56-I

33 House of Lords, Fifth Report of the Select Committee on Science and Technology, Session 2002–03, *Science and the RDAs: SETting the regional agenda*, HL Paper 140-I, paras 3.43-3.44

34 Ev 39

35 Ev 39

International agenda

18. ESRC submitted evidence to the Committee’s inquiry into the use of science in UK international development policy justifying the fact that it sponsored Research Centres with an international development focus:

“The scope of the social sciences is international. They transcend national boundaries and nation states in their methods and subjects of enquiry, and in the knowledge which they produce. The Council strongly believes that research in the social sciences flourishes in an open and internationalist perspective. Given increasing awareness of processes of globalisation, it is apparent that in social, economic and political terms the wellbeing of developed and developing countries are increasingly interdependent.”³⁶

ESRC also emphasised to us in oral evidence to this inquiry that consultation with research-intensive businesses in the UK had identified a demand for greater research on “understanding the international markets and globalisation”, which was partly responsible for the increased focus on an international agenda.³⁷

19. The Development Studies Association told us that “In past years the ESRC has been prone to being rather narrow in its focus on the UK and near-Europe. This has meant that it has been difficult to get funding for social science that is more global in scope, or was focused on the social science issues and challenges of other parts of the world”.³⁸ It is noteworthy that ESRC is now taking steps to rectify the fact that it does not have a Concordat with the Department for International Development, although the lack of a Concordat reflects on the Department as much as on ESRC. The Development Studies Association also indicated that ESRC was now changing, praising the “more internationalist perspective that is embedded in the new strategic framework” and the “efforts by the ESRC to establish a clearer and more systematic link with DFID [Department for International Development]”.³⁹ In our Report, *The Use of Science in UK International Development Policy*, we stated that “UK Research Councils can play an important role in funding research for international development and consider that such research is highly likely to deliver additional, incidental benefits for the UK”.⁴⁰ **ESRC has a remit to fund a broad portfolio of research and to support UK researchers in carrying out work of world standing and relevance. We therefore welcome ESRC’s increasing willingness to fund social science of global rather than just European significance.**

36 Thirteenth Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2003–04, *The Use of Science in UK International Development Policy*, HC 133-I

37 Q 25

38 Ev 36

39 Ev 36

40 HC (2003–04) 133-I

4 Support for research

Funding modes

20. ESRC told us in its memorandum that the “balance between directed and responsive mode funding is approximately 2:1”. This contrasts with the roughly 1:2 ratio of managed: responsive mode funding at NERC, EPSRC and BBSRC, although ESRC suggests that this may partly be due to the fact that it is “far more definitive and limited in its definition of the responsive mode” than the other Councils.^{41,42} Professor Diamond admitted to us in oral evidence that “an increased proportion of our funding in the last few years has gone into the directed mode” and suggested that “the reason for that is that a large amount of the increase in budget that we have had over the last few years has been to engage in cross-Council directed programmes, for example on the rural environment and on energy”.⁴³ Professor Diamond also argued that some of ESRC’s programmes “are effectively responsive mode”, describing the cognitive science programme being run in conjunction with EPSRC, BBSRC and MRC as “a responsive mode programme which is steered”.⁴⁴

21. Mr Davies also pointed out that ESRC spend on responsive mode was starting to rise: “in the coming year we will be increasing our spend on responsive mode from £18 million in the last year to something like £23 million”.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the stakeholder consultation on ESRC’s new strategic framework revealed “overwhelming support for a shift to support of research through more bottom up, responsive provision and away from what is perceived as undue central prescription of research”.⁴⁶ Professor Diamond acknowledged this and indicated that ESRC was exploring the most effective way of increasing responsive mode provision: “It is not quite as simple as saying we will put more money into grants between a quarter and a half million pounds. We also want to give the opportunity to have some bigger response mode grants addressing really big questions”.⁴⁷ **ESRC’s 2:1 ratio of directed: responsive mode funding is out of step with other Research Councils and is unpopular with its research community. We recommend that ESRC respond without delay to the calls from its community to increase significantly the proportion of responsive mode funding.**

Research Centres

22. ESRC provides ten year funding commitments to support Research Centres at a single location with the aim of fostering:

41 Excluding core funding to institutes for BBSRC.

42 *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

43 Q 35

44 Q 35

45 Q 35

46 *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

47 Q 35

- the development of international centres of excellence in partnership with host institutions;
- the development of longer term research agendas beyond the period of ESRC funding;
- interdisciplinary teams;
- capacity building; and
- the development of partnerships with stakeholders.⁴⁸

Examples of current Centres include the Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University, the Centre for Competition Policy (University of East Anglia) and the Centre for Public Organisation (Bristol University).

23. After the initial ten year funding commitment is complete, Research Centres can reapply for continued funding for further five year periods. Professor Diamond indicated that the ESRC council believed “closing something down simply because you can is not a very effective way to take forward research”.⁴⁹ ESRC had therefore decided that “every five years a Research Centre can apply to continue in a proper market test [...] Where the agenda for research is still vibrant, the leadership is still strong and peer review is such that it is important that it is funded as a Centre and it is world class then we will continue to fund on an on-going basis”.⁵⁰ Nevertheless, there was an expectation that Centres should seek alternative funding sources and of the 21 Centres that ESRC has supported in the last decade, five Centres were granted a further period of ESRC funding whilst the remaining 16 had mostly secured support from other sources to enable them to continue, primarily within universities.⁵¹

24. Various memoranda questioned ESRC’s use of this model of research funding. The Political Studies Association, for example, told us: “There needs to be continual and rigorous scrutiny of the value for money offered by research centres compared to other forms of funding. There is a danger that they may reinforce a fashionable orthodoxy rather than stimulating new and innovative thinking”.⁵² The British Psychological Society was of a similar opinion, telling us: “ESRC should reduce the number and/or nature of the research centres that it supports. The current concentration of its resources into 26 centres (11 of which focus on economics) in a limited number of institutions will lead to severe restrictions in research capacity and recruitment difficulties in the UK as a whole. It is vital to ensure the breadth of social science in the UK and to protect its broad institutional,

48 Ev 20

49 Q 36

50 Q 36 [Professor Diamond]

51 Ev 39

52 Ev 34

regional, and departmental base”.⁵³ Similar views were expressed by a number of organisations in response to ESRC’s consultation on its new strategic framework.⁵⁴

25. Thirteen per cent of total ESRC expenditure in 2003–04 was allocated to Research Centres, compared with 18% on managed programmes and 18% for responsive mode grants and fellowships.⁵⁵ The proportion of ESRC research funding allocated to Research Centres has increased from 16.6% in 2001–02 to 19.2% in 2003–04.⁵⁶ ESRC told us that the Research Evaluation Committee had overseen comparative assessments of different approaches to research funding and said that “recent evaluations have highlighted the particular achievements of our centres in relation to the development of dynamic and responsive research agendas, capacity building, career development, sustained user-engagement and the leverage of external co-funding”.⁵⁷

26. ESRC, like all the Research Councils, has to make decisions about how best to distribute its limited funding. In the light of the low amounts of funding currently allocated to responsive mode grants and the low success rates for some of these competitions (see paragraphs 27–28), we find it surprising that ESRC continues to channel such a significant proportion of its funds into ten year commitments to Research Centres. We recognise the value in providing research groups with long-term, predictable funding, but do not believe that ESRC can afford to continue to fund such a large cohort of Research Centres. Moreover, whilst we support the policy of seed funding Research Centres, and note that most have continued once ESRC funding has been withdrawn, we believe that they should be left to stand on their own feet from an earlier age. This would also bring ESRC closer into line with other Research Council initiatives, such as EPSRC’s Portfolio Partnerships and Platform Grants which provide funding for five years. **ESRC should increase the funding available for responsive mode applications by reducing the size of its contingent of Research Centres. In addition, ESRC needs to consider whether a shorter time frame, such as five years, for Research Centre funding would give better value for money.** The effect of Research Centres on the concentration of research is discussed in paragraph 33.

Grant application success rates

27. We have repeatedly encountered problems with low success rates for grant applications in our ongoing programme of scrutiny of the Research Councils. While some degree of competition is obviously healthy and should contribute to the maintenance of high standards in applications, there are serious concerns over the amount of academic time spent on preparing proposals that may not be successful. ESRC told us in its memorandum: “Demand for ESRC funding is high and there has been a substantial increase in grant applications”, from 595 in 2000–01 to 831 in 2003–04.⁵⁸ The overall

53 Ev 37

54 *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

55 Ev 18

56 Ev 27

57 Ev 40

58 Ev 20; the figure of 831 refers to responsive mode research grant and research fellowship applications in 2003–04. 772 of these applications were for research grants. This explains the apparent discrepancy between the figure cited here and the total number of applications given in Table 3.

success rate for responsive mode applications was 35% in 2003–04, but the success rate for large grants (over £45,000) was only 23% and for fellowships 27%.⁵⁹ Furthermore, a substantial proportion of applications with high alpha (i.e. fundable) ratings cannot be supported. ESRC told us that an “additional £20m a year would be required to enable us to support all the proposals in the top half of the alpha range”.⁶⁰ Approximately 80% of the responsive mode applications made to ESRC are alpha rated.⁶¹

28. Success rates for responsive mode award applications vary significantly between disciplines (see Table 3). For example, in 2003–04 the success rate for linguistics applications was 54.5%, whilst for interdisciplinary studies and education the success rates were 16.7% and 15.3% respectively. ESRC told us that it had recently commissioned research looking at the reasons behind the variable success rates for applications in management (very low success rate), sociology (medium rate) and linguistics (high rate) in order to establish whether there was anything in its application system which was “biasing the outcome”.⁶² Although the results indicated that the system was not inherently weighted in favour of any particular subjects, ESRC told us that it did emphasise the need “to ensure we had a mix of referees who were both focussed on the very specific subject and had a broader view”. A correlation was also identified between subjects with low success rates and those which did “less well in getting high graded departments in the RAE”.⁶³

29. In our Report on the work of BBSRC, we urged BBSRC to address its falling success rates by better management of demand for research grants. It appears that ESRC has already taken some steps to manage demand for its awards and we note that ESRC publishes grant application rates for individual institutions—one of our recommendations to BBSRC.⁶⁴ Mr Davies told us that ESRC had been concerned in the 1990s about the low levels of applications receiving an alpha rating: “At that time, the split was roughly about 60:40 [alpha: non-alpha rated proposals]. We engaged in discussions with universities. We changed our system of application to an open date system so that the reader had a chance to look at the application before they submitted it to us. That did work [and] over a period of about 18 months [resulted in] this 80:20 ratio”.⁶⁵ Mr Davies also recognised the need to address specifically the quality of applications in subjects which had low success rates, telling us: “the AIM initiative and the Teaching and Learning Research Programme are working on the other side of ESRC in how we improve the quality of applications coming from, for example, management and education”, where success rates are below average.⁶⁶

We are pleased to find that ESRC is attempting to tackle the low success rates for responsive mode grant applications by managing demand and improving the quality of applications. ESRC must now significantly enhance the funding available for

59 Ev 20

60 Ev 20

61 Q 60

62 Q 65 [Mr Davies]

63 Q 65 [Mr Davies]

64 Third Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2003–04, *The Work of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council*, HC 6

65 Q 61

66 Q 65 [Mr Davies]

responsive mode grants. Until it does so, overall success rates are unlikely to improve significantly.

Table 3: ESRC Responsive Mode Grant Awards by Discipline 1999–2000 to 2003–04

DISCIPLINE	APPLICATIONS					SUCCESS RATE %				
	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04	99/00	00/01	01/02	02/03	03/04
Area Studies	7	6	6	3	6	0.0	66.7	50.0	0.0	33.3
Economic and Social History	27	32	30	35	27	29.6	53.1	43.3	40.0	44.4
Economics	60	56	60	75	112	30.0	46.4	40.0	36.0	41.1
Education	65	62	72	60	59	32.3	27.4	27.8	18.3	15.3
Environmental Planning	15	14	12	14	17	33.3	21.4	50.0	28.6	23.5
Human Geography	40	38	42	45	46	32.5	28.9	47.6	22.2	34.8
Interdisciplinary Studies	0	3	24	14	24	0.0	0.0	16.7	42.9	16.7
Linguistics	22	17	18	25	33	31.8	41.2	44.4	32.0	54.5
Management and Business Studies	55	34	61	38	54	12.7	20.6	16.4	15.8	22.2
Political Science and International Relations	50	36	36	47	60	18.0	50.0	33.3	23.4	23.3
Psychology	140	137	167	152	180	24.3	35.0	26.9	29.6	42.2
Social Anthropology	30	27	26	30	20	33.3	44.4	34.6	33.3	40.0
Social Policy	34	42	20	27	32	14.7	26.2	40.0	18.5	28.1
Socio Legal Studies	16	14	16	12	10	6.3	35.7	31.3	41.7	50.0
Sociology	90	68	74	95	85	27.8	30.9	35.1	26.3	35.3
Statistics Computing and Methodology	17	9	12	8	7	23.5	22.2	50.0	50.0	28.6
TOTAL	668	595	676	680	772	25	35.1	32.4	28.1	34.6

Source: ESRC

Interdisciplinary research

30. We were particularly concerned to note that success rates for applications in interdisciplinary studies had fallen from 42.9% in 2002–03 to 16.7% in 2003–04 and asked ESRC whether this reflected difficulties with the assessment of these applications. Mr Davies described such applications as “an odd collection” for which the applicant could not identify a single discipline, or a mix of disciplines to describe their work.⁶⁷ Professor Diamond also pointed out that the Research Councils had recently reviewed their approach to interdisciplinarity and had come to the conclusion that they “did not have any bias across the Research Councils in the way we dealt with interdisciplinarity” although there was room for improvement in the way they publicised their approach to it.⁶⁸

31. Nevertheless, ESRC’s consultation on its new strategic framework clearly indicated a need for the Council to “make clear its position on supporting research within and across disciplinary boundaries” and “reduce actual and perceived barriers” to supporting interdisciplinary research.⁶⁹ We wholeheartedly endorse this assessment. Interdisciplinary research can engender ground-breaking developments but researchers in these areas frequently complain of difficulties in securing funding. **It is not sufficient that ESRC is content with its procedures for assessing interdisciplinary applications: the research community must also be convinced that these applications will be given proper consideration. If this does not happen, the perceived lack of a level playing field will act as a disincentive for researchers to submit interdisciplinary applications, or indeed to engage in interdisciplinary research.**

Full economic costs

32. The Government has recently announced that the Research Councils are to move to a funding model which requires them to pay the full economic costs of the research they fund.⁷⁰ At present, Research Councils pay 46% of the direct staff costs for a research grant. It is expected that the Research Councils will need to pay in excess of 60% of the direct staff costs in order to meet the full economic costs.⁷¹ ESRC remarked on the fact that the changes entailed in the move towards full economic costs may also have implications for the success rates of grant applications: “We welcome the greater transparency the introduction of full economic costs will bring. However it is possible that this will lead to a considerable increase in the number and costs of grant applications received by ESRC, given the size of our community and the likelihood that a research council award will cover a greater proportion of costs than funding from some other sources”.⁷² **The impact of the move towards full economic costs on grant application success rates needs to be carefully monitored at a cross-Council level.**

67 Q 67

68 Q 67

69 *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

70 HM Treasury, DTI and DfES, *Science & innovation investment framework 2004 – 2014*, July 2004

71 Eleventh Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2003–04, *Research Assessment Exercise: a re-assessment*, HC 586

72 Ev 20

Research concentration

33. ESRC stated in its memorandum that, in line with the other Research Councils, it does not have a “policy in favour of either institutional dispersal or concentration”.⁷³ In fact, although ESRC currently funds research at over 120 different institutions, 44% of ESRC funding goes to ten institutions, as illustrated in the Table 4. ESRC’s funding of Research Centres is likely to contribute to the concentration of research funding (see paragraphs 22–26), and the move towards the quota system for PhD studentships (see paragraphs 53–57) will undoubtedly reinforce this situation.

Table 4: Concentration of ESRC funding

Overall Expenditure on Research and Training 2003–04 (£k)			%
1.	University of Essex	6,806	7.3
2.	London: School of Economics and Political Science	5,204	5.6
3.	University of Oxford	4,553	4.9
4.	University of York	4,111	4.4
5.	University of Manchester	4,076	4.4
6.	University of Cambridge	4,023	4.3
7.	University of London: University College	3,423	3.7
8.	University of Sheffield	2,965	3.2
9.	Cardiff University	2,903	3.1
10.	University of Warwick	2,816	3.0
Total		40,880	43.9

Source: ESRC

34. We have expressed our concern over the effects of research concentration in previous Reports on the work of the Research Councils and, most recently, in our Report on the Research Assessment Exercise.⁷⁴ A review conducted by the Science Policy Research Unit at the University of Sussex reported “little if any convincing evidence to justify a government policy explicitly aimed at further concentration of research resources on large departments [...] on the grounds of superior economic efficiency” and the Lambert Review emphasised the importance of local universities for the development of a healthy regional (and therefore national) economy.^{75,76} A study commissioned by Universities UK also demonstrated the value of investment in departments with RAE scores of 3 or 4 for enhancement of the performance of the research base.⁷⁷ The ten year investment

73 Ev 19

74 HC (2003–04) 586

75 SPRU, *The Effects of Size on Research Performance: A SPRU Review*, June 2003

76 HM Treasury, *Lambert Review of Business-University Collaboration*, 2003

77 Evidence Ltd, *Funding Research Diversity: The impact of further concentration on university research performance and regional capacity*, 2001

framework for science and innovation published in July 2004 outlined a provision for the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to intervene in cases where departments are threatened with closure.⁷⁸ **ESRC needs to acknowledge the role that it plays in the increasing concentration of research in a small number of institutions. We recommend that ESRC co-ordinates its activities with the other Research Councils and with HEFCE to ensure the continued funding of excellent social science across a wide range of departments, institutions and regions.** This matter is discussed further in paragraph 66.

Grant administration

35. During his introductory session with the Committee on 22 January 2003, Professor Diamond commented on the fact that ESRC staff were struggling to cope with the administrative burden: “The one thing I hear from everywhere, all over the country from academics is that the ESRC staff are stretched to the limit [...] it is absolutely clear in my mind that within the Council at the moment people are working flat out”.⁷⁹ The Development Studies Association also told us that “with this new strategic framework and with increased funding it is important that the ESRC’s administrative capacity increases to meet the challenges. As it stands there is a perception that the ESRC staff are fully stretched in seeking to ensure the quality and effectiveness of their systems. Any increase in ambition with this new framework must be matched by a realistic increase in administrative capacity”.⁸⁰ In addition, it has been stated that administrative convergence of the Research Councils should result in a 10% reduction in ESRC recurrent costs.⁸¹ ESRC, like all the Research Councils, aims to keep its administrative costs at less than 4% of its total expenditure and is expected to meet this target in this financial year.

36. We asked ESRC whether it expected to have to increase its administrative capacity. Professor Diamond told us: “If we increase our budget significantly, I think it is only likely that we would have to increase the number of people to administer that”.⁸² Whilst we do not dispute that there may be a need to expand the numbers of staff at ESRC, it does not logically follow that increasing the budget will automatically necessitate a larger body of staff.

Peer review

37. During our scrutiny of the various Research Councils we have encountered a number of problems with the peer review systems being employed. ESRC utilises different peer review systems depending on the size of the grant. Small grants (below £45,000) are reviewed using a streamlined process that involves members of both a virtual college of reviewers and the Research Grants Board, which comprises 24 academic members and two “user” members drawn from the public or private sector, covering a range of different

78 HM Treasury et al, *Science & innovation investment framework 2004–2014*, July 2004

79 Science and Technology, Minutes of Evidence, *ESRC Introductory Session*, Session 2002-03, HC 277-i

80 Ev 37

81 Ev 26

82 Q 80

disciplines. **We support ESRC’s decision to use a streamlined peer review process for small grant applications.**

38. Large grants (above £45,000) enter into a three stage process. In the first instance they are sent for review to individual researchers with relevant expertise. The number of reviewers used at this stage tends to vary between three and five depending on the size of the grant. If the average grading awarded to the proposal by the reviewers exceeds a certain threshold it will pass to the next stage: consideration by two members of the Research Grants Board. If successful at this stage, the proposal will then be reviewed by the Research Grants Board as a whole. Thus ESRC uses neither the committee system favoured by BBSRC for reviewing grant proposals, nor the peer review college system employed by NERC and EPSRC.

39. Applicants can nominate two reviewers, of which at least one will be selected to review the proposal. This is similar to the system used by EPSRC, whereby at least one out of the three reviewers requested by the applicant will be used. Although reviewers’ comments are generally made available for the applicant and other reviewers to see, ESRC does not normally give applicants the chance to respond to these comments. ESRC has recently commenced a trial to give applicants an opportunity to respond to the referees’ comments on grant applications for more than £200,000. EPSRC already has a policy in place to allow applicants the chance to give feedback on referees’ comments. **We note that there are still a number of discrepancies in the peer review processes utilised by the various Research Councils. It is not clear why best practice in peer review should vary significantly between the Research Councils. Moreover, harmonisation of the peer review systems used by the Research Councils should facilitate the evaluation of applications for interdisciplinary research that fall within the remit of more than one Research Council.**

Impact of the Research Assessment Exercise

40. ESRC identified in its written memorandum four main challenges that it was likely to face over the next five to ten years, the first of which was:

“The continuing potential disjunction between the requirements of the RAE and those of the research councils in areas such as interdisciplinarity, applied research and research related to professional practice and engagement with users.”⁸³

Professor Diamond then picked out development studies and education as two disciplines that had been particularly adversely affected by the RAE.⁸⁴ We also heard that lack of appropriate recognition in the RAE was acting as a disincentive for researchers to undertake knowledge transfer activities. However, Professor Diamond seemed optimistic that previous problems had been resolved, telling us “we support the plans [for the 2008 RAE] as they are”.⁸⁵ ESRC also noted that the Research Councils had been acting collaboratively to address problems with the RAE and would continue to do so. In our recent Report on the RAE, we called for panels to give “equal weight to pure and applied

83 Ev 26

84 Q 78

85 Q 79

research” and urged HEFCE to ensure that “this is understood by everyone”.⁸⁶ We also called for the RAE to “recognise that excellent research may not be internationally significant but it may transform the fortunes of a local business or the provision of public services”.⁸⁷ We are pleased that HEFCE has accepted these recommendations in principle; it must now ensure that these are put into practice. **ESRC must continue to work closely with the other Research Councils and the Funding Councils to reduce the deleterious side-effects of the RAE and encourage the RAE subject panels to be open and clear about what they will be measuring and how they intend to do it.**

Research resources

41. Another of the major challenges identified by ESRC for the next five to ten years concerned data access and usage. ESRC described data resources to us as “the very lifeblood of economic and social research” and Professor Diamond was keen to point out that the costs of building and maintaining a world class data infrastructure mean that “Social science is no longer a cheap option”.^{88,89} In 2003–04 ESRC spent £11.62m on resources and, following a major review of its longitudinal datasets, has agreed to commit an additional £22m over the next six years to further sweeps of the British Household Panel Study, the National Child Development Study, the 1970 Birth Cohort Study and the Millennium Cohort.⁹⁰ ESRC also asserted that “if the UK is to maintain its position at the leading international edge, then it needs to do more than simply commit to the long term support of existing data sets”.⁹¹ The collection and analysis of major new datasets would clearly require significant additional funding.

42. The British Psychological Society emphasised the national benefit that could be gained through these research resources, commenting that ESRC “collects and analyses data, not only to discern patterns of behaviour but also to identify processes and behaviours that could contribute to informed and evidence-based decisions on the effectiveness of specific interventions and initiatives on, for example, reducing drug-related crimes”.⁹² However, the British Psychological Society expressed concern that ESRC’s “vital role in underpinning evidence-based policies” was “not fully understood in the ‘corridors of power’”, accounting for “the relatively small financial support that the ESRC receives from the Government”.⁹³

43. The Department for Trade and Industry (DTI) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) do at least seem to recognise the importance of national datasets. DTI told us: “Some of the projects funded by the ESRC provide evidence for policy appraisal. Examples include the Workplace Employee Relations Survey which is co-funded with DFES, ESRC and DTI”.⁹⁴ DWP also noted its intention to increasingly exploit “the capacity

86 HC (2003–04) 586

87 HC (2003–04) 586

88 Ev 21

89 Q 30

90 ESRC, *Annual Report and Accounts 2003-04*, 2004

91 Ev 21

92 Ev 37

93 Ev 37

94 Ev 17

to utilise government administrative databases and major surveys data in its analytical work for policy purposes”.⁹⁵ DWP further told us that it was “considering with ESRC the possibility of opportunities for co-funding of longitudinal data collection”.⁹⁶ **Longitudinal studies and the collection and maintenance of national datasets are essential to build an evidence base to inform effective policy development. Such work is, however, costly and it is unreasonable to expect ESRC to fund these major activities out of its modest budget. Where a dataset is of particular relevance to a Government Department, the Department should shoulder the majority of the financial burden, whilst taking advantage of ESRC’s skills and experience. We recommend that ESRC pursues this issue with the relevant Departments. In addition, given the reliance on these datasets by both Government and the research community, we recommend that future Spending Review allocations ensure that the collection and maintenance of national datasets are fully funded to prevent ESRC having to cut funding for other research activities to preserve these important statistics.**

95 Ev 33

96 Ev 33

5 Cross-Council collaboration

44. ESRC participates in various joint ventures with other Research Councils. For example, ESRC co-sponsored 21 interdisciplinary studentships with NERC beginning in October 2003 and the Operating Plan 2004–05 announced the development of a new joint studentship and fellowship scheme with MRC.⁹⁷ ESRC also co-sponsors the Advanced Institute of Management with EPSRC (see paragraph 74) and is involved in the cross-Council research programmes on genomics, stem cells, rural economy and land use, energy, research methods and e-science.

45. In our recent Report on the use of science in UK international development policy we recommended that the Research Councils “adopt a clear and consistent approach to the funding of scientific and technical research for international development”.⁹⁸ Professor Diamond told us in oral evidence: “We have had absolutely positive discussions with the other Research Councils about taking forward a number of issues which have international development agendas”.⁹⁹ The Development Studies Association also praises “ESRC’s willingness to work on themes in partnership with the other Research Councils” for the benefits this brings to the development studies community.¹⁰⁰ **We are pleased to see that ESRC has been engaged in discussions with the other Research Councils regarding research for international development.** In our Report on the use of science in UK international development policy we recommended the establishment of a cross-cutting Development Sciences Research Board “to safeguard the UK skills and research base in development sciences, and to provide a much needed expansion of the research effort for poverty reduction”.¹⁰¹ In view of the erosion of the UK development sciences research base that has already taken place, and the vital importance of research to inform the spending of the growing international development budget, we urge ESRC and the other Councils to give their support to the establishment of a Development Sciences Research Board.

Arts and Humanities Research Council

46. The Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) was created in 1998 following a recommendation in the 1997 Dearing Report on UK higher education that a research council for the arts and humanities be established.¹⁰² The Higher Education Act 2004 provides for the establishment of an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), which is expected to be established by April 2005.¹⁰³ There are clearly areas of potential overlap in the remits of ESRC and AHRC. Professor Diamond told us that AHRB and ESRC senior officers already meet twice per year “to make sure that where we do meet we are aligned and look forward in a way which is good for the community”.¹⁰⁴ He also

97 ESRC, *Operating Plan 2004–05*

98 HC (2003–04) 133-I

99 Q 33

100 Ev 36

101 HC (2003–04) 133-I

102 The National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, *The Dearing Report, Higher Education in a Learning Society*, 1997

103 Higher Education Act 2004

104 Q 31

acknowledged the need to clarify the way in which ESRC and AHRC will approach areas of mutual interest: “One of the things we are likely to be doing over the next few months is actually giving some key advice to groups and saying this is what ESRC definitely does, this is what the AHRB definitely does and this is an area in the middle. You must make a judgement as to which Council you send it to. What we guarantee is that where there is a need for us to get together as Councils to ensure proper refereeing then we will so do”.¹⁰⁵ **ESRC and the newly-established Arts and Humanities Research Council must clarify their remits in areas of potential overlap and communicate these to their research communities at the earliest possible opportunity.**

Harmonisation of administration

47. The quinquennial review of the Research Councils in 2001 which led to the creation of RCUK identified opportunities for harmonisation of the administrative functions of the various Councils.¹⁰⁶ In 2003–04 ESRC and EPSRC underwent a merger of their human resource operations. This decision was taken on the basis of the co-location of their staff in Polaris House in Swindon, the fact that neither administered Research Institutes, and the similarity of staff grading systems in the two Councils. The resulting human resources group also took responsibility for oversight of a Joint Recruitment Unit that services all the Swindon-based Councils. The merger has already led to a reduction in staffing, has facilitated staff mobility across the Councils and paves the way for continued cost savings through further harmonisation of human resources functions between the Councils.¹⁰⁷ **We welcome the steps taken so far to harmonise the administrative functions of the Research Councils.** This topic will be considered in more detail in our forthcoming Report on RCUK.

105 Q 31

106 <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/#review>

107 Staffing has been reduced by one Band 5, one Band 3 and one and a half Band 4 posts.

6 Support for researchers

Postdocs and fellowships

48. ESRC supports three categories of fellowships:

- **Postdoctoral Fellowships** fund new researchers for a one year period within two years of submission of their doctorate. Awards are made through an annual competition.
- **Research Fellowships** fund both senior and less experienced researchers generally for two to three years (five years in exceptional circumstances). Applications are accepted at any time of year and compete with other applications made under the Research Grants Scheme.
- **Professorial Fellowships** provide support to outstanding social scientists in the UK and last for a maximum of 3 years. There is an annual competition.

Support for young researchers

49. Professor Diamond mentioned in oral evidence that ESRC was considering the introduction of “a ring-fenced pot of money for junior researchers just starting out on their careers”.¹⁰⁸ The scheme might also incorporate “the opportunity to get networks together” and “training courses, for example, in how to manage your first research assistant”.¹⁰⁹ In addition, ESRC’s summary of the responses to the stakeholder consultation concluded that “A ring fenced scheme for new researchers is a notable absence from the Council’s range of opportunities across a research career”.¹¹⁰ In our Report on the work of BBSRC, we commended the Council on the introduction of the New Investigators scheme which allocated grants to young scientists with strong potential who had not yet had time to establish a good track record.¹¹¹ EPSRC also runs a First Grant scheme that provides funding for academics who have recently secured their first permanent appointment. **We recommend that ESRC remedies the current lack of support for new researchers by introducing a ring-fenced fund for newly-appointed investigators as soon as possible. We support the suggestion by ESRC that these awards should include training and development tailored to the needs of these researchers.**

50. We also expressed concern in our Eighth Report of Session 2001–02, *Short Term Research Contracts in Science and Engineering*, at the high proportion of scientific researchers employed on short term contracts and recommended that all Research Councils allow contract researchers to apply for grants in their own name.¹¹² We are pleased to note that ESRC allows those who are not established members of staff to apply for research funding in their own right.

¹⁰⁸ Q 64

¹⁰⁹ Q 64

¹¹⁰ *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

¹¹¹ HC (2003–04) 6

¹¹² Eighth Report of the Science and Technology, Session 2001–02, *Short-Term Research Contracts in Science and Engineering*, HC 1046

Postgraduate training

3+1 awards

51. In 2001 ESRC introduced the “1+3” model of PhD funding, whereby an initial year of research based Masters training is followed by three years’ PhD support and training in more advanced research skills (variants of this model such as “2+2” may also be supported). ESRC continues to fund “+3” PhD studentships for students who have completed an appropriate research training programme (usually equivalent to the “1” of a 1+3 award). ESRC told us that it “firmly believes that four years of training are required to develop the necessary skills to prepare postgraduate students for a longer term research career [...] By providing an integrated and secure four year funding package, the ESRC believes it is more likely to attract high quality candidates to apply for its studentships”.¹¹³ Nevertheless, the British Psychological Society described the 1+3 scheme as “too rigid and restricted to meet the needs of social science”.¹¹⁴

52. ESRC told us that “the Council’s short and long term strategies for the allocation of awards and the development of the 1+3 model” would be informed by “a full independent evaluation of the 1+3 model of funding” to be conducted on completion of the first cohort of 1+3 students in 2005.¹¹⁵ ESRC also said that “whilst the demand for three year studentships is expected to decline gradually over time, there will always be provision” for these awards.¹¹⁶ **We support ESRC’s decision to move towards studentships funded for four years but also recommend that ESRC retains sufficient flexibility in the studentships that it offers to meet the diverse needs of both the candidates and higher education institutes in the social science community.**

Quota system

53. In February 2004 ESRC announced that it was changing the way it allocated its 1+3 postgraduate studentships from open competition to a quota system. ESRC told us in its submission: “This devolved process of decision making has greatly improved the ability of HEIs to identify the highest calibre candidates and guarantee them a studentship at an early date. The quota system also means that institutions know in advance how many studentships they will receive in the future, which greatly assists in the planning of institutional and departmental research strategies. It will also bring us more closely in line with the postgraduate allocation procedures used by other Research Councils”.¹¹⁷ **We agree with ESRC that the allocation of studentships through quotas should assist higher education institutions in forward planning and strategy development. However, it does not follow that the quota system will automatically lead to better quality students being awarded studentships.** A more streamlined process within ESRC could presumably also enable decisions on awards to be made at an earlier date.

113 Ev 22

114 Ev 37

115 Ev 42

116 Ev 41

117 Ev 22

54. The introduction of the quota system has been controversial. Professor Andrew Dobson from the Open University, for example, published a highly critical article in the Political Studies Association newsletter:

“The quota system precisely denies PhD students the opportunity to work with the large number of social scientists who are not located in the quota outlets. [...] the claim that there was a ‘clear consensus’ that the ESRC should move to 1+3 quotas is not supported by the data. In fact 39 out of 64 replies showed in favour. [...] the move to quotas has caused massive resentment among those outlets that strove mightily to gain 1+3 recognition in the 2003 research recognition exercise, on the assumption that if they got it, they would be able to apply in the 2004 round of studentships. Pulling up the ladder, in the way the ESRC did, is and was demoralising.”¹¹⁸

The latter point was also made by the Political Studies Association which told us of its “strong reservations regarding the ESRC’s decision to move to quota awards for PhD studentships” and its concern that “Departments who have gained ESRC recognition for the excellence of their research training, but who are not eligible for quota awards, have no incentive to continue to provide intensive research training”.¹¹⁹

55. The Political Studies Association additionally suggested that the quota system could restrict the choices available for students: “The Departments that will receive quota awards are all fine ones (though it should be noted that not all are rated at 5 or above). Nevertheless, they do not cover all the areas of the discipline equally well. Students who wish to study a sub-field in which none of the quota Departments have any particular expertise, face a stark choice between funded research with non-specialists, or self-funded research with a more appropriate supervisor”.¹²⁰ The British Psychological Society expressed a similar concern: “The recently adopted quota scheme for 1+3 studentships focuses resources on too few institutions and departments and too small a set of expertise and therefore places at risk the future health, effectiveness and international competitiveness of social science research in the UK”.¹²¹

56. We raised this point with Professor Diamond in oral evidence. He acknowledged the potential problem but stated that ESRC had retained “a competition for those places that do not have quotas”.¹²² In 2004 ESRC allocated 53% of its 630 standard studentships through the 1+3 quota system and 9% through the 1+3 competition. The remaining 38% were allocated through the +3 competition. A further 137 awards were made for collaborative studentships through open competition in various schemes, such as CASE and the joint schemes between ESRC and NERC, MRC and ODPM. We are concerned by the statement in the ESRC Operating Plan 2004–05 that: “In the longer term the allocation of all awards will be made through a quota mechanism”.¹²³

118 Professor Andrew Dobson, *ESRC quota awards...bad for research training, bad for students, bad for supervisors, and bad for social science*, Political Studies Association News, Vol 15 (2), June 2004

119 Ev 35

120 As above

121 Ev 37

122 Q 42

123 ESRC, *Operating Plan 2004–05*

57. It is worrying that ESRC's move to allocate more than 50% of its studentships through quotas has caused such divisions in its user community. We are not satisfied with ESRC's explanation that the resistance to the quota system is a reflection of the fact that "change is always uncomfortable and people had got used to the old system".¹²⁴ We also query whether the advantages of critical mass for research in the natural and physical sciences apply in equal measure to the social sciences where access to costly equipment is a more rare limitation. **ESRC must continue to award a significant tranche of studentships through open competition.**

58. We also asked ESRC to explain on what basis it allocated the studentships to higher education institutions. Professor Diamond told us that for the first two years ESRC had decided to allocate studentships "on the basis of those places which have had success previously, not just in the competition for '1+3' but that had our students over a longer period of time [...] so as to make sure that we kept our studentships largely where they had been".¹²⁵ Allocation of studentships in subsequent years would be based on "a large amount of modelling over the next couple of years linked with a new recognition exercise to allow places which did not currently have the recognition to receive studentships to come in".¹²⁶ Professor Diamond said ESRC was considering "a whole series of possible inputs, such as the RAE, such as research income, [...] such as the size of the student research base in a particular place" and was likely to take into account "the need to have geographical coverage of studentships".¹²⁷ Traditionally Research Councils have made awards on the basis of quality—allocating quotas of studentships in order to maintain geographical coverage in a particular subject would represent a significant departure from this principle. This issue is discussed further in paragraph 66.

Demographics

59. David Berry, a current ESRC PhD student, was critical of the fact that "ESRC has an institutional view of the student as in their early twenties and single and consequently their policies reflect this bias".¹²⁸ There is evidence to suggest that the demographic profile of the holders of ESRC studentships might differ slightly from some of the other Research Councils although, regrettably, differences in the way that the various Research Councils collect data on the diversity of their award holders hinder cross-Council comparisons. It is, nonetheless, apparent that ESRC has a higher proportion of female students than some other Councils (59% of the current cohort) and ESRC told us that "from the 2003 intake of students the percentage of offers to female candidates was significantly higher for ESRC students than for the AHRB".¹²⁹

60. ESRC also appears to support a larger percentage of older students: "based on an average of student intake at PhD level between 2002 and 2004, 56% of ESRC students are in the mid range age bracket (26–39 years old) compared to just 16% of EPSRC students [...]"

124 Q 41 [Professor Broadfoot]

125 Q 43

126 Q 43

127 Q 43

128 Ev 36

129 Ev 42

Similarly, 32% of the current stock of NERC students are in the mid-range age bracket”.¹³⁰ For both EPSRC and NERC, the largest proportion of students fall into the under 25 age category.¹³¹ In addition, 50 of the current 2300 ESRC students are undertaking their studies on a part-time basis. Professor Diamond told us in oral evidence: “There are as many types of PhD students in social science as there are people out there on the street”.¹³² ESRC needs to be certain that its policies for studentships reflect this. **It is important that Research Councils monitor demographic trends amongst their award holders and ensure that the support that they offer is appropriate to their needs. We also recommend that the Research Councils agree on a common approach to data collection on demographics to facilitate comparison of the profiles of their award holders.**

130 Ev 42

131 Ev 42

132 Q 73

7 Skills shortages

61. In oral evidence at his introductory session on 22 January 2003, Professor Diamond talked to the Committee about the “absolute crisis” in recruitment in the areas of statistics, computing and methodology, stating that “one of the things that is absolutely key—I stress it is not neglect—is the extreme difficulty in recruiting numerate undergraduates into this area”.¹³³ In 2003–04 there were only seven applications for responsive mode awards in statistics, computing and methodology, compared with 85 in sociology, 112 in economics and 180 in psychology. Of these, only two awards were made in statistics, computing and methodology, compared with 30 made in sociology, 46 in economics and 76 in psychology (see Table 3). As of October 2003 there were ten New Standard Studentships in statistics, computing and methodology out of a total of 631.¹³⁴

62. We have repeatedly expressed our disquiet over the skills shortages in subjects such as maths and chemistry. ESRC reported in its memorandum that “concern at present over the severe recruitment and retention difficulties in areas such as mathematics, physics and chemistry” was mirrored by concerns in the social sciences over “renewal of the research base not least in areas such as economics and management where people with the necessary quantitative skills are in short supply and where alternative career options are generally rather more lucrative than a career in academia”.¹³⁵ ESRC also told us of its “significant concerns relating to social statistics, research methods and related areas such as demography/population studies where the community has always been relatively small but where there are very few new people coming through”.¹³⁶ ESRC noted a further problem arising from the fact that “across the social sciences as a whole the academic workforce is ageing to the extent that we face major problems over the next ten years [...] This is particularly the case in subjects such as education and social work”.¹³⁷

63. In response to these problems, ESRC is “implementing the substantial increase in the postgraduate stipend, rising to £12k in October 2005”, as well as providing higher salaries for research staff in shortage areas.¹³⁸ ESRC also said that it has been prioritising subject areas with serious skills shortages in terms of support for studentships and postdoctoral fellowships. In 2004 ESRC earmarked 23.3% of studentships for economics, statistic and demographics, management and business studies and socio-legal studies, and expects this proportion to increase in the future.¹³⁹

133 Science and Technology, Minutes of Evidence, *ESRC Introductory Session, Session 2002-03*, HC 277-i

134 ESRC, *Annual Report and Accounts 2003-04*, 2004

135 Ev 23

136 Ev 23

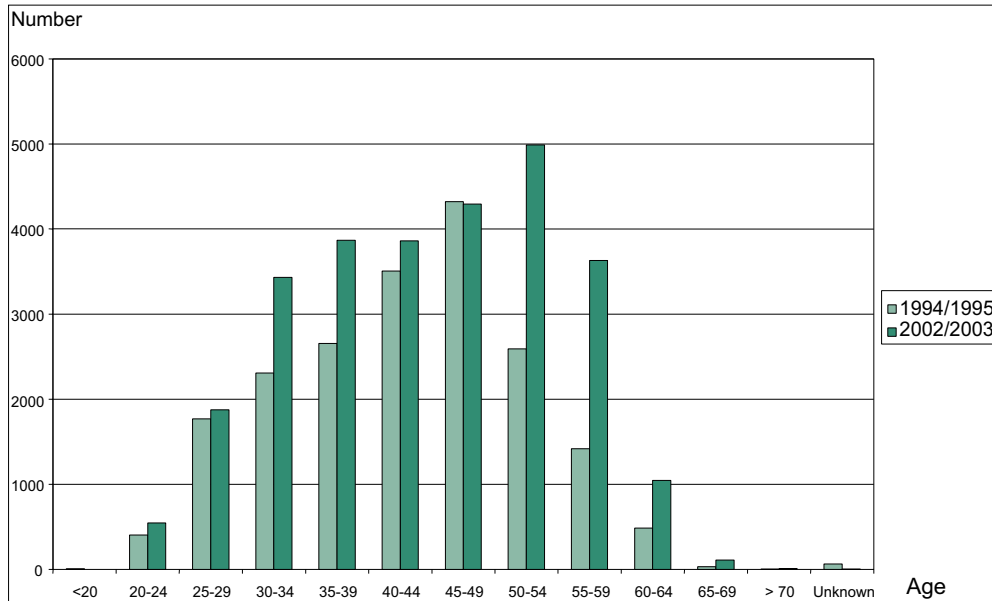
137 Ev 23

138 Ev 23

139 Ev 41

Figure 1

Age of Academic Social Science Staff Full Time Equivalents at UK HE Institutions



Source: ESRC

64. More generally, ESRC's stakeholder consultation reinforced the need for the UK to be able to attract and retain talent "in the context of an increasingly international social science endeavour".¹⁴⁰ ESRC cannot directly influence the pay of researchers in universities but the move to the full economic costs funding regime will mean that ESRC must be prepared to fund the costs of employing internationally-competitive principal researchers, which can be substantial. ESRC is also contemplating how best to improve conditions for researchers, for example by increasing opportunities for "thinking time" through sabbaticals and fellowships. The move to full economic costs will, however, render such schemes considerably more expensive. ESRC has warned that this will mean that "hard choices may be needed between any aspiration to enhance attraction and retention of talent and other activities of the Council".¹⁴¹

65. ESRC is also seeking to improve the quantitative skills of social scientists who are already established researchers. The ESRC Centre for Applied Social Surveys, for example, holds courses in social survey methods and training courses have also been held in conjunction with the Research Methods Programme. The new £6.5m National Centre for Research Methods will build on the work of the Research Methods Programme. ESRC is considering introducing provision to assist established researchers to enhance their linguistic skills.

66. We are deeply concerned by the skills shortages afflicting, in particular, the quantitative branches of social science. It is hard to see how significant progress towards rectifying these shortages can be made through deployment of ESRC's limited resources. Furthermore, skills shortages in quantitative subjects affect all the Research Councils. If Government is serious about addressing skills shortages in key subjects it

140 *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

141 As above

needs to find a more effective mechanism to achieve this. We recommend that a cross-Council approach be developed to the reversal of this erosion of the skills base. It is important that Research Councils continue to award grants primarily on the basis of the quality of the proposal. However, implementation of this policy will inevitably lead to further concentration of research in a limited number of institutions and geographical locations and will do little to stem the declining popularity of subjects such as statistics. HEFCE already provides for a modest capability fund to support research in emerging areas, such as nursing, social work and art and design, where the research base is not as strong as for more established subjects. **We recommend the establishment of a national Strategic Capabilities Fund to address skills shortages and ensure national coverage in key subject shortage areas by building local capacity. Measures that could be supported include Research Centres and quotas for studentships in key subject areas or strategic geographical locations. The management of the fund would be co-ordinated by RCUK, but would also require the participation of HEFCE and the Regional Development Agencies.**

International reviews

67. Effective action to preserve and enhance the skills and research base requires an understanding of the distinctive features and state of health of research in each discipline. A report on social science in the UK produced for the Academy of Learned Societies for the Social Sciences in 2003 recommended that “ESRC should commission a substantial study to measure by bibliometric means the internationally distinctive nature and the relative strengths and weaknesses of British research in the social sciences”.¹⁴² ESRC told us that its new evaluation strategy had “a greater emphasis on benchmarking the UK’s international performance, starting with the development of robust bibliometrics”.¹⁴³ EPSRC has for several years undertaken periodic international reviews of UK science, focusing in turn on chemistry, physics, engineering etc. and the Committee commended it for doing so in its Report on the work of EPSRC. ESRC told us that was intending to introduce a comparable approach but no clear commitment is given in the Operating Plan 2004–05.¹⁴⁴ **We are pleased that ESRC has undertaken to conduct international reviews of subject areas, as pioneered by EPSRC. ESRC should make a firm commitment to do this in its next Operating Plan.**

¹⁴² *Great Expectations: The Social Sciences in Britain*, March 2003

¹⁴³ Ev 25

¹⁴⁴ ESRC, *Operating Plan 2004–05*

8 Knowledge transfer and user engagement

68. Knowledge transfer is frequently associated with the commercial exploitation of research results. However, in the context of the economic and social sciences, knowledge transfer can be interpreted more generally as referring to user engagement and the dissemination of research findings. ESRC spent £3.48m on knowledge transfer and £1.88m on science and society in 2003–04, amounting in total to approximately 5.4% of ESRC’s total expenditure, although for ESRC the distinction between knowledge transfer and science and society is somewhat hazy. ESRC also engages in a range of collaborative schemes and partnerships that contribute to knowledge transfer to both the public and private sector. For example, ESRC awarded 22 Knowledge Transfer Partnerships in 2003 to support projects carried out by graduates in collaborations between companies or public sector organisations and groups of academic staff.

69. Professor Diamond identified knowledge transfer as one of his top priorities at the introductory session on 22 January 2003: “I believe we have to improve and up our game on [...] knowledge transfer, the communication of what we do both to our broadest user community, be it government, be it industry, commerce or whatever, but also for the public as a whole”.¹⁴⁵ All ESRC research grants require researchers to develop a user engagement strategy and ESRC programmes commit 5% of their budget for dissemination and engagement activities. ESRC also runs media training courses and has developed a “Communications Toolkit”, available on its website, to promote best practice in communications amongst its award holders.

70. ESRC’s stakeholder consultation revealed a desire on the part of research users for “increased attention by the ESRC to improve knowledge transfer through access to knowledge”.¹⁴⁶ ESRC’s new online “Information Centre” should improve the accessibility of its research and provide a portal to other useful social science research sites. The stakeholder consultation also demonstrated a perception amongst researchers that the RAE fails to give due recognition for knowledge transfer activities.¹⁴⁷ The impact of the RAE is discussed in paragraph 40. **We applaud ESRC’s efforts to improve the communication and dissemination of its research and encourage it to continue, in particular, to provide opportunities for award holders to enhance their skills in this area. ESRC’s work in this area serves as a model of good practice for other Research Councils.**

Science and society

71. ESRC research covers a range of topics pertaining to science and society, including public dialogue and public perceptions of risk and ESRC has published various reports addressing public engagement in science. The 2003 ESRC report on the social and economic challenges of nanotechnology was well-received and made a useful contribution

¹⁴⁵ Science and Technology, Minutes of Evidence, *ESRC Introductory Session, Session 2002-03*, HC 277-i

¹⁴⁶ *New Stakeholder Framework: Consultation with Stakeholders, Preliminary Analysis and Discussion*, ESRC, 2004 [not published]

¹⁴⁷ As above

to the debate.¹⁴⁸ ESRC has also started organising an annual social science awareness week, in order to “promote the diversity of ESRC research and engage with both existing and new users”.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the Political Studies Association told us that despite ESRC’s “considerable effort” to promote communication of its research, the outcome was “sometimes a little disappointing” and asserted that “Specialist stakeholder audiences are often reached, but more general public awareness of the ESRC’s work is not well developed”.¹⁵⁰ **ESRC has taken laudable steps to improve the quality of its science and society activities but it needs to ensure that it evaluates rigorously the effectiveness of these activities.**

Availability of research results

72. In our recent Report on scientific publications, we noted the problems associated with the difficulty of publishing negative results in commercial journals: “Many research findings are ‘negative’ and consequently do not get published because they are not deemed to have made any progress [...] however: the publication of negative research findings has the potential to save duplication of effort by other researchers”.¹⁵¹ We asked Professor Diamond whether ESRC made sure that negative results arising from research that ESRC had funded was made publicly available. He told us: “Our view is that the research we fund is in the public domain, not only the written results of that, but we require any data that are collected on any ESRC grants to be deposited at our data archive so that it is freely available for secondary analysis”.¹⁵² Professor Diamond also noted that every ESRC-funded project was required to submit “a report of its finding within three months of the end of the funding” which was then peer reviewed to ensure that the research, “which could have resulted in a negative finding as well as a positive finding, has been undertaken properly and effectively”.¹⁵³ These reports are also made “widely available and easily accessible” within six months of the project’s end date.¹⁵⁴ **We are pleased that ESRC guarantees that negative results arising from research that it funds are made freely available within a reasonable period after the project has been completed.**

Engagement with industry

73. Various ESRC activities involve partnerships with the private sector, such as the CASE collaborative studentships and Knowledge Transfer Partnerships. ESRC also engages with industry through its user networks and several ESRC programmes and Centres interact with industry. For example, the Centre for Organisation and Innovation has attracted £1.5 million of external funding from users and provides advice and consultancy to a wide range of businesses, such as Barclays Bank, BMW, BP, Caterpillar, Excel, Unilever and

148 ESRC, *The Social and Economic Challenges of Nanotechnology*, 2003

149 ESRC, *Annual Report and Accounts 2003-04*, 2004

150 Ev 34

151 Tenth Report of the Science and Technology Committee, Session 2003–04, *Scientific Publications: Free for all?*, HC 399-I

152 Q 16

153 Q 17

154 Q 17

Twinings.¹⁵⁵ The Complex Product Systems Innovation Centre interacts with companies such as American Express and Ericsson through its teacher/training module on managing innovation in capital goods and systems.¹⁵⁶ In addition, Professor Broadfoot noted that “As well as ideas and need swelling up from the community of industry there clearly are representatives of industry and business on our committees and indeed the council”.¹⁵⁷ However, ESRC conceded that its corporate data on interaction with industry “is not as present as comprehensive as [it] would wish”.¹⁵⁸ **ESRC-funded researchers have done some valuable work with industry. We support these efforts and hope that industry will continue to engage with UK social scientists. We trust that ESRC is taking steps to rectify its lack of data collection on its interaction with industry.**

Advanced Institute of Management

74. In oral evidence on 22 January 2003, Professor Diamond identified management and business research and its uptake by the private sector as an area of ESRC weakness: “this is an area that I do not think we have managed to develop properly, the whole area of management, in the past”.¹⁵⁹ Professor Diamond explained that this was one of the motivations behind the establishment of the £20.9m joint ESRC/EPSRC initiative, the Advanced Institute of Management (AIM), in October 2002.¹⁶⁰ The mission of AIM is to “increase significantly the contribution of and future capacity for world class management research” and it has a core objective to engage with potential users of research in the UK and internationally.¹⁶¹ The output of AIM to date has included research forums on topics such as “Knowledge and Skills Transfer between Universities and Local Industry” and publications on subjects such as “Innovation Networks”.¹⁶² We will continue to monitor the output of AIM with interest.

155 Ev 43

156 Ev 43-44

157 Q 26

158 Ev 43

159 Science and Technology, Minutes of Evidence, *ESRC Introductory Session, Session 2002-03*, HC 277-i

160 The AIM budget is £20.9 million over 5 years, of which EPSRC has contributed £660,000 and ESRC the remainder.

161 Ev 43

162 Ev 43

9 Conclusion

75. We conclude that ESRC is a well-run Council that is, for the most part, managing its limited budget sensibly. We commend ESRC's pro-active approach to seeking ways to improve its own performance. We are pleased that ESRC has recognised the need to increase the proportion of funding devoted to responsive mode research and recommends that it does so without delay. We also believe that ESRC's significant investments in ten-year Research Centres cannot be justified in the light of the low availability of responsive mode research funding. ESRC's decision to move to the quota system for the allocation of studentships, while having some obvious merits, has caused great disquiet in some quarters of the research community and we recommend that ESRC keeps this situation under review. ESRC certainly needs to continue to make provision for some studentships to be awarded through open competition. With these exceptions, the research community that ESRC serves has been very supportive of the Council and we urge the Council to work to maintain and further develop this constructive engagement with its research and user communities.

Conclusions and recommendations

1. The positive feedback from the social science community about the way in which ESRC conducted the consultation on its new strategic framework is a credit to the Council. ESRC needs to build on this good work by continuing to engage with its community in its forward planning. (Paragraph 11)
2. It is encouraging that ESRC is building strong relationships with a wide range of Government Departments. We believe that this interaction should strengthen the quality of policy making in these Departments. We nevertheless urge ESRC to exercise caution to ensure that its work programme does not become overly focussed on meeting Government priorities at the expense of giving researchers with strong proposals the freedom to pursue issues that they believe are important. (Paragraph 15)
3. In view of ESRC's interest in, and the Government's stated commitment to, evidence-based policy making, we believe that there would be significant merit in ESRC conducting periodic appraisals of the extent to which specific Government policies in areas within ESRC's remit are based on sound evidence. This would remind Government of its commitment to evidence-based policy making and would also be a useful indicator of the relevance and value of ESRC-sponsored research. (Paragraph 16)
4. We encourage ESRC to ensure that research of relevance is disseminated widely to the Regional Development Agencies and advise Regional Development Agencies to make more use of ESRC expertise in planning and conducting research to underpin policy making. (Paragraph 17)
5. ESRC has a remit to fund a broad portfolio of research and to support UK researchers in carrying out work of world standing and relevance. We therefore welcome ESRC's increasing willingness to fund social science of global rather than just European significance. (Paragraph 19)
6. ESRC's 2:1 ratio of directed: responsive mode funding is out of step with other Research Councils and is unpopular with its research community. We recommend that ESRC respond without delay to the calls from its community to increase significantly the proportion of responsive mode funding. (Paragraph 21)
7. ESRC should increase the funding available for responsive mode applications by reducing the size of its contingent of Research Centres. In addition, ESRC needs to consider whether a shorter time frame, such as five years, for Research Centre funding would give better value for money. (Paragraph 26)
8. We are pleased to find that ESRC is attempting to tackle the low success rates for responsive mode grant applications by managing demand and improving the quality of applications. ESRC must now significantly enhance the funding available for responsive mode grants. Until it does so, overall success rates are unlikely to improve significantly. (Paragraph 29)

9. It is not sufficient that ESRC is content with its procedures for assessing interdisciplinary applications: the research community must also be convinced that these applications will be given proper consideration. If this does not happen, the perceived lack of a level playing field will act as a disincentive for researchers to submit interdisciplinary applications, or indeed to engage in interdisciplinary research. (Paragraph 31)
10. The impact of the move towards full economic costs on grant application success rates needs to be carefully monitored at a cross-Council level. (Paragraph 32)
11. ESRC needs to acknowledge the role that it plays in the increasing concentration of research in a small number of institutions. We recommend that ESRC co-ordinates its activities with the other Research Councils and with HEFCE to ensure the continued funding of excellent social science across a wide range of departments, institutions and regions. (Paragraph 34)
12. We support ESRC's decision to use a streamlined peer review process for small grant applications. (Paragraph 37)
13. We note that there are still a number of discrepancies in the peer review processes utilised by the various Research Councils. It is not clear why best practice in peer review should vary significantly between the Research Councils. Moreover, harmonisation of the peer review systems used by the Research Councils should facilitate the evaluation of applications for interdisciplinary research that fall within the remit of more than one Research Council. (Paragraph 39)
14. ESRC must continue to work closely with the other Research Councils and the Funding Councils to reduce the deleterious side-effects of the RAE and encourage the RAE subject panels to be open and clear about what they will be measuring and how they intend to do it. (Paragraph 40)
15. Longitudinal studies and the collection and maintenance of national datasets are essential to build an evidence base to inform effective policy development. Such work is, however, costly and it is unreasonable to expect ESRC to fund these major activities out of its modest budget. Where a dataset is of particular relevance to a Government Department, the Department should shoulder the majority of the financial burden, whilst taking advantage of ESRC's skills and experience. We recommend that ESRC pursues this issue with the relevant Departments. In addition, given the reliance on these datasets by both Government and the research community, we recommend that future Spending Review allocations ensure that the collection and maintenance of national datasets are fully funded to prevent ESRC having to cut funding for other research activities to preserve these important statistics. (Paragraph 43)
16. We are pleased to see that ESRC has been engaged in discussions with the other Research Councils regarding research for international development. (Paragraph 45)
17. ESRC and the newly-established Arts and Humanities Research Council must clarify their remits in areas of potential overlap and communicate these to their research communities at the earliest possible opportunity. (Paragraph 46)

18. We welcome the steps taken so far to harmonise the administrative functions of the Research Councils. (Paragraph 47)
19. We recommend that ESRC remedies the current lack of support for new researchers by introducing a ring-fenced fund for newly-appointed investigators as soon as possible. We support the suggestion by ESRC that these awards should include training and development tailored to the needs of these researchers. (Paragraph 49)
20. We support ESRC's decision to move towards studentships funded for four years but also recommend that ESRC retains sufficient flexibility in the studentships that it offers to meet the diverse needs of both the candidates and higher education institutes in the social science community. (Paragraph 52)
21. We agree with ESRC that the allocation of studentships through quotas should assist higher education institutions in forward planning and strategy development. However, it does not follow that the quota system will automatically lead to better quality students being awarded studentships. (Paragraph 53)
22. ESRC must continue to award a significant tranche of studentships through open competition. (Paragraph 57)
23. It is important that Research Councils monitor demographic trends amongst their award holders and ensure that the support that they offer is appropriate to their needs. We also recommend that the Research Councils agree on a common approach to data collection on demographics to facilitate comparison of the profiles of their award holders. (Paragraph 60)
24. We are deeply concerned by the skills shortages afflicting, in particular, the quantitative branches of social science. It is hard to see how significant progress towards rectifying these shortages can be made through deployment of ESRC's limited resources. Furthermore, skills shortages in quantitative subjects affect all the Research Councils. If Government is serious about addressing skills shortages in key subjects it needs to find a more effective mechanism to achieve this. We recommend that a cross-Council approach be developed to the reversal of this erosion of the skills base. (Paragraph 66)
25. We recommend the establishment of a national Strategic Capabilities Fund to address skills shortages and ensure national coverage in key subject shortage areas by building local capacity. Measures that could be supported include Research Centres and quotas for studentships in key subject areas or strategic geographical locations. The management of the fund would be co-ordinated by RCUK, but would also require the participation of HEFCE and the Regional Development Agencies. (Paragraph 66)
26. We are pleased that ESRC has undertaken to conduct international reviews of subject areas, as pioneered by EPSRC. ESRC should make a firm commitment to do this in its next Operating Plan. (Paragraph 67)
27. We applaud ESRC's efforts to improve the communication and dissemination of its research and encourage it to continue, in particular, to provide opportunities for

award holders to enhance their skills in this area. ESRC's work in this area serves as a model of good practice for other Research Councils. (Paragraph 70)

28. ESRC has taken laudable steps to improve the quality of its science and society activities but it needs to ensure that it evaluates rigorously the effectiveness of these activities. (Paragraph 71)
29. We are pleased that ESRC guarantees that negative results arising from research that it funds are made freely available within a reasonable period after the project has been completed. (Paragraph 72)
30. ESRC-funded researchers have done some valuable work with industry. We support these efforts and hope that industry will continue to engage with UK social scientists. We trust that ESRC is taking steps to rectify its lack of data collection on its interaction with industry. (Paragraph 73)

Formal minutes

Wednesday 8 December 2004

Members present:

Dr Ian Gibson, in the Chair

Dr Evan Harris
Dr Brian Iddon
Mr Robert Key

Mr Tony McWalter
Dr Desmond Turner

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (The Work of the Economic and Social Research Council), proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Chairman's draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 75 read and agreed to.

Resolved, That the Report be the First Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

[Adjourned till Wednesday 15 December at nine o'clock.]

Witnesses

Wednesday 20 October 2004

Page

Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive, **Mr Glyn Davies**, Director of Policy and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, **Mr Adrian Alsop**, Director for Research, Training and Development, and **Professor Patricia Broadfoot**, Council Member, Economic and Social Research Council

Ev 1

Written evidence

1	Department of Trade and Industry	Ev 16
2	Economic and Social Research Council	Ev 17, 38
3	Department of Work and Pensions	Ev 32
4	Political Studies Association	Ev 34
5	David M Berry	Ev 35
6	The Development Studies Association	Ev 36
7	British Psychological Society	Ev 37

Reports from the Science and Technology Committee since 2001

Session 2003-04

First Report	Annual Report 2003	HC 169
Second Report	Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council: Introductory Hearing (<i>Reply HC 629</i>)	HC 55
Third Report	The Work of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (<i>Reply HC 526</i>)	HC 6
Fourth Report	Office of Science and Technology: Scrutiny Report 2003 (<i>Reply HC 588</i>)	HC 316
Fifth Report	<i>Too Little too late?</i> Government Investment in Nanotechnology (<i>Reply HC 650</i>)	HC 56
Sixth Report	Within REACH: the EU's new chemicals strategy (<i>Reply HC 895</i>)	HC 172
Seventh Report	Director General for Higher Education: Introductory Hearing (<i>Reply HC 1015</i>)	HC 461
Eighth Report	The Work of the Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (<i>Reply HC 1199</i>)	HC 462
Ninth Report	Director General of the Research Councils: Introductory Hearing (<i>Reply HC 1059</i>)	HC 577
Tenth Report	Scientific Publications: Free for all?	HC 399
Eleventh Report	Research Assessment Exercise: a re-assessment (<i>Reply HC 34, 2004-05</i>)	HC 586
Twelfth Report	Government support for Beagle 2	HC 711
Thirteenth Report	The Use of Science in UK International Development Policy	HC 133
Fourteenth Report	Responses to the Committee's Tenth Report, Session 2003-04, Scientific Publications: Free for all?	HC 1200

Session 2002-03

First Report	The Work of the Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (<i>Reply HC 507</i>)	HC 161
Second Report	Annual Report 2002	HC 260
Third Report	The Work of the Medical Research Council (<i>Reply Cm 5834</i>)	HC 132
Fourth Report	Towards a Non-Carbon Fuel Economy: Research, Development and Demonstration (<i>Reply HC 745</i>)	HC 55
Fifth Report	The Work of the Natural Environment Research Council (<i>Reply HC 1161</i>)	HC 674
Sixth Report	UK Science and Europe: Value for Money? (<i>Reply HC 1162</i>)	HC 386
Seventh Report	Light Pollution and Astronomy (<i>Reply HC 127, 2003-04</i>)	HC 747
Eighth Report	The Scientific Response to Terrorism (<i>Reply Cm 6108</i>)	HC 415
Ninth Report	The Work of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council. (<i>Reply HC 169, 2003-04</i>)	HC 936

Session 2001-02

First Report	Cancer Research – A Follow-Up (<i>Reply Cm 5532</i>)	HC 444
Second Report	The Research Assessment Exercise (<i>Reply HC 995</i>)	HC 507
Third Report	Science Education from 14 to 19 (<i>Reply HC 1204</i>)	HC 508
Fourth Report	Developments in Human Genetics and Embryology (<i>Reply Cm 5693</i>)	HC 791
Fifth Report	Government Funding of the Scientific Learned Societies (<i>Reply HC 53</i>)	HC 774
Sixth Report	National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts: A Follow-Up (<i>Reply HC 276</i>)	HC 1064
Seventh Report	The Office of Science and Technology: Scrutiny Report 2002 (<i>Reply HC 293</i>)	HC 860
Eighth Report	Short-Term Research Contracts in Science and Engineering (<i>Reply HC 442</i>)	HC 1046

Oral evidence

Taken before the Science and Technology Committee

on Wednesday 20 October 2004

Members present:

Dr Ian Gibson, in the Chair

Dr Evan Harris
Dr Brian Iddon
Mr Tony McWalter

Bob Spink
Dr Desmond Turner

Witnesses: **Professor Ian Diamond**, Chief Executive, **Mr Glyn Davies**, Director of Policy and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive, **Mr Adrian Alsop**, Director for Research, Training and Development, and **Professor Patricia Broadfoot**, Council Member, Economic and Social Research Council, examined.

Q1 Chairman: Thank you all very much for coming along to help us in what is really our last inquiry into research councils. We are very pleased to see you here. We will allow you to carve up the answers in whatever way you want, but it would help if one person and not four people tried to answer every question or we will not get through all the issues. I think this is the first time you have really been scrutinised.

Professor Diamond: This is the first scrutiny we have had, so we are looking forward to it very much.

Q2 Chairman: Would you like to introduce your back four?

Professor Diamond: Sure. To my left is Glyn Davies who is our Director of Policy and Resources, on my far right is Adrian Alsop who is our Director for Research, Training and Development, and next to me is Patricia Broadfoot who is Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Bristol and a member of our council.

Q3 Chairman: We are very pleased you managed to find the time to come together. Based on a lot of the evidence that we have seen we had hoped to get flooded with comments, that is what usually happens, but it does seem to me that not a lot of people have written in on this. Departments do not seem to be turned on by it. What do you say to the suggestion that you are just a Division 3 south and about to be relegated council? I get the feeling sometimes that there is not a lot of back-up support and unanswered questions and so on. Is that a fair comment?

Professor Diamond: I think that is deeply unfair. I could give you fairly quantitative evidence that the quality of social science in this country is equal to that of any in the world. While in quantity terms we would not claim to churn out as much as our colleagues in the United States of America, we can demonstrate that in quality terms, as judged by some of the bibliometry which is appropriate for the social sciences, we have some of the very best social scientists in the world. What I might suggest, if I may be so bold, has happened is that during the last five to six months we have undergone the biggest

consultation across the entire social science community that there has ever been as to where the social sciences should be going in the next five years and what role the ESRC should play in that. We have had over 130 responses to that from 80 or so higher education institutions, from a large number of learned societies, from business and from government. Chairman, you are very welcome to read the papers that I have brought with me. What they demonstrate is the strength of the social sciences in this country and the engagement the community has had in working with the ESRC.

Q4 Chairman: Is it going to make a change of emphasis?

Professor Diamond: Yes, exactly so.

Q5 Chairman: We will come back to this point.

Professor Diamond: Since I last met with you we have already changed the way in which we plan strategically and this consultation will be what goes in to that strategic plan which will be released early next year.

Q6 Dr Harris: The Government commissions research from the ESRC and from a number of departments. That is correct, is it not?

Professor Diamond: The Government does not commission research from us. We have concordats with 13 government departments and we work with them to identify priorities. We would not expect work to go on funded by the research arm of the Home Office which duplicated any future work which the ESRC was funding. What we do not do is contract research for government departments.

Q7 Dr Harris: How is that concordat worked out? Are there some areas where Government, who are essentially politicians, do not want too much research being done? Is there not a danger that constraining the concordat would prevent research being done to create an evidence base around a particular area?

Professor Diamond: Absolutely not. The concordat is not a statement which says we are going to be bound to research. Just before I took on this role I

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

attended a number of these concordats and, broadly speaking, they were delightful conversations, we had excellent cups of tea and not bad Rich Tea biscuits, but they were not actually an agenda for action. I think we are all far too busy to have those kinds of pleasant conversations. So what we have done—and I have to say that government departments have all been very much on board in this—is to regenerate these concordats. These are simply meetings which take place once a year and they are taking stock of where research in the department is going, where research in the ESRC is going, it identifies agendas for action over the next year and takes stock of what has happened in the past year and sometimes that may end up in jointly commissioned activity. I will give you two very quick examples if I may. We met with the Scottish Executive last November and a key issue in Scotland, as you will be aware, is Scotland's population, the Scots have forgotten how to make babies and those that are there are migrating out rather than in.

Q8 Chairman: So that should be a headline in *The Scotsman* tomorrow.

Professor Diamond: I hope so. The Scottish media is right on board. The population is a key issue. Some of these questions, particularly that of a falling birth rate, are basic social science questions which have relevance in the rest of the UK and in Europe. We were very pleased to get together with the Scottish Executive to put in money for a programme on Scotland's population which was commissioned a couple of weeks ago. Secondly, when we met with the Welsh Assembly we identified the real need to develop a new generation of researchers with knowledge of working on Welsh issues. Jointly with the Welsh Assembly we have advertised and commissioned a number of PhD studentships which are starting around now into issues central to the Welsh, and I am sure you caught our first ever full page advertisement in Welsh in the press. That is the way in which the concordats work.

Q9 Dr Harris: The Government claims that it engages in evidence based policy making. To what extent, based on your knowledge of the research it commissions and the research that you have done at its sites when it comes out with policy, do you think it has truly adopted evidence based policy making?

Professor Diamond: I could point to some examples of policy which have reflected some research. I would have to say that we see our role to be in painting the research landscape. Let me give you another example. We lag behind many of our industrial competitors on productivity. You do not have one small research project which looks at productivity. Over the last few years at the ESRC we have had a really major portfolio of work on this. We put all that together recently in a short paper which highlighted what we know about productivity in this country, the sectors where the UK is good, the role that the levers of Government could play in order to improve productivity in the sectors where we are not so good, and we presented that in a seminar at the Treasury which was heavily attended

and I think it was a very positive occasion. What then happens is up to the politicians, but our job is to make sure that the evidence is on the table.

Q10 Dr Harris: Was that evidence published before the Treasury got to see it?

Professor Diamond: The evidence was available before the Treasury got to see it. It was not put together in one single piece. We gave it to the Treasury and published it on the same day.

Q11 Chairman: Did you give any evidence to the Tomlinson committee?

Professor Diamond: I do not think we were formally invited as the ESRC to give evidence to the Tomlinson inquiry. However, we run a Teaching and Learning Research Programme, which is the single biggest piece of research on education and that has much to say on this area. The director himself, Professor Andrew Pollard, has had an ESRC grant which says an awful lot about 14-19 education.

Q12 Chairman: Do you not find it surprising that the Tomlinson committee made radical changes to the British education system with 14-19 ramifications elsewhere and you were not consulted?

Professor Diamond: Adrian may be able to tell us whether we did send a formal submission. The TLRP (Teaching and Learning Research Programme) were consulted, which is the right place.¹

Q13 Chairman: But not your organisation as such?

Professor Diamond: Exactly so.

Q14 Chairman: I seem to remember the minister and I spoke at one of your meetings.

Professor Diamond: Very much so.

Professor Broadfoot: I just wanted to follow up the point about evidence based policy because in addition to the examples that Ian has cited, the board that I chair, the Research Resources Board, has actually been funding over a number of years a centre on evidence based policy which is looking at both disseminating policy for policy but also looking at how to do it better.

Q15 Dr Harris: Do you mean disseminating evidence?

Professor Broadfoot: Yes, trying to encourage a dialogue between the research and policy communities, but it is also looking at how to do that better because, as you will appreciate, there are lots and lots of problems in the act of communication between policy and research.

¹ *Note by the witness:* ESRC did not make a formal submission. However, one of the members of the TLRP Programme's Steering Committee and an academic working on one of the Programme's projects were members of the Tomlinson Committee. Other members of the TLRP Steering Committee were on the HE subgroup of the Committee. Two other academics running projects under TLRP were on other sub-groups.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Q16 Dr Harris: On this question of publishing evidence in a peer reviewed way at the same time or before it is used or ignored by policy makers, I have had some representations about the fact that with research done within their research departments the politicians have control about when or even whether that research is published, whereas I imagine the ESRC has very strong provisions for ensuring that anything it funds is going to be published. Do you allow the people who commission the research, your collaborators, to have rules about whether or when to publish?

Professor Diamond: Our view is that the research we fund is in the public domain, not only the written results of that, but we require any data that are collected on any ESRC grants to be deposited at our data archive so that it is freely available for secondary analysis and that is something that is unique to the social sciences.

Q17 Dr Harris: Do you have a policy of ensuring that research that does not show what it was hoped it would show is published, not just deposited, avoiding this issue of negative result bias?

Professor Diamond: Clearly the ESRC cannot ensure that the peer review process will publish everything. However, we require that every project that we fund submits a report of its findings within three months of the end of the funding. That project is peer reviewed so that we can say whether the research, which could have resulted in a negative finding as well as a positive finding, has been undertaken properly and effectively. We then place that report on an electronic means which is widely available and easily accessible so that negative findings are as easily accessible to the community within six months of the project ending as well as positive findings.

Q18 Dr Harris: Do you see a role for the ESRC, which is the leading research council and effectively a funder of research in these areas, to have an active programme of checking Government policy against the evidence and then informing the wider community and the public as a public duty as to how much Government policy is based on evidence, or where there is not evidence, or where it goes against the evidence? Is that something you would consider as a strategy?

Professor Diamond: That is a very interesting idea and one that I have to be absolutely honest about and say we have not considered. However, it is one that I guarantee we will consider. It is not something that I would rule out of court.

Q19 Chairman: Is there any inhibition in publishing in journals in any way by giving data and so on to departments or somewhere else? Is your primary aim to get data published in an academic sense?

Professor Diamond: We have two aims. The first is to generate knowledge and the second is to have an impact. Some of that impact will be through publishing in academic journals of the highest standard; other parts of it must be in communicating the results of those data to all stakeholders.

Q20 Chairman: So you think both are done, do you?

Professor Diamond: We make sure that both are done. We do not believe that anyone has the right to take public money to do research without communicating it as effectively as possible to all the appropriate stakeholders. Part of the way we have developed that in the last 15 months since I took over is actually to develop a directorate of knowledge transfer, to use the common parlance at the moment, to place that right at the centre of our agenda and we are very happy to be judged over the next few years on the extent to which we have managed to do that.

Mr Davies: On all our research grants we have a requirement that the researchers have to have what we call a user engagement strategy, which is not just after the research but during the research so that they are clear who are going to be the public to consume their research, that they are engaged with that public and making sure the results will get through to them. If they are doing research in education then that may be schools or local education authorities, it may be industry and management etcetera, it may be government departments, but we do check when they apply that they have a reasonable user engagement strategy in place.

Q21 Mr McWalter: You have got some new strategic authorities that rejoice in the acronym CREP (Capacity Research Engagement Performance). Why did you develop these? What was wrong with the old ones?

Professor Diamond: You may recall, if we go back some 20 months, you asked me another question about this last time.

Q22 Mr McWalter: I might do a follow-up one to that very shortly.

Professor Diamond: You said you had been looking at these thematic priorities we had got and I think my response was actually your question, Tony. Since then we have sat back and had a look at our thematic priorities and if you look at them, they were seven substantive priorities. Ask yourself what a social science research council should be doing that was not one of them and the answer is perhaps a lot of the algebra that I used to do in my previous life and some parts of social anthropology. What they were actually doing was saying very clearly what is social science. They were not really, I would submit, architects for priorities. What we have done is to change our view and say that we will state very boldly and clearly what we mean by the social sciences and what we cover, but we will also say that our priorities are not just substantive areas, they must be developing capacity, ensuring that UK social science has the infrastructure to be able to undertake world class social science as well as the engagement that we have already talked about and, finally, performance, which is in two parts: firstly, it is ensuring that the minimum amount of public money is spent getting the research money out into the community effectively and, secondly, being able to benchmark UK social science against our international competitors. What we decided to do

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

then was in each of these four areas we will have activity at all times, we will always have studentships, but, having consulted with our community (and this was the purpose of the consultation we have undergone in the last few months), we will then set a relatively small number of key priorities which we will really drive forward over a two to three year period. One of the reasons why we have to do that, let us be frank, is that while we are delighted to receive the budget that we receive, it is simply not enough to do all the world class social science that this country has the capability to do or needs.

Q23 Mr McWalter: One aspect of that four-fold strategic priority is capacity. The last time we met you will recall I was rather alarmed to hear that there were relatively few new little Diamonds coming forward, I am referring to your own capacity for doing statistical and mathematical work which is clearly a key ingredient in social science and yet the number of people who have this upfront as a clear attainment was devastatingly low at that time. Have you been able to redress the balance so that that particular aspect of capacity has been addressed?

Professor Diamond: Let me be frank, to redress that balance is slightly more than a 15 month challenge, it is a holistic challenge together with schools and undergraduate departments as well. Having said that, what we have done as we have revised our research training is we have allowed for a number of studentships in priority areas, social statistics is one. This year we have a relatively small number of studentships in that area as priorities but next year there will be more and in so doing social statistics, empirical research in law and economics at the quantitative end have certainly been areas that we have prioritised and so more people have been placed there.

Q24 Mr McWalter: But you do not really have the capacity to attract front rank statisticians or mathematicians into social science in a sufficiently large way.

Professor Diamond: That is part of the next agenda and some of the things we are talking about. You will know that our colleagues at the EPSRC have recently launched an initiative on statistics and together with some of the other councils we are joining with them in discussions about how we can ensure in the short term the research leadership in statistics as well as using our studentships to be able to bring on a next generation.

Q25 Mr McWalter: What is the relationship between your priorities and industry? Did they help you frame these priorities? Have you had a positive response from them once you framed them? Is there a relationship there?

Professor Diamond: We consult through our management community with industry a lot and they have offered suggestions for our consultation. When we move forward with the plan one of the key challenges we will have is to communicate some of the really exciting results. For example, I have

already mentioned the productivity research that we are funding being communicated into that community.

Mr Alsop: We had responses from a number of research intensive businesses that there are within the UK and what was interesting in those responses was how much emphasis they gave to understanding the international markets and globalisation and that whole agenda because that was exactly the same thing as the academic community was saying to us in the academic side of the consultation. That is something we will be taking forward in relation to succeeding in a global economy and how we can work with business on that agenda.

Q26 Mr McWalter: So you are going to be in a position to assess future trends for the world economy and the particular contributions that the UK economy is going to be able to make to that world economic profile, are you?

Mr Alsop: Indeed, and particularly the emerging economies and the developments in China and India and so forth as well as across the Atlantic.

Professor Broadfoot: As well as ideas and needs welling up from the community of industry there clearly are representatives of industry and business on our committees and indeed the council. For example, we have on our council Adair Turner who has been quite a lot in the news this week. The process of distilling the strategic priorities begins with the individual boards. For example, on my board, which is about research resources, we have the business director for Volvo Trucks who does not have a background in social science, but he is very, very interested in the kind of communication that you are referring to. In the process of agreeing as a council our strategic priorities we have those debates at board level in terms of capacity and resources and so on and then it is the council, with all the different perspectives represented there, with people like me from universities, people from industry and business and indeed from bodies like the RDA and so on, who together can agree what the most pressing issues are. Only last week we were having a strategic subgroup of the council to do exactly that, both to look at what we were currently doing and to think what areas we need to move into in the future.

Q27 Mr McWalter: This Committee is a bit confused about some of the timetables you have got because you are going to make final decisions about your strategic plans at your council meeting in April 2005, but the science budget allocations are expected in March. Should you not have developed your strategic plans in time for your bid for the science budget allocations and sorted out what you wanted to demand from that process?

Professor Diamond: At the risk of boring you with the detail—

Q28 Mr McWalter: I am never bored by detail.

Professor Diamond: It is actually seamlessly planned and the reason for this is that we will be making our submission to the OST—the first draft will be ready at the end of November, the final draft at the end of

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

December—and that will be based on consultation and that will be based on what our plans are. The council subgroup will meet to sign that off in December. We must properly stretch ourselves in what we ask OST for. OST have got a hugely difficult decision to make in prioritising properly between councils. Following that OST will give us some advice on what our budget is and, absolutely properly, that is when we can make our final decisions as to what our key priorities will be, but we will not be able to do that until we know what our budget is. The choice of timing is so that we can work very much with the OST timing and be able to respond very quickly and then to be able to tell the community in late April or early May precisely what the priorities are going to be.

Q29 Mr McWalter: Are they going to stop treating you as a Cinderella?

Professor Diamond: I do not think they treat us as a Cinderella. We have probably the largest community and, until our colleagues from AHRC join us, the smallest budget.

Q30 Mr McWalter: That is what I mean.

Professor Diamond: Social science is no longer a cheap option. If we are to answer properly some of the very important questions that we have then we do require the sorts of very large datasets which Patricia's board is the steward of and the costs of collecting those datasets gets ever greater. We will be saying that very clearly to OST and we hope that OST recognise the budget that would be required to take forward that work.

Q31 Chairman: I seem to remember the Art and Humanities Council that will be enacted. Are they going to cross-fertilise you? Are they going to interfere with you? How do you see them coming through the Higher Education Bill? I think it has got Royal Assent now. They are going to be there and they are going to want some extra money too.

Professor Diamond: Effectively they are there already. Geoff Crossick has sat on the Research Councils UK Strategy Group since before I became the chief executive; he is part of all the discussions. We see the Arts and Humanities Research Council as a very good thing. Clearly there are some areas where we meet the Arts and Humanities Research Council in exactly the same way as there are areas in which we meet almost every other research council, because in dealing with society we must meet every research council. The way in which our relationship with AHRC works is that we meet twice a year as senior officers to make sure that where we do meet we are aligned and work forward in a way which is good for the community. One of the things I think we are likely to be doing over the next few months is actually giving some key advice to groups and saying this is what ESRC definitely does, this is what the AHRB definitely does and this is an area in the middle. You must make a judgment as to which council you send it to. What we guarantee is that

where there is a need for us to get together as councils to ensure proper refereeing then we will so do.

Q32 Mr McWalter: I very much welcome that multi-research council style. I think some research councils are rather behind you in that respect. I also very much welcome the more international development agenda you have got, but that is clearly linked to the need for significant resources and it is also clearly linked to making sure that you really do get into bed with the engineers and the scientists and mainstream scientists in an effective way. Do you get the impression from your early debates and arguments that people are quite responsive to the fact that here we have quite a new vision for social sciences, do you feel that people are responsive to that international intervention or is it hard work?

Professor Diamond: When you say specifically the international development dimension, do you mean across the research councils?

Q33 Mr McWalter: Yes.

Professor Diamond: We have had absolutely positive discussions with the other research councils about taking forward a number of issues which have international development agendas, for example water. I very much hope that we will be able to take something forward on water and that will be done jointly with the NERC and with the MRC and with the EPSRC and I hope that those sorts of agendas are really taken forward properly through RCUK and the Research Directors' Group.

Mr Alsop: What was nice was not only was our sister research council saying to us they would want to take forward these agendas with us but our own Social Sciences community in its response was making exactly the same point. So with things like water and energy, where we have had a very happy experience with our sister research councils in taking it forward to the National Energy Centre, the social science contribution is recognised and we are ready to do more.

Professor Diamond: Could I raise one important issue that we are actively working on at the moment and that is that as a country we do not have the cadre of researchers that we need who are able to speak some of the harder to learn languages; I am thinking of Chinese or Arabic. I will be talking tomorrow with HEFCE about a potential new initiative which will be enabling people to do top class PhDs in Chinese or Arabic in absolutely the best institutions and at the same time learning languages properly, not having a quick two to three month crash course, and so over time we will have a cadre of researchers in this country who can really address some of these important issues in a deep and informed way.

Q34 Mr McWalter: Even though school kids learn no languages at all.

Professor Diamond: We hope through the TLRP to be able to help on that. With Chinese, for example, that is going to be a bunch of people learning *ab initio*, there is no doubt about that.

Q35 Dr Turner: You seem to be increasingly putting your research funding into your own centres rather than into responsive mode. Why are you doing this? Why have you chosen a ten-year funding period for establishing these centres?

Professor Diamond: I would not say that we were increasingly putting money into our centres. It is the case that an increased proportion of our funding in the last few years has gone into the directed mode which includes programmes as well as centres and the reason for that is that a large amount of the increase in budget that we have had over the last few years has been to engage in cross-council directed programmes, for example on the rural environment and on energy. We have increased in real terms the amount of money that we spend on response mode. In our consultation over the last few months what we have said is, "This is the amount we are spending on response mode at the moment. Is this about right? Is it a bit too low? Do we need a bit more?" Clearly the consultation from all sides has said that we really must try to do something to increase the amount we spend on response mode over the next few years and we intend doing that. It is not quite as simple as saying we will put more money into grants between £ $\frac{1}{4}$ million and £ $\frac{3}{4}$ million. We also want to give the opportunity to have some bigger response mode grants addressing really big questions, so we are thinking at the moment very creatively about how we are likely to increase our response mode.

Mr Davies: I think the balance actually which we spend on responsive mode tends to be between 30 and 40% and it has gone down towards the lower end of that in recent years partly for the reasons the Chief Executive has pointed out. However, in the coming year we will be increasing our spend on responsive mode from £18 million in the last year to something like £23 million, so we are moving up on the responsive mode as well. Clearly insofar as we are particularly moving into areas which are across research council, which require big spend and are in a directive mode, then there has been some rebalancing in the last few years in that direction.

Professor Diamond: Some of the programmes we fund are effectively response mode. For example, a key area at the moment is cognitive science and together with our colleagues at EPSRC, BBSRC and MRC we are just announcing a response mode programme which is steered. We are all going to put some money together to take forward some of the big questions that the nation can lead on, such as on cognitive science.

Q36 Dr Turner: What do you expect to happen at the end of the first ten years of each of these centres, do you expect them to be able to raise money externally after that or do you expect to continue to fund them?

Professor Diamond: I will give you a very quick policy answer and then I am going to pass you over to Adrian. Our policy until early in my chief executive period was that you were funded largely for ten years. We would expect you to look after yourself after that. In exceptional circumstances we would fund you for five years, after which you would be on your own. Our judgment at council was very

much that closing something down simply because you can is not a very effective way to take forward research and so what we have decided to do is every five years a research centre can apply to continue in a proper market test, and I stress a proper market test. So it is not just getting a few people around and seeing if we will continue. Where the agenda for research is still vibrant, the leadership is still strong and peer review is such that it is saying it is important that it is funded as a centre and it is world class then we will continue to fund on an on-going basis. We still expect and our centres do get multiplier funding. Adrian, would you like to give us some numbers?

Mr Alsop: Over the last three years there have been eight centres coming up to the cut off period for their current period of funding. Four of them, through the evaluation and competitive process that Ian has described, have been refreshed in their ESRC funding to tackle new agendas, four have been closed off from ESRC centre funding, although all of those either already have, or will in future, found ways of support from other sources. So the ESRC in a sense has provided the basic research over the years that has enabled them to attract funding from other sources. We do not go with a view to closing centres just because we can, but I think the record shows that we have a way of challenging our centres and it is a real one.

Q37 Dr Turner: Are you satisfied that you have reached the right sort of proportion as between centres and directed research and responsive mode research? Do you see that changing? How do you monitor it?

Professor Diamond: We will monitor it through our management information at the time and through our periodic discussions of priorities with councils. I would expect us to be aiming over the next couple of years to increase the proportion that we spend on response mode. At the moment we have got about the right number of centres, but we continue more or less biannually to have an open competition for centres. We have one under way at the moment where we seek to see exactly what the community is saying to us that they feel requires the unique opportunities that a centre provides for them as opposed to a series of research grants.

Q38 Dr Turner: Are you at the point yet where you feel you have to identify centres that are no longer serving a useful service?

Professor Diamond: Through the market testing process that I have described to you we take a judgment as to whether an area has perhaps runs its course, it would be the equivalent of nail making in the 19th Century, perhaps we did not need an industry in that after a while, or an area which perhaps has done the research and now properly moves into the development end which is funded by someone else, or perhaps a particular centre where the agenda has quietened down and there is no need to continue. We do that for centres through our market test. Where the agenda is rich and where the social science is world class we keep it going.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Q39 Dr Iddon: This Committee has been worried about the concentration of research in a shrinking number of higher education institutions now. Whilst the figures show that you do fund across about 122 centres, nevertheless about 44% of your funding goes into ten institutes. Can you justify that or are you concerned about that in any way?

Professor Diamond: No, we are not concerned. We say we fund the very best social science wherever we find it. Those ten institutes have had to reflect a certain type of funding. For example, our largest university receiving research funding² is the University of Essex and there are two very good reasons for that: (a) Essex has world class social science and (b) we fund through Essex our data archive and some of our very big data collection exercises, most notably the British Household Panel Survey and so large amounts of that money are to fund those things rather than to fund research. If we look at our portfolio for research, response mode grants, it is a slightly different group of ten universities and a broader base. It would not be unfair to say that some universities have very much stronger and bigger social science communities than others, but we simply fund wherever there is great social science, we do not look at where the institute is.

Q40 Dr Iddon: One or two of the seven research councils fund research centres in quite a strong way and yours is one of them. Does that inhibit you in any way funding the rest of the research community?

Professor Diamond: Clearly we have made a judgment with our centres to have around about 18 or so large groups which are addressing particular questions and that is a priority decision to do that, but that still leaves money to the rest of the community which can be applied for in response mode, although I would have to say, such is the size and strength of social science in this country, as I have said in many fora, our success rates are not as high as we would like them to be.

Q41 Dr Iddon: One of the things that the evidence we have collected shows is that your research community seem to be particularly upset by the decision to go towards '1 + 3' studentships. Can you tell the Committee why you made that decision? Has that not in turn led to the concentration of research which I started my first question about?

Professor Diamond: One of the great problems with recruiting social science students is that, for example, economists often have an option, that is, shall I go and earn a few thousand pounds as a PhD student or shall I go and earn an enormous amount of money working in the City? If we work it simply as a competition, we could only tell people whether they had got an ESRC studentship after they had finished their degree, which was often after they had had the opportunity to have a job from somewhere else, and universities were saying to us that they needed to be able to tell people early on that they could have a grant. The universities also said to us

that they send us seven applicants and we choose the students that they would have ranked three and five through their competition. They could not understand why we did not have one and two. Our view very strongly was that the quota system allows us to do that, it allows us to say to universities early, "This is the number of studentships you have got. You allocate them to who you feel would be the best to do that." I have to say that while some universities did find this difficult, others were extremely positive. We did a survey in the summer of the outlets which received our quotas to see whether the system was working and they are unanimous that it is a much better system. I will just ask Patricia to say a few words from the user community as to how it has worked for them.

Professor Broadfoot: I would just like to say two things. First of all, I think there was a frisson when we intimated that we were moving to a quota system because change is always uncomfortable and people had got used to the old system. I totally agree with Ian that an enormous amount of work went into preparing the cases that were not going to be funded, so in terms of sheer efficiency this is much better. The other point I would add to what he has already said, which broadly I agree with, is that institutions themselves are becoming much more focused and strategic in terms of their own research priorities and so the existence of a known quota system allows them to decide where they are going to invest their research studentships in terms of their own priorities. So it is important from the ESRC's point of view but it is also important from the point of view of the institutional infrastructure. That does also suggest the important point about critical mass which relates to the previous question about research concentration. If somebody can do their PhD study in a department where there are a significant number of people working in a particular area and they are working on that theme, that has got to be a better experience for them than just the randomness of a particular individual seeking to be in a particular place.

Q42 Dr Iddon: Is it not unfair to the student who may be attracted to work with a particular researcher in a university that is not receiving quotas? Does your quota system allow for the broad coverage of research that would attract students into the different pockets of research that they might want to go into?

Professor Diamond: We are very clear in our mind that in allocating quotas we retain a competition for those places that do not have quotas so that the student that you have just described, who wishes to work with a particular supervisor in a place which has not typically had many studentships, has the opportunity to apply in that competition, and if the student is good, the project is excellent and the supervisor is excellent then that project will get funded. That has been allowed for in our process. I am going to ask Glyn to address the second part of that.

² Note by the witness: The university receiving the largest amount of ESRC research funding

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Mr Davies: Sorry, could you repeat the question?

Q43 Dr Iddon: It was about the breadth of research that you are covering if you are allocating quotas to certain universities. On what basis are you making the allocations? Is it based on the research assessment exercise or something else?

Professor Diamond: Maybe I could come back on that. What we decided to do initially was to allocate for two years on the basis of those places which have had success previously, not just in the competition for '1 + 3' but that had our students over a longer period of time, the previous four years, so as to make sure that we kept studentships largely where they had been. We then said we will do a large amount of modelling over the next couple of years linked with a new recognition exercise to allow places which did not currently have the recognition to receive studentships to come in and that modelling has been going on. We are looking at a whole series of possible inputs, such as the RAE exercise, such as research income where income is appropriate to a discipline, such as the size of the research student base in a particular place, and we will be making our judgment not only on the basis of those variables but also on the basis of the need to have geographical coverage of studentships. Does it affect the breadth? I think we can influence that in some way through our priority studentships, but clearly at one level the competition is providing us with the best students in the emerging areas working on the best projects and I would submit that we are still getting that.

Mr Davies: Two things on breadth. We support 17 different subject areas across the social sciences: psychology, education, sociology, social policy, linguistics, geography, etcetera. One of the issues which we have to address is whether we are getting the right balance between those subjects and I think that is a real issue with the competition we have run, namely that we are not getting the right number of people into subjects, maybe perhaps in economics and more in other areas. We need to be thinking about how we are covering the breadth across those subjects. An even more important issue for us is then the actual balance within those subjects. There is a real issue about quantitative skills in the social sciences as there are in other areas, but there can be an easy option, which is that the students go for those issues within a subject which do not tackle those problems. So we have to think that we can target and try and increase the spread into areas where we really do need to develop highly skilled researchers with quantitative skills and in some subjects with the open competition we are trying to do that with one hand behind our back.

Dr Iddon: The British Psychological Society would not agree with you so you had better have a word with them.

Q44 Bob Spink: I am going to focus fairly tightly on the research skill base and the problems of recruitment and retention. I suppose Adrian will be the focus of this, although Glyn has touched on one area that I will come to at the end. The difficulties range from a problem with maths, physics and

chemistry through to absolute crisis on statistics, computing and methodology, as we have heard. The stats show that academic staff in higher education have changed over the last decade. It has skewed up towards my age, which is pretty old. Looking at the stats, I would say it has moved about four or five years over ten years which is pretty frightening as a trend. That is the background. Have you or will you in the future commission international, independently based research into this problem, research such as the EPSRC have conducted?

Professor Diamond: We showed you in our submission the graph of everyone. If you subdivide that into some disciplines, things get particularly scary. For example, if you look at education research over the last ten years, the distribution looks exactly the same. It has just shifted ten years to the right and it now has a group in its early fifties and a large proportion of that group will retire over the next few years. We have to do something about that fairly urgently. We are very conscious of that and that is why we are engaged in the sort of research which properly allows us to target our resource at those areas that need it most urgently.

Mr Alsop: We are going to introduce a mechanism very similar to that already employed by the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council to take an area and look at it from the international perspective and engage international experts to advise us on how that works.

Q45 Bob Spink: Where do you think this springs from? Obviously it is multi-factorial. Is there an element of chicken and egg where we cannot get the teachers or we are using people who are not excellent, very enthusiastic teachers, or is it that the subjects are just badly taught or too difficult or what? What is your analysis?

Professor Broadfoot: Interestingly enough, the undergraduate demand for most of the social science subjects is enormous and there are particular areas of shortage but there is no shortage of people coming from school wanting to do social science subjects like geography, sociology or politics. Education and other professional areas are somewhat different. The problem has really been in universities as much as the Research Council in not having a career pathway for people who go through. Certainly they can do a PhD and then it has been very problematic how the career develops after that. In the world of education research which I am part of, it has certainly been the case that you live a very hand to mouth existence on short term contracts and so on—not very well paid short term contracts at that.

Q46 Bob Spink: The Committee has addressed that and we agree with you unanimously.

Professor Broadfoot: The answer is that that is going to change quite substantially with the new kinds of employment contracts coming into universities and there will be a more transparent career development ladder, if you like, for people wanting to be academics.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Professor Diamond: I spoke only yesterday to Julia Goodfellow from the BBSRC who is leading a sub-group of Gareth Roberts's committee on research careers, which will be about developing these kinds of career ladders and publicising them widely both in schools and amongst undergraduates so as to make research something that 14 year olds are saying they want to do rather than something that serendipitously comes to them later on in their lives.

Q47 Bob Spink: You have answered the question from the back end. I thought you might have approached the front end of it as well. I am surprised to hear you say there is no shortage of students interested in going down the route initially. My perception was that perhaps students were not interested in these things. They found it too difficult or they were turned off science and maths or whatever at the school level.

Professor Broadfoot: I do not disagree with that. Maths is still a very popular A level but I think it goes back to what Ian was saying earlier. We need to subdivide the social sciences between the quantitative ones and the more qualitative ones. Economics, including mathematically driven economics, is still very popular but broadly speaking I think it is those quantitative areas which are short.

Q48 Bob Spink: To what extent do you use your research centres, research programmes and priority networks to address these weaknesses? Are you proactive in this?

Professor Diamond: We are very proactive. Each centre has to have an engagement strategy which is about publicising and making very clear the excitement of these areas and also we prioritise some of our studentships into centres because we see these as being really power houses of social science taking forward critical social science agendas and the right sort of place where a student can really get invigorated in a research career.

Q49 Bob Spink: As a society, we have talked about increasing the pressure of our focus on how we can get kids enthused in science, maths and these more difficult subjects right at the beginning and then keep them hooked as they go through. We have found sometimes that they are very enthused at primary school and when they go through puberty something turns them off. What is your analysis of this and are you able to do anything to promote these more difficult subjects at school level and to get people on the right tracks in the first place?

Professor Diamond: Firstly, our job is to provide some research evidence on what works. Our teaching and learning research programme produced a document about a year ago which was, the evidence on how to make science exciting in schools. That received a lot of publicity and a lot of thought. DFES took that very seriously. Andrew Pollard, who is the director of our TLRP programme, is actively engaged at the moment in taking forward not only that science agenda but also how we take the results of our research on primary school teaching and on secondary school teaching

into the policy agenda to make the teaching of these areas more exciting, more relevant and to grab the agenda again.

Q50 Bob Spink: Assume that you have them in the loop and trained them as good scientists, statisticians or whatever. How do we hang on to them and stop them going to these more lucrative careers in the City and all the rest of it? You have already said that you are looking at the career paths in academia which is the right way forward. Do you have any other clues as to what to do?

Professor Diamond: Three things. Career paths are one. The second thing is, as the government has rightly said in its ten year framework, we have to make the UK the place that people want to do science in. In other words, the infrastructure within higher education has to be such that you absolutely want to be in that laboratory; you absolutely want to be at that computer with that large data set analysing fabulous, new things about social phenomena. The infrastructure to want to do it must be there. Thirdly, we have to do something about salaries because at the end of the day you have to pay the mortgage and you only have to look very simply at the sorts of salaries that junior researchers are being offered to know that some of them will have to make difficult decisions.

Q51 Dr Harris: Do you consider it a rational move for a student leaving university with £15,000-worth of debt to take a lucrative job in the City or continue to be saddled with that debt while trying to find a place to live on a relatively low salary in academia? Would you be astonished if there was evidence out there that suggested that that was a factor for people choosing careers?

Professor Diamond: Astonishment would not be the first word that came to mind. That is why we really do have to work at this. We have to be creative in some of the ways in which we encourage people into academia. While we have not formally discussed this, certain things like golden hellos for people coming into academia are the sorts of things we ought to start thinking about.

Q52 Dr Harris: Your empirical view seems to match mine. The government said that their policy which rejected the idea that you and I seem to think is not unreasonable was evidence based but could not produce any evidence. In respect of your answer to one of my first questions, do you think this is an area the ESRC might subject early on to some research for evidence?

Professor Diamond: The question is: does the evidence exist. We have certainly funded recently a couple of projects which have looked at the research careers of new graduates. Those have reported in the last couple of months. I have a proposal on my desk from the National Centre for Social Research to start a longitudinal study for graduates to address some of those very questions that you are asking, which would enable us properly to get the evidence.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Professor Broadfoot: I think it is very important not to think that there is one, single explanation. Clearly, the salary issue and the security issue and the job progression are central for most people, but I am in a way very encouraged too by the number of people who do want to pursue a research career, despite the attractions of jobs elsewhere and this includes economists. I think it would be very desirable to have a better evidence base to know exactly what prompts the decisions people take. One of the worries I would add is the difference between different kinds of subjects and what it is that makes some people want to stay and be an academic. There is a change taking place in that, in the recent past, it was very individualistic and people had to pursue their own career as an individual, whereas now I think increasingly subjects and communities are taking more responsibility for their own future survival almost. That should help because at the moment the economics community, for example, is not encouraging people to stay on to do PhDs.

Q53 Bob Spink: Is there any evidence that shows the proportion of people that make their minds up early during their school career and those that are still prepared to change their minds or do change their minds later on, once they have taken their professional qualifications?

Professor Diamond: None that I am aware of.

Q54 Bob Spink: My view, for what it is worth, is that inspirational, really good teachers at secondary school level are key to enthusing people, getting them on that track, and I think that is an area that really does need to be addressed as well as the areas that you mentioned, so we come back to the way that I opened this section. That was that it is multi-factorial. There are many, many factors and they are all important.

Professor Diamond: We are very clear in our minds that this is not something that can simply be solved by a research council. A research council has to be engaged with the education community of schools and at undergraduate level in order properly to see this as a long term issue.

Professor Broadfoot: The inspirational teacher is incontrovertibly important and a lot is being done to make that better but the other thing is the engagement activities that universities are carrying out with local schools. For example, our own chemistry department at Bristol is very actively engaged with local schools and that has produced huge demand for undergraduate study in chemistry so I think there is a lot that can be done of the same type in social science.

Q55 Mr McWalter: You told us on 22 January 2003, Professor Diamond, that one of the things that is absolutely key is the extreme difficulty in recruiting numerate undergraduates into this area. From what I have heard in your responses to Bob Spink, the reality is that nothing is being achieved in this regard because the problems are too deep seated.

Professor Diamond: It is not an overnight, quick fix. We have been engaging right across research councils in the UK in this whole agenda of how we engage both with school teachers and schools to start in schools. Secondly, we have been engaging with universities to start to talk about how we move the quantitative agenda in universities and then there is a question of encouraging people to do research.

Q56 Mr McWalter: Is not the truth that, if you require heavy skills and statistical influence from your students, you turn them off social science? They would go and do other subjects instead where those skills were not demanded of them because it is too tough.

Professor Diamond: If I could speak from the evidence of having taught the methods course at undergraduate social sciences for many years at the University of Southampton, if you teach people in a really relevant and proper way and explain to them very clearly why you need the statistical methods in order to answer the very important, in this case, social science questions, people will engage with it and sit down and put the effort into understanding the statistical techniques they need. I can show you any number of examples of that. If you simply walk in and say, "Statistics equals the following 25 blackboards of algebra that I am going to put down and at the end of it you ought to understand something about social science" I think you are on a different planet to the one that teaching should be on.

Q57 Chairman: What you are saying is that a lot of people are teaching who should not be teaching.

Professor Diamond: What I am saying is that we have to properly think through the way in which we teach statistics to social scientists in exactly the same way as we have to properly think through the way we teach statistics to chemists or engineers.

Q58 Chairman: Let us move on to your success rate. I notice in your memorandum you require £20 million to support all the proposals in the top half of the alpha range. When are you happy? What percentage would you like to deliver to the nation?

Professor Diamond: That £20 million would fund at the level at which we used to fund in the late 1990s when Patricia and I in former lives sat on that grants board.

Q59 Chairman: What percentage is that, roughly?

Professor Diamond: That would be about 30% of the applications that we receive.

Q60 Chairman: Alpha ratings? What percentage do you get there?

Mr Davies: Obviously it varies from year to year but around 80% of applications are alpha rated.

Q61 Chairman: Are your plans anything beyond asking for more money? Have you any other ways of getting alpha rated project percentages up?

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Professor Diamond: In many ways, the only thing one can do is to try to find partnership funding. The only other way you could do it would be simply to get fewer alpha rated projects submitted to you. That would, I submit, simply cut them off for somewhere else and frankly we would rather have the opportunity to peer review the proposals that come to us rather than not have that opportunity.

Mr Davies: In the late 1990s, we had great concern about the number of applications we were receiving which were not alpha rated. At that time, the split was roughly about 60:40. We engaged in discussions with universities. We changed our system of application to an open date system so that the reader had a chance to look at the application before they submitted it to us. That did work and it did reduce the number of applications over a period of about 18 months to this 80:20 ratio rather than the 60:40 ratio which was, in our view, a worthwhile development, because we were primarily cutting off applications which were not going to be successful. If you are going to have a healthy application rate, you are bound to have some applications which are not of the best and we suspect that if we try to get to 95% alpha we may be losing a few of the good applications as well.

Q62 Chairman: You are getting more applications coming in because more people want to do research now.

Mr Davies: Yes.

Professor Diamond: We have a huge community.

Q63 Chairman: Is the evidence that after you rebuffed them once they would still come back again?

Professor Diamond: To be honest, the ESRC funding is something that people really, really want. If you go back into the universities often people will look very carefully at the referees' responses, ask themselves what they should have done and they will come back not with that same proposal but with a new proposal which addresses a new area. People will come back to us knowing that they have a chance. Perhaps people who get responses which say, "This is a long way away from the standard we require" may make a difficult judgment of themselves but we have a community which does get funded sometimes and not others.

Professor Broadfoot: I can confirm what you have said, Ian. There is very significant status attached to getting an ESRC grant. It is in itself a performance indicator of your academic quality. It is also a driver, both directly and indirectly, historically of RAE performance. I think people like myself who put in for grants hopefully get them but even if you do not get them it is something that you learn from and you develop. It is part of life really that you accept a certain amount of failure.

Professor Diamond: The important thing is the mentoring of junior researchers because when you are a junior researcher and you apply for your first grant and perhaps it gets turned down this can seem like the end of the earth. The ESRC is able to mentor a little in the universities.

Q64 Chairman: One of the factors must be their academic record and they do not have one because they are juniors. How do you compensate?

Professor Diamond: We are very keen to encourage junior researchers to come for small grants initially. We run a small grants programme which encourages junior researchers. We are also very clear in our minds that, as part of the discussions we are having at the moment, we may well have a ring fenced pot of money for junior researchers just starting out on their careers to apply on a level playing field with other junior researchers for their first grant. If we did that, I would like to include in that the opportunity to get networks together and for some training courses, for example, in how to manage your first research assistant. A person walks through the door for the first time and says, "Hello. I am David. I am your research assistant." What do you do? Bringing that kind of thing on we see as very important.

Q65 Dr Turner: There seems to be considerable variation between disciplines and their success rate in applications: 54.5 for linguistics applications down to 16.7 for interdisciplinary and 15.3 for education. Can you account for this bias and is there a bias against funding interdisciplinary research, which is something we have suspected across other research councils?

Professor Diamond: There is absolutely no bias whatsoever. Often, the figures which are presented, which are those for straight response mode, reflect the alternative funds that exist. For example, we are putting £28 million into education research,³ largely response mode. Those figures would not be included in those data so take out the enormous number of education researchers who have funding from a different source and this is the success rate for another group. In linguistics, a pretty small community, a small number of successes can influence those rates over time. We have also identified examples in management research where the quality of the proposals over a number of years was not great and that meant that we moved towards an initiative, the Advanced Institute of Management, to try and increase the quality of UK management research.

Mr Davies: It has been a concern of ours. We commissioned some research last year to look at three subjects. We took sociology, linguistics and management, very low relative success rate, sociology, medium, and linguistics, very high. We were particularly concerned about learning whether there was anything in our system which was biasing the outcome. It is important to note from the figures that within subjects they change quite a bit radically from year to year which it itself important to show that there is no fix. There is no given rate which applies. The research project came to four broad conclusions. One, they found nothing in our system which was exceptionally biasing one way or another, although there was some advice on trying to ensure we had a mix of referees who were both focused on the very specific subject and had a broader view. The

³ Note by the witness: This is through the Teaching and Learning Research Programme.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

major determinants were the extent to which there was other money available for funding outside ESRC in a particular research subject. In subjects like management and education, we are a relatively small part of the total funding available. You raise the question what happens if somebody fails with ESRC. That means they have to go somewhere else to get their funding, to a government department, to industry, to somewhere else. That was a factor because the reapplication rate in the lower success rates was less than in those where they were higher. The second major impact was alternative funding within ESRC. For example, we had the Advanced Institute of Management initiative. We have the Teaching and Learning Research Programme in education, so there are other pots of funding. The final one of the three is about research culture in the departments and there is some correlation between subjects which do less well with us and, for example, do less well in getting high graded departments in the RAE. There is something there which we are addressing further because we need to think about it, but things like the AIM initiative and the Teaching and Learning Research Programme are working on the other side of ESCR in how we improve the quality of applications coming from, for example, management and education. We are certainly seized of the need to do something further in the area of social work which is coming up very much in our agenda as an area where we need to do something about improving the quality of research and research applications.

Q66 Dr Turner: You have not really addressed the point of the low success rate in interdisciplinary research applications apart from to deny bias. You would say that, wouldn't you? Is it the fact that you make sure that given that the research is alpha rated and you have to make sure the peer review system does not have any bias there, you then have mechanisms for seeing that there are other sources which can fund this work? What steps do you take to make sure that worthwhile things do not fall down the cracks?

Mr Davies: The first thing is that the number of applications which are classified using interdisciplinary is very small. The figures arise because we asked the applicants to advise us on what they considered to be the primary discipline, the primary subject, and then several others. We are merely taking what they say is the primary subject. There are many applications which will say, "Primary subject is sociology but this also involves psychology and linguistics." That will come out as a sociology application for these figures. Where they are interdisciplinary, it means that the applicant has said, "I cannot give a single discipline or a mix of disciplines. I am merely saying this is wholly interdisciplinary." They are an odd collection of a fairly small number of applications. We do look at them individually to see if there is something biased in the system but I think it is about the nature of how they are classified, which is a very small number. In the upper sixties% of our applications have involved more than one discipline, including disciplines

sometimes outside the social sciences.⁴ I think it is around 45% of applications to us which involve three or more disciplines. Most of the applications coming in to us involve a mix of disciplines. This particular set is a small group.

Q67 Dr Turner: They are disadvantaged because they feel unable to identify a lead discipline?

Mr Davies: I do not think they are disadvantaged by that because we choose the referees on the basis of those who know about the subject in which they are doing the research. We do not have a disciplinary grouping. We merely say, "This is research on rural studies." We choose people who know about rural studies, about the subject, whether they come from economics, from geography or sociology, just as we would in any other area.

Mr Alsop: Where interdisciplinarity is a question not within the social sciences but between the social sciences, natural sciences and engineering, we are in regular dialogue with our colleagues in the other research councils and the Arts and Humanities Research Board to make sure things do not fall down the gaps and neither do the applications subject to double jeopardy. We have quite sophisticated systems, we like to think, to make sure that that does not happen.

Professor Diamond: RCUK were invited by the Council for Science and Technology over the summer to consider across the research councils interdisciplinarity and how we funded it. In producing a report which I am very happy to let you have, we came to two conclusions. Firstly, that we did not have any bias across the research councils in the way we dealt with interdisciplinarity. Secondly, perhaps we had not publicised as effectively as we might the way in which we dealt with interdisciplinarity. A challenge for us over the next few months is to do that publicity. We feel very comfortable that we do not in any way bias interdisciplinarity and we would be very happy if you would like to come to Polaris House and we could take this in greater detail.

Q68 Dr Turner: How does the move towards full economic cost of grant awards impact on you?

Professor Diamond: I lead for the research council as a champion for economic costing and Glyn has been doing an enormous amount of work on this. We see it as being a wholly desirable activity but one which is clearly a challenge and one which is a partnership between universities. We are encouraged by the extent to which this partnership is going forward and we believe that when we start to receive grants under full economic costing early in September 2005 we will be ready, the universities will be ready and we will move forward in a very positive way. How might it affect our applications? It may increase the number of applications if universities decide to ask colleagues to put in for grants which effectively pay for their salaries in a huge amount. We have been

⁴ *Note by the witness:* In an examination of a large number of applications are the last 18 months, 18% of applications had only one discipline listed; 35% had two disciplines listed; 47% had three disciplines listed.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

honest about that with the universities to say there is no extra money for volume of research. The extra money is for sustainability of research and increased volume of applications will lead to decreased success rates. The universities have been quite clear in accepting that. I think the universities will work very positively towards that. One slight area for us which is important is the small number of grants we give which are almost exclusively data collection. They are often quite large. In that area, we are having discussions at the moment as to whether we will try to fund the entire amount of the data collection because it would be quite unreasonable for us to give a grant of 95% data collection to a university and expect them to put a lot of money into it themselves.

Q69 Mr McWalter: The notion of identifying a lead discipline for genuine interdisciplinary subjects is nefarious and I think it is really awful. I speak as someone involved in the interface between computing and philosophy. I went to the computer scientists and they said, "If you think that is computing, you do not understand computing"; I went to the philosophers and they said, "If you think that is philosophy, you do not understand philosophy." The truth is that if you have a really interdisciplinary project you are stretching the bounds of what it is to do sociology or whatever and you need somebody who is pretty good to understand that that is what you are doing and nevertheless integrate it in so I would just urge you, please, not to identify a lead discipline and look at these projects in their own right as doing what we should be doing which is stretching the frontiers of knowledge.

Professor Diamond: We believe we do stretch the frontiers of knowledge, but we hear what you are saying.

Q70 Chairman: I am trying to work out whether you live in fear of getting too many grants or you go out and encourage people to apply for grants. For example, if you are at a conference and some bright young or old thing gets up and talks about something, do you go up and say, "That sounds really interesting. Why not put an application in?" Are you living in that kind of world, encouraging people to apply or do you just suck it and see and hope?

Professor Diamond: In the last six months, I personally have been in over 20 institutions as part of the consultation meeting with social scientists and I say that we want to receive their grants in a smooth and effective way for them. "Tell us about any barriers that you perceive in applying to us so that we can remove those barriers." Our job very simply—we believe this fundamentally in ESRC—is to encourage great research and for us to have the opportunity to fund great research. We only do that by encouraging people.

Q71 Chairman: I am surprised you did not say that when I asked you if the number of grants was increasing. You did not say, "The reason for that is because I am working my socks off trying to get people to apply." Now you are saying that.

Professor Diamond: I am sorry for not giving you the answer you particularly wanted but I have done it.

Q72 Chairman: Is the stereotype of the young PhD student in the 20s and 30s, single and so on, which some people have spoken about, true or do you have a different type of PhD student across the board with regard to gender, balance and so on?

Professor Diamond: In social science?

Q73 Chairman: Yes. How do you see your PhD students?

Professor Diamond: There are as many types of PhD students in social sciences as there are people out there on the street. There are certainly people, as I was some years ago, straight from an undergraduate degree and a master's into a PhD. There are other people often in some of the subjects rated as professional practice who have been out pursuing that professional practice and now see their careers moving into research. There are other people who have been in a completely different world who see an opportunity to come in. That is brilliant and they bring those experiences to social science. What we must do is have strategies which allow them to do that and to bring everything to bear on social science over the rest of their career. If you take one of the greatest social scientists ever, someone like Titmuss, he came to academia after a long career elsewhere and that is something we must encourage.

Q74 Chairman: That is music to my ears because we have talked to all the other research councils. Do you think you are unique in this aspect of your work in terms of the recruitment of people who come to do the research?

Professor Broadfoot: It is a joint effort between the Research Council and the community because what universities have done in social science which they have not done in other disciplines particularly is to provide opportunities for part time studies. Social scientists have pioneered part time PhDs, for example, and there are huge numbers of those.

Q75 Chairman: That is unique, in a way.

Professor Broadfoot: It is less unique than it was.

Professor Diamond: We have always been very keen on part time PhD applications and fund them. They come a lot in places like social work.

Q76 Chairman: Their success rate of achievement is as high as others who are there full time?

Professor Diamond: Yes.

Professor Broadfoot: It is harder to do.

Professor Diamond: We have an assessment of PhD success rates and we sanction universities that do not reach a threshold and part time PhDs, given a little extra time obviously, are included in that section.

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

Q77 Dr Iddon: You have identified four challenges for the next five or ten years. Could we ask first how those challenges have been identified? Did you go out to the research community?

Professor Diamond: Very much. I have probably mentioned nine or ten times this morning this consultation. It is not the case that we sit in Polaris House saying, "What is the future of social sciences?" We have gone out to the community and said, "What have the major achievements been recently and what are the future challenges?" The whole agenda around succeeding in this changing economy is something that is coming to us from all over the place. The same with population, the same with lifestyle and health.

Q78 Mr McWalter: I like what you said about the first one. "The continuing potential disjunction between the requirements of the research assessment exercise and those of the research councils in areas such as interdisciplinarity, applied research and research leading to professional practice and engagement with users." You recognise this tension. Which areas of social science have been particularly affected by problems with the RAE? To what extent have these problems been resolved by the plans for the 2008 RAE? What further improvements need to be made and how effectively do you think the research councils are in working together to address those issues?

Professor Diamond: Certainly we would argue that some areas of social science have been affected by the RAE, where people have felt the need to publish in professional, academic journals rather than put things into professional practice. Some disciplines have been affected more than others. I have already mentioned development studies and we supported very much the Development Studies Association bid for its own panel which would be able properly to reflect the special issues there. On professional practice, education is a classic example. Research related to professional practice has been said not to be properly reflected in the research assessment exercise which looks at academia. What we have done to try to address this is we have asked John Furlong, who is professor of education at Oxford and the immediate past president of the British Educational Research Association, to lead for us a small piece of work which is identifying quality thresholds in research related to professional practice and in applied research. John's report, which is in draft form and which I have seen, is excellent. This provides a framework for a panel assessing quality to be able to say, "This particular piece of research which might not have appeared in a peer review journal is a really high quality piece of work." We would argue that in this area—we hope the framework will cascade into other areas—the research assessment exercise panels should make these guidelines based on things such as this widely available as the guidelines which they will use to judge research which may not be in the normal academic sphere, so that the very best researchers can see themselves being properly rewarded by undertaking research which may end up as a

government report or a non-standard piece of output. We have to do that or people will see their careers needing to go in particular directions. We are very keen at ESRC to be part of making that happen.

Q79 Mr McWalter: With the 2008 research assessment exercise, you have made a contribution to how that policy has evolved. Is that going to stop research being twisted away from stuff that is important to stuff that is immediately publishable?

Professor Diamond: At the moment, we support the plans as they are. We are very encouraged by the ideas of the big panels and the smaller panels and we look forward to the next few weeks and months with the guidelines coming out and hope that some of the things I have just said to you are reflected. We did approach HEFCE about some of these issues earlier this year and the welcome we received was warm and friendly so we feel that we have a positive dialogue on this agenda.

Q80 Dr Iddon: We have had more than a hint that your administrative capacity at Polaris House is already quite stretched. Will you have to expand that in terms of capacity to take on these four new challenges?

Professor Diamond: Let me make it very clear that my colleagues at Polaris House work incredibly hard to deliver what they deliver. We continue to attempt to minimise the amount of public money that is spent effectively and efficiently delivering our research. If we increase our budget significantly, I think it is only likely that we would have to increase the number of people to administer that.

Q81 Dr Iddon: Finally, on the challenge of improving data access and usage, can you tell us how you are going to go about that and whether you have put in a cost estimate?

Professor Diamond: We are doing two things. Firstly, we have led the development of a national data forum and appointed Professor Peter Elias from the University of Warwick as our strategic adviser on data resources. The idea there is to say very clearly that the UK has some of the world's jewels in social science data. These are ever more expensive and what we need is to put a portfolio of funders together so that we can give long term commitment, particularly to some of the big cohort data. In so doing, I believe that the community we are working with, some of the government departments and the research councils and some charities, are extremely welcoming of that. With regard to data access more broadly, some of the major social questions that require to be answered in the next few years require more exciting, innovative data, the possibility to have biomedical data, the possibility to have administrative data. We have research on how to merge those data in a way which maintains disclosure control and maintains what the public would expect of that and we are working very much with the Council for Science and Technology to try and develop a way in which we are able to have the sorts of data which are essential to answer big

20 October 2004 Professor Ian Diamond, Mr Glyn Davies, Mr Adrian Alsop and Professor Patricia Broadfoot

questions available to researchers in a proper way. The other thing we are doing is we have taken e-social science very, very seriously and have commissioned the University of Manchester Centre on e-social science which will lead for us in developing some of the new methods of ways of merging access so that a researcher properly can sit at a desk in Warwick and analyse data from four or five different sources around this country or the world, using computer packages from a sixth source. That kind of opportunity will really allow us to take forward some of the big questions in social science.

Q82 Dr Iddon: What your research community is worried about is that all of that and the other three challenges that you have identified will top-slice your present research funding by about 10%. Is that true?

Professor Diamond: Our challenge is to work with OST to enable us to get the maximum budget that OST feels it is able to allow us, to address these challenges and then to work with our community to ensure that our community is not disadvantaged.

Q83 Dr Iddon: The assurance is that you will only go ahead with some of these quite expensive programmes if the OST would put the cream on top of the cake, rather than top-slicing existing funding?

Professor Diamond: The assurance is that we will make whatever decisions are needed to pursue the very best social science and to pursue an agenda which is good and the best for the entire social science community.

Professor Broadfoot: Could I add two things? I do not think people realise generally—that might even include some of the academic community—what a tremendous resource we have already in this country in terms of data resources. The recent Commission on the Social Sciences that was carried out in this country identified quite clearly that these are outstanding in world terms but they are in their own way as expensive as something like some nuclear

reactors and particle physics and they are our laboratory. I feel that one of the biggest challenges facing not only the Council but also the community of social science more generally is to communicate the need for much bigger scale social science in the future. I think in the past we had the one person and a dog view of what a project was, to recognise the importance of the scale of resources that would be needed with e-social science but also just more generally to do with data. That is one of the biggest challenges that we have to communicate to OST, but we are talking about a step change in funding for that to happen.

Q84 Dr Iddon: It sounds as if you have to convince your own community as well as the OST.

Professor Diamond: I think our community is very clear. What our community says to us, which we absolutely believe in, is that while I have given you a vision for big social science there will also continue to be an absolute need for that incredibly clever person sitting alone in their office to continue. We are not saying that there will be a shift from, if you like, a cottage industry to suddenly this major manufacturing industry. It is a difficult job but we are very clear to our community that there is a role for the lone scholar in social science. There is also a role for the big team with big data. We must enable both to happen.

Q85 Chairman: Thank you for your honest and very open answers to us. It has been a delight to hear your ambitions and your enthusiasm in terms of social science particularly. Thank you again for coming. Our report will come out and we will see what happens then. We have enjoyed it and I know a lot more about your Research Council now, so thank you very much indeed.

Professor Diamond: Thanks very much for the opportunity to meet with you. We have enjoyed the preparation for this hugely and all my colleagues at Polaris House are so pleased to see you personally in such robust health.

Written evidence

APPENDIX 1

Memorandum from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI)

INTRODUCTION

1. The DTI has benefited from a Concordat with the ESRC since 1993. This arrangement derived from the commitment in the SET White Paper 1993—“Realising our Potential”—stating that the Department and the Research Councils should have Concordats in place to put their co-operation on an institutional footing and ensure regular contact. The co-operation with the ESRC has been of real practical value to policy makers and the DTI is keen to build on this relationship.

2. The ESRC-DTI Concordat binds the two parties to an annual meeting to explore each other’s activities and identify potential areas for collaboration. The last meeting was held on the 4 May 2004 at the DTI. Discussion of areas of activity of interest to both parties has included:

- Science base areas (including collaborative research and HEIF).
- Enterprise, Innovation and Productivity.
- Energy.
- Employment Issues.
- Competition Policy.
- Consumer Policy.

3. The Chairman of this Group is Patrick McDonald, Director of Key Business Technologies (KBT), DTI.

The Department is represented by OST, KBT, Strategy Unit, and Employment Relations Directorate.

The ESRC is represented by Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive and colleagues such as the Director of Finance, and the Director for Knowledge Transfer.

Additional areas of co-operation

4. The DTI and the ESRC have held lunchtime seminars that provided valuable discussion platforms on programmes which affect industry and the consumer, and are of interest across the Department. Many joint initiatives have been set up and useful dialogue continues.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

5. The ESRC see the Concordat as an ideal vehicle to outline initiatives they have planned or under consideration. Within DTI we are working at enlarging the group of participants at events and at Concordat meetings without losing their effectiveness. This would lead to wider awareness and greater stakeholder contribution to many important initiatives undertaken by ESRC and enlarging the scope of the Concordat.

USE OF ESRC RESEARCH

6. The DTI uses the research results produced by ESRC at a number of different levels for policy making. Important examples of this include:

Policy Development

7. ESRC research has contributed significantly to policy development in the DTI. The jointly funded study by Michael Porter and Christian Ketels “UK Competitiveness: Moving to the Next Stage”, which had a significant impact.

8. The Future of Work Programme has informed the policy making process in the area of employment relations and diversity in the workplace and was used in the development of the Employment Relations Bill 2002.

9. Research centres such as the Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition and the Centre for Business Research have also contributed to policy development, for example in developing the technology strategy.

10. The joint seminar “Devolution and Economic Policy” has informed policy making on regional and innovation policies and the effects of devolution.

Policy Appraisal

11. Some of the projects funded by the ESRC provide evidence for policy appraisal. Examples include the Workplace Employee Relations Survey which is co-funded with DFES, ESRC and DTI which has been used to assess the impact of employment regulation prior to their introduction. These Regulatory Impact Assessments are an integral part of policy formation.

12. Other programmes such as the Evolution of Business Knowledge which the DTI co-funds have fed into strategic policy development such as review of innovation policy "Competing in the Global Economy: The Innovation Challenge", 2003.

Policy Evaluation

13. Policy evaluation is a key ingredient to future policy development. The DTI has been supported in its evaluation activities by various ESRC research initiatives such as the Advanced Institute of Management research (AIM). Many leading researchers and institutions are involved in AIM.

27 September 2004

APPENDIX 2
Memorandum from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
1. ESRC'S REMIT

ESRC covers a wide and disparate range of disciplines and topics, perhaps more than any other research council, ranging from economics through psychology to anthropology, and including management and education, and from issues such as environmental sustainability and international security to youth crime and family welfare. The ESRC has the largest research community of all the councils, accounting for some 25% of those staff returned in the last Research Assessment Exercise and our work is relevant to a diverse body of research users across all areas of government, business and the voluntary sector.

2. THE VALUE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

The work supported by the ESRC contributes to the social, political, economic and intellectual life of the UK and beyond in a number of ways. It directly informs public policy and professional practice across all sectors of the economy. It strengthens our knowledge of and our ability to address a wide range of complex issues central to our development as an advanced and civilised society. It contributes to the teaching of large numbers of undergraduate and postgraduate students. And, it enhances the wider public's understanding of the world in which we all live. Some examples of recent achievements and impacts, funded by ESRC, that have contributed towards these in the last few years are:

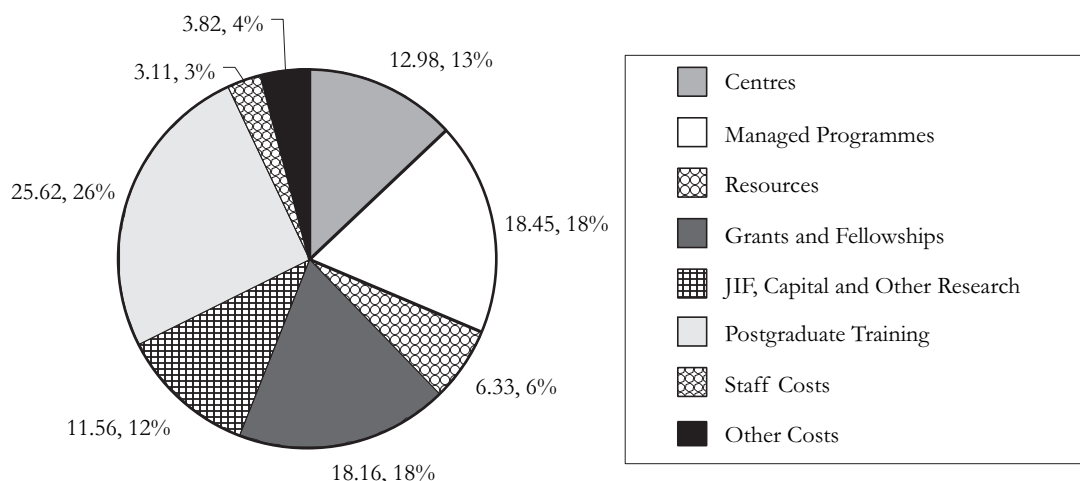
- World-class research on the application of evolutionary and learning approaches to economic game theory at the Centre for Economic Learning and Social Evolution based at University College London. A recent ESRC evaluation confirmed that this research team has few peers in Europe and rivals the best in the US.
- Work over a number of years on the psychology of face recognition which has influenced the ways in which images are used in police investigations and how identification evidence is used in court.
- The major independent evaluation and report on the public's attitudes to GM food by a research team led by Professor Nick Pidgeon which informed the House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee report on, and Government Response to, the *GM Nation?*
- Work on families and social change, including the influential report "Rethinking Families" which was welcomed by the Minister for Women at its launch in June this year as a major influence on government thinking in this area.
- The Review of Government Social Classifications as the basis for major government datasets, including the census. This has had widespread international impact such that the EU has accepted it as the basis of socio-economic classification across Europe.
- The work led by Professor Harvey Goldstein on the development of multi-level modelling as a tool for handling complex data involving multiple variables which has led to a major shift in the practice of social science data analysis.
- Groundbreaking work by Professor David Hendry at the University of Oxford to develop a new general theory of economic forecasting, which is already influencing work in government departments and central banks.

- The core funding that sustains the analytical base for the regular analyses and briefings provided for MPs and policy makers by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, such as the annual budget briefings.
- Work in our Innovative Health Technologies Programme on the role of technology in medical practice leading, amongst other things, to the development of a CD ROM for NHS training purposes.
- The central role played by ESRC-funded Research Centres in the DTI's recent Innovation Review and the Government's Productivity Initiative as reflected in the subsequent reports in both areas.

3. MAIN ACTIVITIES

Our total expenditure in 2003–04 was £100 million of which £67 million was spent on research, £26 million on postgraduate training and the remainder on communications activities, evaluation and administration. The Council's budget is set to increase further over the next few years following the overall increase in the science budget announced in the 2002 spending review and is £119 million this year rising to £130 million in 2005–06. At any one time, we are supporting about 2,000 doctoral students, 700 grants and fellowships, 350 projects within our 20–30 managed programmes, and 30 large-scale research and resource centres. Approximately 1,500 researchers are employed on these awards in addition to the members of staff leading the research. The balance between directive and responsive mode funding is approximately 2:1. Annex 1 provides a breakdown of our funding across these main areas of activity over the last five years.

ESRC Expenditure 2003/2004, £M



Overall strategy and policy is the responsibility of the Council. The commissioning, management and oversight of the scientific output of our work is taken forward by four advisory Boards that report to Council. These Boards comprise senior social scientists and research users and are chaired by members of Council. They are:

- Research Grants Board—responsible for responsive mode funding ie in response to ideas from the social science community.
- Strategic Research Board—responsible for the pro-active, or directive, mode of funding primarily through programmes and centres.
- Research Resources Board—responsible for infrastructure, data resources, large-scale surveys and research methods.
- Training and Development Board—responsible for doctoral training, postdoctoral fellowships and researcher career development.

These activities are all discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

4. PLANNING, PRIORITY SETTING AND DECISION MAKING

This year ESRC has adopted a new mechanism for making major, long-term strategic decisions. Hitherto we had used our seven thematic priorities to shape our research agenda. However, it had become increasingly apparent that a more broadly based approach was required in order to embrace fully the range of activities to which we wish to give priority, to facilitate more focused and transparent decision making, and to allow for more radical shifts in our portfolio where this was judged to be appropriate. The themes will remain as a useful description of the work we support across broad topic areas but future funding decisions will instead be driven by the four priority categories of Capacity, Research, Engagement and Performance.

The main features of the new approach are:

- A more explicit recognition of the importance of building future research capacity through the recruitment, retention and professional development of top class researchers and the development of the social science infrastructure in terms of facilities and resources.
- Greater enabling of activities addressing cross-disciplinary collaboration, user engagement, knowledge transfer and science and society.
- More frequent consultation with our key stakeholders both within and beyond the social science research community.
- Greater integration between the Council and its Boards and Committees throughout the planning cycle to develop a shared agenda and set of priorities.
- Greater flexibility to respond quickly to opportunities for collaboration and co-funding through the creation of a new Research Venture Fund. We have already used this fund to support a new initiative on demographic change in Scotland with the Scottish Executive and to become a co-funder of the National Preventative Research Initiative.

How does this work in practice?

We are now in the first year of implementing this strategic framework. A major consultation exercise on what our future priorities should be was launched in the spring involving universities, learned societies, government departments, organisations in the business, public and voluntary sectors and other key stakeholders.

In October, Council will consider the responses to our consultation exercise alongside proposals for new or additional activities. The ESRC Boards and office will then submit strategic plans to the Council meeting in April 2005 for final decisions. It is already clear that strong proposals will be put forward for substantially more new work than can be afforded. The Council will therefore have to take a carefully considered long-term view on the key priorities for ESRC in the coming years before deciding which of these should be supported. This will include feeding into RCUK-level discussions about new initiatives, the allocation of SR2004 funding over the next few months and implementation of the government's 10 year framework for science and innovation.

5. THE RESEARCH AND TRAINING PORTFOLIO

ESRC's approach to the funding of research is based on two key principles:

- (i) That we should fund the highest quality research wherever it is found, underpinned by independent peer review. There is no policy in favour of either institutional dispersal or concentration. ESRC currently funds research at over 120 different institutions. However, 44% of ESRC funding goes to 10 institutions as illustrated in the table below.

<i>Overall Expenditure Research and Training 2003–04 (£K)</i>			<i>%</i>
1.	University of Essex	6,806	7.3
2.	London: School of Economics and Political Science	5,204	5.6
3.	University of Oxford	4,553	4.9
4.	University of York	4,111	4.4
5.	University of Manchester	4,076	4.4
6.	University of Cambridge	4,023	4.3
7.	University of London: University College	3,423	3.7
8.	University of Sheffield	2,965	3.2
9.	Cardiff University	2,903	3.1
10.	University of Warwick	2,816	3.0
Total		40,880	43.9

NB These figures include major centres and surveys.

- (ii) A balanced research portfolio. This will include a combination of directive funding to support research in areas of strategic importance and to develop capacity in important emerging areas and a strong responsive mode, providing opportunities for the best ideas to emerge from the research community. The portfolio also needs to allow sufficient support for the development of world class researchers, resources and infrastructure to underpin future social science research.

STRATEGIC DIRECTED FUNDING

Programmes and Networks

Programmes and priority networks are co-ordinated mechanisms that draw on and bring together expertise from across the UK science base, wherever it is located. They address key research challenges ranging from devolution to innovative health technologies. An increasing number of our programmes have been funded through specific spending review allocations and many of these entail cross-disciplinary collaboration with our RCUK partners. The work of these programmes is discussed further below.

Research Centres

Research Centres, usually funded for ten years at a single location, foster the development of international centres of excellence in partnership with host institutions; the development of longer term research agendas beyond the period of ESRC funding; inter-disciplinary teams; capacity building; and, the development of partnerships with stakeholders. New Centres established in recent years include the Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS) at Cardiff University, the Centre for Competition Policy (University of East Anglia) and the Centre for Public Organisation (Bristol University). Current centres have the potential to reapply for continued funding for further five year periods in competition with other proposals. In the last year the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Centre for Economic Performance and the Centre for Micro-Social Change have been given continuing support on this basis.

A full list of current programmes and centres is provided at Annex 2.

RESPONSIVE MODE FUNDING

Our responsive mode mechanisms are open and flexible. Applications are invited in any area within our remit. We have no fixed closing dates and provide support for research grants up to £750k and for research fellowships. Small grants provide a particular route for supporting new researchers. In addition, the Training and Development Board supports one-year postdoctoral fellowships for those who have just completed their doctorates.

We also introduced last year a new Professorial Fellowship scheme to provide up to five years of funding for the UK's best social scientists in order to pursue innovative and creative agendas that will make a major contribution to the development of social science in the UK. The first fellows include Professor Gerry Stoker, whose recent book "Transforming Local Government" was cited as "recommended reading" in a recent House of Commons debate on Local Government Finance and Professor Tony Barnett, co-author of the world's first research-based account of the social and economic effects of the AIDS epidemic in Africa, lead author of the UNDP report on HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe and recently awarded the Royal Anthropology Institute's Lucy Mair Medal for contributions to practical anthropology.

Success rates

Demand for ESRC funding is high and there has been a substantial increase in grant applications (from 595 in 2000–01 to 831 in 2003–04). The overall success rate in 2003–04 was 35%. However, the success rate for large grants (over £45k) was only 23% and for fellowships 27% and a substantial proportion of applications with high alpha (ie fundable) ratings remain unsupported. An additional £20 million a year would be required to enable us to support all the proposals in the top half of the alpha range. Data on responsive mode applications and awards over the last five years by discipline are provided at Annex 3.

Peer Review

Our assessment mechanisms are based on peer review. We select reviewers from the whole research community in order to access specialist expertise and spread the responsibilities and learning opportunities involved in peer review. The Research Grants Board then provides expert comparative assessments and a virtual College of assessors supports the streamlined assessment of small grant applications. We are keen to encourage openness and transparency in our decision-making processes. We therefore discourage the submission of confidential comments so that referees' and panel members' comments can be fed back to applicants and other reviewers. We have just introduced the opportunity for applicants to respond to referees' comments on very large grant applications before a decision is made and if this proves successful it will be extended to other schemes.

Dual Support Reform

ESRC is working closely with the other research councils, the OST and the funding councils in implementing the impending changes to the dual support system. We welcome the greater transparency the introduction of full economic costs will bring. However, it is possible that this will lead to a considerable increase in the number and costs of grant applications received by ESRC, given the size of our community

and the likelihood that a research council award will cover a greater proportion of costs than funding from some other sources. We will need to keep this under constant review to ensure that our success rates do not fall to an unacceptable level.

RESEARCH RESOURCES

High quality data resources are the very lifeblood of economic and social research. The ESRC has thus made a fundamental commitment to building and maintaining a comprehensive data infrastructure for the UK social science community. The effective exploitation of this data infrastructure is equally essential and the Council has played a leading role in developing innovative methodological approaches to analyse increasingly complex data resources.

Building a data infrastructure

The United Kingdom has led the world in the creation of major social science data resources. For example, we have funded the collection of a unique suite of internationally renowned longitudinal studies, including the National Child Development Study, British Household Panel Study and Millennium Cohort. Through repeated periodic sampling of the same people over many years, these studies are charting the life histories of thousands of individuals from birth into old age. The resulting data offer enormous opportunities to study social and economic change over time. They also provide a robust evidence base upon which to formulate public policy in areas ranging from deprivation and social exclusion through to labour market dynamics and income distribution.

Building and maintaining a world class data infrastructure requires very substantial investment given the pace of technological change in this area. The cost of maintaining the ESRC's major longitudinal studies alone will be £20 million over the next six years. However, if the UK is to maintain its position at the leading international edge, then it needs to do more than simply commit to the long term support of existing datasets. It must also find the resources to create bigger and more complex datasets to radically open out the opportunity for more in depth analysis of major social and economic issues. These include, for example, developing a deeper understanding of the dynamics of ethnic diversity and of wealth and asset distribution across the UK's population. It would also greatly improve our capacity to undertake comparative analysis internationally and across devolved administrations and the different regions within the UK.

The Council recognises that this can be best achieved by working in close partnership with other key stakeholders. We are therefore working in close co-operation with such bodies as the Office for National Statistics, government departments, charitable foundations and other Research Councils. These efforts are now culminating in a major new ESRC-led initiative to create a National Datasets Strategy. This will provide stable and long term access to an increasing range of key social science data resources through co-ordinating future funding and data delivery arrangements

Exploiting the data infrastructure

It is of vital importance that the most advanced tools and techniques are available to the social science community to both collect and effectively analyse increasingly multi-layered and multi-textured social science data resources. For example, the opportunities for greater data integration and improved data mining techniques are immense and offer the potential to truly revolutionise social science research. The Council has a role as the steward of methodological development, providing a fundamental and enduring commitment to improving the methodological skills base of the UK social science community through a number of initiatives. This has produced groundbreaking new methodological advances, including, for instance, work on Multi-Level Modelling which has helped researchers distinguish the influence of family from neighbourhood and school setting in assessing individual child educational attainment. This programme of support continues with the Council investing over £12 million in a Research Methods Programme and National Research Methods Centre over the last three years.

POSTGRADUATE TRAINING

One of the Council's principal aims is that of building the next generation of social scientists by supporting high quality research training.

Quality Assurance

The Council operates rigorous quality assurance procedures to ensure that training provision is of the highest standards, setting out both generic and subject specific training requirements. Any Department or Faculty that wishes to be eligible for ESRC postgraduate funding must first apply to the Council describing how its training provision meets these requirements. There are over 550 eligible Departments or Faculties currently "recognised" for ESRC studentship funding.

The impact of our approach has been far reaching with a significant number of students not funded by the Council also benefitting from the training standards required by the ESRC. In this way the Council has had a positive impact on raising the general standard of postgraduate training provision in the social sciences and not only for ESRC funded students.

The “1 + 3” Model

The ESRC believes that a minimum of four years of training are required to develop the necessary skills to prepare postgraduate students for a longer term research career. In 2001 we introduced the “1 + 3” model which provides integrated training and research over a four year period. This is normally based upon an initial year of research based Masters training followed by three years PhD support and training in more advanced research skills, although variants of this model such as “2 + 2” can also be supported. By providing an integrated and secure four year funding package, the ESRC believes it is more likely to attract high quality candidates to apply for its studentships.

Allocation of Studentships

The Council’s capacity to fund the most talented students has been further strengthened by the recent introduction of a quota system with the intention that by 2006 the vast majority of studentships will be allocated in this way. This devolved process of decision making has greatly improved the ability of HEIs to identify the highest calibre candidates and guarantee them a studentship at an early date. The quota system also means that institutions know in advance how many studentships they will receive in the future, which greatly assists in the planning of institutional and departmental research strategies. It will also bring us more closely in line with the postgraduate allocation procedures used by other Research Councils.

Cross-council collaboration

We have been working closely with the other Research Councils in other studentship schemes. For example, we currently have two jointly funded studentship schemes aimed at building vital new interdisciplinary research capacity. The first of these is with NERC and is concerned with new approaches to the study of environmental issues. It has been running for five years and has supported about 100 students over this period. The second scheme, launched this year, is with MRC and is seeking to encourage innovative approaches at the interface between medicine and social science, particularly in the field of health behaviour.

6. CURRENT PRIORITIES FOR RESEARCH AND TRAINING

(i) *Spending Review initiatives*

Many of the largest and most high profile investments within our current research portfolio are those funded through targeted spending review (SR) allocations. Most of these are in partnership with other research councils. These are priorities for the Council not least because of the intrinsic importance of the areas covered, the amount of funding involved and the opportunities they provide for cross-disciplinary, cross-council collaboration. A summary of all our current SR funded initiatives is provided at Annex 4. Amongst the principal issues being addressed are:

Genomics—the effective contribution of social science to a better understanding of the social, legal and ethical issues surrounding current advances in biotechnology and genomics and analysing UK public attitudes towards a range of applications of genomics including GM foods, cloning and genetic testing.

Stem Cells—the global regulation of embryonic stem cells; innovation processes in relation to stem cells; the role of standards; and public engagement in stem cell research.

Management—UK productivity and other performance indicators for the 21st century; sustaining innovation while meeting competitive pressure; adapting promising management practices to new circumstances; and, developing an agenda for public service innovation and effectiveness.

Rural Economy and Land Use—successful and sustainable food products and food chains; integration of land and water use; the environmental basis of rural development; and, economic and social interactions with the rural environment.

Energy—how to access a secure, safe, diverse and reliable energy supply at competitive prices while meeting the challenge of global warming. “Managing the New Uncertainties” with a focus on energy markets and regulatory, social and economic drivers.

Research Methods—the creation of a National Centre for Research Methods to provide a national research and training programme for improving the quality and range of methodological skills and techniques used by the UK social science community.

E-Social Science—the use of new grid technologies to look at such key areas as financial forecasting and macro-economics, Human Systems Modelling and life-course analysis.

(ii) *Education research*

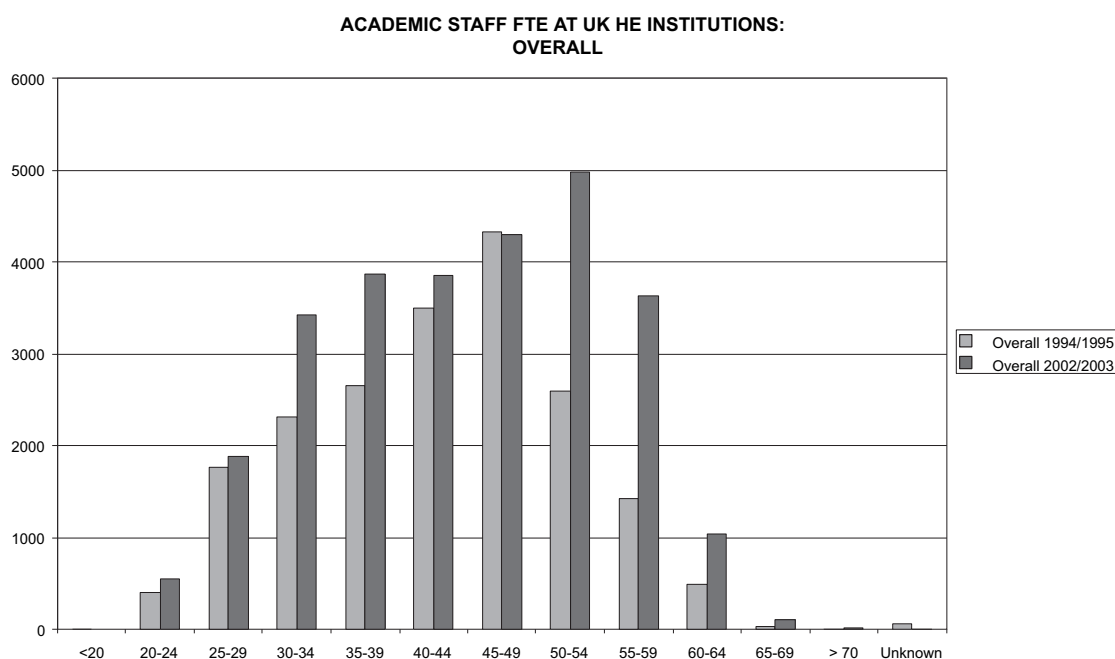
ESRC is leading a major initiative in the area of Teaching and Learning funded by a number of key stakeholders including the funding councils, the DfES and the Welsh and Scottish devolved administrations. The programme originated from concerns over the need for better co-ordinated high-quality research in this area and HEFCE initially provided the majority of the funding. The overall budget is some £27 million. The programme's overarching purpose is to support research leading to improvements in outcomes for learners of all ages and in all contexts of education and learning. For example, research on incentives to workplace learning has developed the powerful new concept and diagnostic tool of "expansive and restrictive learning environments" and has fed into the 2003 White Paper *21st Century Skills* and the work of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) and the Modern Apprenticeship Task Force.

(iii) *Commissioning of new work*

In addition to the continuing commissioning work on cross-council programmes such as Energy and the Rural Economy, we are also commissioning four new programmes on Public Services; World Economy & Finance; the New Dynamics of Ageing; and Non Governmental Public Action. We are also finalising plans for two new programmes in the areas of ethnicity and mobility and are in the process of running a further Research Centres competition from which we will consider support for a number of new centres in April 2005.

(iv) *Maintenance of the research base*

There is much concern at present over the severe recruitment and retention difficulties in areas such as mathematics, physics and chemistry. In the social sciences there are similar concerns in terms of the renewal of the research base not least in areas such as economics and management where people with the necessary quantitative skills are in short supply and where alternative career options are generally rather more lucrative than a career in academia. We also have significant concerns relating to social statistics, research methods and related areas such as demography/population studies where the community has always been relatively small but where there are very few new people coming through. In addition, across the social sciences as a whole the academic workforce is ageing to the extent that we face major problems over the next ten years as illustrated by the table below. This is particularly the case in subjects such as education and social work. We are of course implementing the substantial increase in the postgraduate stipend, rising to £12k in October 2005, and will be providing higher salaries for research staff in the areas identified above. We have also given some priority to these subject areas in our support for studentships and postdoctoral fellowships.



(v) Interdisciplinarity

ESRC funds research excellence whether within or across disciplines and works to eradicate barriers to such excellence both within the social sciences and with those areas covered by the other Research Councils. Nearly all of our programmes and centres depend upon the involvement of researchers from a range of disciplines and an increasing proportion of our activities now involve collaboration with researchers in the physical, natural and life sciences. All of our Boards and Panels are multi-disciplinary—there are no “subject” Committees. Close collaboration with other councils regarding the assessment of responsive mode applications at the boundaries between us ensures that cross-disciplinary applications are not disadvantaged.

(vi) International collaboration

The ESRC’s role in developing social science in the UK involves a strong commitment to work across national boundaries, taking advantage of the intellectual opportunities to be gained from co-operative and comparative research, as well as maintaining and developing the high standing of UK researchers within international social science research networks. Such collaboration includes:

- International co-funding of response mode research such as the European Science Foundation’s ECRP (European Collaborative Research Projects) Scheme. We are now planning to introduce such co-funding with sister organisations beyond the EU.
- Building effective platforms of co-operation via inter-country and inter-agency agreements. This extends beyond our European partners including, for example, a collaboration with the Social Science Research Council for US academics to visit ESRC Research Centres and Programmes in 2004–05 and agreements with a number of partner Academies in China to offer grants for research visits and joint projects in areas such as Chinese economic policy and foreign direct investment in China.
- Participation in EU Framework Programmes, particularly the theme on Citizens and Governance in a Knowledge-based Society and the horizontal programme on Science and Society. We also co-fund pan-European research infrastructures such as the European Social Survey.
- Training initiatives through the new Dorothy Hodgkin Postgraduate Awards scheme. This is a new cross-Council scheme (initiated by the Office of Science and Technology) to fund PhD students from the developing world. Each award is jointly sponsored by both a Research Council and an industrial sponsor.

7. KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER AND COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

A key element of the Council’s approach to knowledge transfer is its commitment to effective user engagement at all stages of the research process, from the setting of research agendas and priorities and the conduct of research through to the communication and dissemination of research outcomes.

In relation to public sector bodies, our approach is underpinned by concordat agreements and strategic partnerships with government departments and devolved administrations. A list of current concordat partners is provided at Annex 5. In particular, we provide syntheses and briefings on research findings in relevant policy areas such as taxation; fiscal planning; climate change; and employment patterns. We have introduced a policy seminar series and seminars have been held on factors affecting school leaving decisions, population trends in Scotland, UK productivity and obesity.

In relation to business, there are close links between specific programmes and the business community. The Financial Markets Group based at LSE has attracted significant corporate sponsorship from a range of investors such as UBS Global Asset Management, Lehmann Brothers and International Asset Management Ltd. The CEP (Centre for Economic Performance) Business Club has also attracted similar support. ESRC’s Innovation Research Centres work closely with business. For example, the Centre for Complex Product Systems (COPS) has run training courses for organisations such as Samsung and Boots, while BAe Systems has adopted its “human centred” approach to improving software processes and practices. The Centre for Research on Innovation and Competition (CRIC) has worked closely with Rolls Royce, Unilever and BNFL.

All ESRC programmes and centres are required to engage with a range of users and programmes, for example, commit 5% of their budget for dissemination and engagement activities. Key performance indicators for engagement activities and published output have been introduced to set levels of achievement for this activity. In addition to workshops and other events, training opportunities are also provided by the ESRC for the directors of our major investments on understanding Government processes to maximise policy impact and engaging effectively with the media. Senior social scientists are engaged in a wide variety of advisory roles in Government and many academics, particularly in the areas of economics and management and business studies, also engage in consultancy work. ESRC commissioned research at Cambridge University has shown that academics acting in consultant roles are one of the most significant mechanisms of knowledge transfer in the social sciences. A number of the senior academics within our

Management Research Initiative (AIM) are involved in such activity. We are also in discussion with the Treasury over the development of a new scheme to facilitate greater movement between the academic and government sectors.

In addition to our centres and programmes, we spend over £2 million annually on collaborative studentships (CASE—Collaborative Awards in Science and Engineering), supporting about 200 such students at any one time. This scheme is based on partnerships between universities and non-academic organisations and allows doctoral students to draw upon workplace experience in a range of settings for their research. Similarly, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs), managed with the DTI, bring together staff in academic institutions and workplaces from all sectors by having associates conducting jointly supervised projects. For example, the partnership between Central Manchester and Manchester Children's (CMMC) University Hospital NHS Trust and the Manchester School of Management at UMIST was awarded the KTP annual award for the Best Application of Social and Management Sciences in 2003. This partnership was funded by the ESRC and NHS North Region and will lead to an extra 700 operations being performed each year due to more efficient scheduling, potential savings to the Trust of over £400,000 per annum and employment by the research associate with York NHS Trust.

Beyond these schemes the Council has also collaborated with government departments in building research capacity in targeted areas. It has, for instance, established a highly successful co-funded studentship scheme with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and has a jointly supported scheme with the Welsh Assembly Government, focused around developing research capacity on key social and economic issues within Wales. We are keen to extend these collaborations to involve other partners. The ESRC also supports LINK programmes, student placements in the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology, the Small Business Research Initiative, the Business Plan Competition and the Young Entrepreneurs Scheme.

8. SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

ESRC science and society activity aims to promote social science and demonstrate its valuable contribution to the UK's knowledge base. The ESRC's portfolio of research into science and society topics such as public dialogue, public perceptions of risk and science teaching, means that we have an added responsibility to distribute evidence to the science community and encourage evidence based science policy. ESRC reports on public understanding of science such as "Towards a better map: science, the public and the media" and "Who's Misunderstanding Whom?" have made important contributions to the debate. In addition our Science in Society research programme has addressed key issues regarding the role of science, public engagement with science issues and the governance of science.

We use the media, events, publications and the internet to inform and engage the public about social science research. For example, we issued 139 press releases related to our research in 2003–04. Much of our public dialogue activity is channelled through our research programmes, many of which invite relevant user groups and communities to become involved through, for example, programme advisory committees. Stakeholders help to shape the overall direction of these activities throughout the lifecycle of the research from the initial proposal through to the dissemination of findings.

The ESRC is expanding its use of the internet and is launching in spring 2005 a major on-line initiative. The Information Centre will be a free-access social science research tool. Users will be able to access a breadth of social science knowledge from both ESRC and other UK funders. The site is aimed at both academic and non-academic users and will focus on presenting research results in plain English.

9. EVALUATION

The ESRC places considerable emphasis on evaluating the outcomes and impacts of its research funding, and it uses the results to inform its strategic development and funding decisions. Evaluations are managed by the Research Evaluation Committee (REC), which operates independently of the research boards and reports directly to Council. The REC conducts project, programme, centre and policy evaluations to provide accountability for ESRC expenditure, inform strategic priorities, support decision-making and contribute to improved research performance. The Committee has recently revised its strategy to incorporate more cross-cutting reviews of aspects of research policy in order to better inform Council's strategic planning process.

Recent evaluations have included a policy evaluation of interdisciplinary research support, and assessments of work at the Centre for Research on Innovation & Competition, the Complex Products and Systems Innovation Centre, the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment, and the Centre for Organisation and Innovations; results from the centre evaluations underpinned the Council's decision that these investments have performed sufficiently well to justify bids (in competition with others) for continued support. The REC's current work includes an assessment of the effectiveness of the ESRC's Postdoctoral Fellowship Scheme, a review of the utility and performance of the Census Data Support Units, and evaluations of a range of research investments.

The new evaluation strategy includes a greater emphasis on benchmarking the UK's international performance, starting with the development of robust bibliometrics. The bibliometric data collected by Thomson ISI is used widely but is acknowledged by experts to present a misleading picture of performance.

The ISI takes no account of book publication, yet only 51% of submissions to the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise Politics Panel from 4, 5, and 5* Units were journal articles. There is also very variable coverage of important social science publications, with, for example, only 13% of outputs submitted to the RAE Education Panel appearing in the ISI. The REC's work is addressing these weaknesses, and the results will provide government and funders with more accurate measures of impact. The Committee will supplement these improved metrics with international subject reviews to benchmark disciplinary strengths and weaknesses in more detail.

10. ADMINISTRATIVE EFFICIENCY AND CROSS-COUNCIL CO-OPERATION

The Council aims to keep its administrative costs to below 4% of total expenditure although, with a relatively small budget and a large and diverse community and portfolio of activities, this represents a considerable challenge. The opportunities afforded by the creation of RCUK and the increasing harmonisation of administrative functions across the research councils will support this in the longer-term.

The leading area of work since 2001 has been the development of Joint Electronic Submissions (Je-S). With the onset of Dual Support Reform and the introduction of Full Economic Costs (FEC), it was agreed that the best time for ESRC to come into the main system was by September 2005. As soon as the Je-S system is fully operational we shall proceed in 2005–07 with the integration of back office systems in areas such as research administration including applications processing, peer review, award and payments administration and end-of-award evaluation. These will be major steps forward in administrative collaboration.

A major joint initiative has been the cross-Council development of an Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS). The MRC has taken the lead in directing the work, and ESRC has been the first to implement the new system, working with colleagues at CCLRC. This became operational in April 2004.

ESRC has also established a joint Human Resources/Personnel office with EPSRC, and last year established a common pay system for both Councils. The joint unit saved £80,000 from our joint EPSRC/ESRC salary costs in this area (some 25%). From January 2005 we shall also establish a common IT support unit at Polaris House in Swindon, with all Councils working together.

Lastly we are reviewing how we bring together our financial administration systems, given that the various Councils have quite different businesses and therefore varying requirements.

It is intended that a strategy for administrative convergence by 2008 will be in place by 2005. In total we believe that the synergies and benefits will save ESRC much in future capital costs and up to 10% (£450,000) of our recurrent costs.

11. LOOKING FORWARD: FUTURE PLANS AND PRIORITIES

The Council is currently engaged in developing its future priorities, both as part of the broader process for determining the distribution of the science budget announced in this year's spending review and as part of its own decision-making cycle. Over the next five to ten years there are substantial research challenges for which high quality social science is needed and the UK is well placed to deliver. The Council is already committed to supporting new work in areas such as economic performance and development, the delivery of public services and programmes on qualitative data and the secondary analysis of existing data. We will also wish to maintain a vibrant responsive mode that allows us to support those applications with the highest alpha ratings and to strengthen the infrastructure that underpins much of this work.

In addition, ESRC will be seeking to strengthen its support in areas such as health and lifestyle behaviours; demographic change such as family structures and dynamics, migration and ageing; the emerging role and influence of countries such as China and India in the global economy; environmental and climate change; and, international security.

We will also face a number of challenges over the next five to ten years and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with the committee. These include:

- The continuing potential disjunction between the requirements of the RAE and those of the research councils in areas such as interdisciplinarity, applied research and research related to professional practice and engagement with users.
- The need to increase the quantitative and linguistic skills of social scientists. In addition to ESRC support, this will require intervention at earlier stages in the education process ie at school and undergraduate levels.
- The need to make a research career more attractive to the UK's brightest young people, particularly in view of the ageing of the current workforce as described earlier, and to provide more integrated support throughout the academic lifecourse.
- The need to improve data access and usage.

Annex 1

ESRC RESEARCH AND POSTGRADUATE TRAINING EXPENDITURE 1999–2000—2003–2004

£K	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	Total
<i>RESEARCH</i>						
Managed Programmes	14,500	14,594	17,040	16,705	18,452	81,291
Research Centres	8,451	7,773	8,956	10,249	12,978	48,407
Research Resources	6,385	5,614	7,366	7,309	6,325	32,999
Grants and Fellowships	16,108	16,608	15,809	17,295	18,161	83,981
Joint Infrastructure Fund	0	4,882	3,014	4,822	3,242	15,960
Capital	626	548	723	1,259	6,948	10,104
Other	203	428	1,077	958	1,376	4,042
Total	46,273	50,447	53,985	58,597	67,482	276,784

£K	1999–2000	2000–01	2001–02	2002–03	2003–04	Total
<i>POSTGRADUATE TRAINING</i>						
Advanced Course Studentships	5,194	5,859	5,416	2,617	181	19,267
Standard Research Studentships	15,057	15,288	16,431	18,487	21,347	86,610
Training Development Activities	183	192	226	273	333	1,207
Teaching Company Scheme	565	665	547	700	1,074	3,551
General Research	76	107	169	96	211	659
Postdoctoral Fellowships	0	0	0	1,393	2,474	3,867
Total	21,075	22,111	22,789	23,566	25,620	115,161

Annex 2

ESRC STRATEGIC INVESTMENTS AS OF SEPTEMBER 2004

<i>Investment</i>	<i>End Date</i>	<i>Location*</i>
New Dynamics of Ageing		Sheffield
AIM Management Initiative	Mar 2007	LBS/Warwick
BRASS Centre for Business, Accountability, Sustainability & Society	Sep 2006	Cardiff
CARR Centre Analysis of Risk & Regulation	Sep 2010	LSE, London
CASE: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion	Sep 2006	LSE, London
CAVA Care, Values and the Future of Welfare Group	Dec 2004	Leeds
CBR Centre for Business Research	Sep 2004	Cambridge
Centre for Competition Policy (starts 03/04)	Aug 2009	UEA, Norwich
Centre on Sociocultural Change (starts 03/04)	Sep 2014	Manchester
CEP Centre for Economic Performance	Sep 2010	LSE, London
Families & Social Capital Group	Dec 2006	SBU, London
CMAPP Centre for Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy	Sep 2006	IFS, London
COI: Centre for Organisation & Innovation	Sep 2006	Sheffield
COMPAS Centre Migration, Policy and Society	Sep 2013	Oxford
CoPS Centre for Innovation in Complex Product Systems	Sep 2006	Sussex/Brighton
CPRR Crime Pathways: Risk & Resilience Network	Sep 2005	Sheffield
CRIC Centre for Research on Innovation & Competition	Sep 2006	Manchester
CSERGE Centre for Socioeconomic Research on Global Environment	Sep 2006	UEA, Norwich
CSGR Centre Study of Globalisation and Regionalisation	Sep 2007	Warwick
Cultures of Consumption Programme	Sep 2006	Birkbeck, London
Devolution & Constitutional Change Programme	Mar 2005	Birmingham
Domestic Management of Terrorist Attacks	Dec 2004	n/a
EHB Environment & Human Behaviour New Opportunities Programme	Sep 2004	PSI, London

<i>Investment</i>	<i>End Date</i>	<i>Location*</i>
ELSE Centre Economic Learning and Social Evolution	Sep 2010	UCL, London
EOBK Evolution of Business Knowledge Programme	Dec 2006	Warwick
ESOC e-Society Programme	Mar 2009	LBS, London
Public Services: Quality, Performance and Delivery Programme (starts 2003–04)	Sep 2009	Oxford
FMC Financial Markets Centre	Dec 2004	LSE
Genomics Research Centre—INNOGEN	Sep 2007	Edinburgh
Genomics Research Centre—EGENIS	Sep 2007	Exeter
Genomics Research Centre—CESAGEN	Sep 2007	Lancaster/Cardiff
Genomics Forum	Jun 2009	Edinburgh
GPRG Global Poverty Research Group	Sep 2007	Oxford/Manchester
Human Capability & Resilience Network	Sep 2006	UCL, London
IHT Innovative Health Technologies Programme	Jan 2006	York
MISOC Research Centre on Micro-social Change	Sept 2009	Essex
GeNet Gender Equality Network	Sept 2009	Cambridge
New Security Challenges Programme	Dec 2007	Birmingham
PACCIT People at the Centre of Communications and IT Programme	Mar 2006	Glasgow
RELU Rural Economy & Land Use (starts 2003)	Sep 2011	Newcastle
SAGE Simulating Policy for an Ageing Society Group	Apr 2005	LSE, London
SCARR Social Contexts and Responses to Risk Network	Sep 2008	Kent
Science in Society Programme	Jul 2007	Oxford
SCOPIC Social Contexts of Pathways in Crime Network	Sep 2007	Cambridge
Social Identities & Social Action Programme	Sep 2008	Open U
SKOPE Centre—Skills, Knowledge & Organisational Performance	Sep 2008	Oxford/Warwick
Stem Cells research	Sep 2006	n/a
STI Sustainable Technologies Initiative [Programme]	Dec 2006	Brunel
UKERC UK Energy Research Centre (part of the TSEC Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy Programme)	Apr 2009	PSI/Imperial/Oxford
TLRP Teaching & Learning Research Programme	Dec 2008	Cambridge
TSU Transport Studies Unit	Sep 2004	UCL, London
Tyndall Centre for Climate Change Research	Sep 2005	UEA, Norwich
WED Well-being & Development Research Group	Sep 2007	Bath
World Economy and Finance & Finance	Feb 2009	Birkbeck

RESEARCH RESOURCES

British Election Study 2005–06 (RRB)	Mar 2007	Essex
CASS Centre for Applied Social Surveys (RRB)	Oct 2005	Southampton/Surrey/ NATCEN
Centre for Longitudinal Studies (RRB) (incorporates the Millennium Cohort Study/ NCDS and BCS70)	Sep 2009	IOE, London
Economic & Social Data Service (RRB)	Sep 2007	Essex/Manchester
ESRC/JISC Census Programme (RRB)	July 2006	Southampton
European Social Survey (UK component) (RRB)	Sep 2005	NATCEN, London
Evidence Based Policy Network (RRB)	Mar 2005	Queen Mary, London
International Bibliography of Social Sciences (RRB)	Mar 2005	LSE, London
National Centre for e-Social Science Hub (RRB)	Mar 2007	Manchester/Essex
National Centre Research Methods Hub (RRB)	Mar 2009	Southampton
Research Methods Programme (RRB)	Mar 2008	Manchester
Social Science Information Gateway (RRB)	Aug 2006	Bristol
UK Longitudinal Studies Centre (RRB) (incorporates the British Household Panel Study)	Sep 2009	Essex
Work Employment Relations Survey		DTI

* Location of Centre/Group host institution; or location of Programme/Network Director

Annex 3

ESRC RESPONSIVE MODE AWARDS BY DISCIPLINE 1999-2000 TO 2003-2004

Discipline	Applications				Awards				Success Rate %						
	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	1999-2000	2000-01	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04
Area Studies	7	6	6	3	6	0	4	3	0	2	0.0	66.7	50.0	0.0	33.3
Economic and Social History	27	32	30	35	27	8	17	13	14	12	29.6	53.1	43.3	40.0	44.4
Economics	60	56	60	75	112	18	26	24	27	46	30.0	46.4	40.0	36.0	41.1
Education	65	62	72	60	59	21	17	20	11	9	32.3	27.4	27.8	18.3	15.3
Environmental Planning	15	14	12	14	17	5	3	6	4	4	33.3	21.4	50.0	28.6	23.5
Human Geography	40	38	42	45	46	13	11	20	10	16	32.5	28.9	47.6	22.2	34.8
Interdisciplinary Studies	0	3	24	14	24	0	0	4	6	4	0.0	0.0	16.7	42.9	16.7
Linguistics	22	17	18	25	33	7	7	8	8	18	31.8	41.2	44.4	32.0	54.5
Management and Business Studies	55	34	61	38	54	7	7	10	6	12	12.7	20.6	16.4	15.8	22.2
Political Science and International Relations	50	36	36	47	60	9	18	12	11	14	18.0	50.0	33.3	23.4	23.3
Psychology	140	137	167	152	180	34	48	45	45	76	24.3	35.0	26.9	29.6	42.2
Social Anthropology	30	27	26	30	20	10	12	9	10	8	33.3	44.4	34.6	33.3	40.0
Social Policy	34	42	20	27	32	5	11	8	5	9	14.7	26.2	40.0	18.5	28.1
Socio Legal Studies	16	14	16	12	10	1	5	5	5	5	6.3	35.7	31.3	41.7	50.0
Sociology	90	68	74	95	85	25	21	26	25	30	27.8	30.9	35.1	26.3	35.3
Statistics Computing and Methodology	17	9	12	8	7	4	2	6	4	2	23.5	22.2	50.0	50.0	28.6
TOTAL	668	595	676	680	772	167	209	219	191	267	25	35.1	32.4	28.1	34.6

SUMMARY OF SPENDING REVIEW INITIATIVES

GENOMICS

Commissioning of the ESRC Genomics Network as a part of the broader cross-Council Genomics Programme has now been completed. The Network comprises:

- Three Research Centres launched on October 2002:
 - Centre for Economic and Social Aspects of Genomics (CESAGEN) at Lancaster and Cardiff Universities (£4,300,000 October 2002–September 2007).
 - ESRC Centre for Genomics in Society (Eugenic) at Exeter University (£2,500,000 October 2002–September 2007).
 - ESRC Centre for social and economic research on Innovation in Genomics (Innogen) at Edinburgh University (£2,082,000 October 2002–September 2007).
- The ESRC Genomics Forum for Policy and Research, based at Edinburgh University, directed by Professor Michael Banner, and launched on 1 August 2004 with co-funding from the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council. It will exploit synergies across these Centres and beyond and aims to ensure that the social sciences can contribute more effectively to a better understanding of the broader issues surrounding the current scientific and technological advances in biotechnology and genomics to develop new research links and activities involving social scientists, medical and biological scientists, policy makers, and members of the general public.
- A major survey of attitudes to genomics (£703,000 November 2002–January 2005). Using qualitative, large scale quantitative and experimental methods, this project aims to examine UK public attitudes towards a range of applications of genomics including GM foods, cloning and genetic testing.
- Five additional research projects on genomics in society under ESRC's Science in Society Programme (£500,000 October 2003–July 2007), examining issues such as ethics in research laboratories and clinics working with human embryos, farmers' understandings of GM crops and the uptake and incorporation into clinical practice of new technologies based on pharmacogenomics.

STEM CELLS

Working closely with RCUK partners (EPSRC, MRC, BBSRC, CCLRC, NERC) through the Cross Council Stem Cells Co-ordinating Committee, commissioning of the first phase of ESRC-funded research has been completed. Six projects costing over £1.1 million are starting from autumn 2004 and are examining issues such as the global regulation of embryonic stem cells, innovation processes, the role of standards and public engagement in stem cell research. Professor Andrew Webster (University of York) has been appointed co-ordinator of ESRC's Stem Cells Research and is currently taking the lead in developing proposals for further work on awareness raising and capacity building.

AIM (MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INITIATIVE)

Founded in October 2002 with co-funding from EPSRC and a budget of £20,950,000, AIM now has activities at over 20 institutions co-ordinated from its offices at London Business School. Directed (from 1 August 2004) Professor Robin Wensley, AIM is supporting:

- 16 three-year National Competitiveness Fellows to create a national team of researchers to address key problems facing British business such as productivity and innovation. Fellowships include provision for a New Researcher Development Fund of up to £150,000 to foster the careers of promising new researchers.
- 12 Public Service Fellows to explore the public service delivery agenda.
- A rolling programme of AIM scholars targeted at leading new researchers and visiting international fellowships.
- A series of highly successful Management Research Fora such as the AIM / CIHE Forum on Solving the Skills Gap held in October 2003.

RELU

The ESRC leads the management of the Cross-Council Rural Economy and Land Use Programme in collaboration with the BBSRC and NERC. The overall budget is £20 million. The Programme has secured co-funding from DEFRA (£1 million) and SEERAD (Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department) (£0.5 million). The Programme Director is Professor Philip Lowe, OBE, from the Centre for Rural Economy at Newcastle University. Commissioning of the first phase of research has been completed and will support:

- Eight major research projects funded at a cost of £5 million under the Programme's theme on successful and sustainable food products and food chains (examining issues such as use of biological alternatives to chemical pesticides, potential for producing, nutritionally improved foods acceptable to consumers and participatory tools for assessing and managing food chain risks).
- 14 scoping studies, 5 capacity building awards, 8 development activities and 7 networking awards (£1 million in total) aimed at supporting the development of innovative interdisciplinary research collaborations and approaches across all the Programme's themes.

The second phase (c £10 million) for research projects has now been issued focused on the Programme's other major themes—integration of land and water use, the environmental basis of rural development and economic and social interactions with the rural environment.

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ECONOMY PROGRAMME

ESRC has worked in close collaboration with the NERC (lead Council) and EPSRC on the SR 2002 Cross-Council Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy Programme. The overall budget is £28 million. The Programme aims to support research which will help the UK to access a secure, safe, diverse and reliable energy supply at competitive prices, while meeting the challenge of global warming.

A key element of the Programme has been the establishment of a UK Energy Research Centre (UKERC) (£13 million over five years) co-funded by the ESRC (c £3 million). The Research Director is Professor Jim Skea OBE.

The Programme is based on three vertical themes: Demand Reduction; Future Sources of Energy; and Infrastructure and Supply. There will also be three cross-cutting themes: Energy Systems and Modelling; Environmental Sustainability; and Materials for Advanced Energy Systems.

The first call for proposals under the TSEC Programme was issued in late 2003, with a focus on two of the Programmes themes: Keeping the Nuclear Option Open (led by EPSRC) and Managing the New Uncertainties. ESRC is leading on the latter, which will address a number of the key issues highlighted in the report of the Chief Scientific Adviser's Energy Research Review Group such as energy markets and regulatory, social and economic drivers. ESRC is also collaborating closely with the other Councils on the second call (led by the NERC), issued in the summer of 2004, focused on the themes of Carbon Management and Renewables.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH METHODS

The National Centre for Research Methods aims to provide a strategic focal point for the identification, development and delivery of an integrated national research and training programme aimed at promoting a step change in the quality and range of methodological skills and techniques used by the UK social science community. The Centre consists of a co-ordinating "hub", based at the University of Southampton (£2.02 million, April 2004–March 2009) together with a series of sub-centres or "nodes" (£4.5 million), distributed across a number of sites, drawing upon the knowledge and expertise of researchers around the UK. The nodes are currently being commissioned and are expected to start in April 2005.

E.SCIENCE

The ESRC E-Social Science Initiative is building on the major advances made under the cross Council e-science programme and will involve new cross disciplinary collaborations with, for example, computational scientists. In its initial stage, the ESRC's broad e-social science strategy is made up of three components:

- a training and awareness programme;
- Pilot Demonstrator Projects; and
- the National Centre for e-Social Science (NCeSS) The NCeSS will have a distributed structure, comprising a co-ordinating Hub, which has now been commissioned and is based at Manchester University (£1.58 million May 2004–March 2007) and a set of research-based Nodes distributed across the UK, which will begin work in April 2005 (£4.5 million). The "Hub" will, in addition to the existing demonstrator projects, co-ordinate a further series of small grants (£400,000).

Early projects are looking at such key areas as financial forecasting and macro-economics, Human Systems Modelling and life-course analysis. ESRC in co-ordination with the NCeSS “Hub” is also commissioning the purchase and regional distribution of a number of Access Grid Nodes.

Annex 5

ESRC CONCORDAT PARTNERS

Cabinet Office
Department for Education and Skills
Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Department of Health
Department of Trade and Industry
Department of Transport
Department of Work and Pensions
HM Treasury
Home Office
Northern Ireland Executive
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Scottish Executive
Welsh Assembly Government

APPENDIX 3

Memorandum from the Department for Work and Pensions

INTRODUCTION

1. The Committee invited comments from users on ESRC’s work, strategy and expenditure plans. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has been developing stronger links with ESRC over the last year and this note provides the Committee with information about these developments to inform its scrutiny.

BACKGROUND

2. DWP is a relatively new Department having been formed in 2001 and it has needed to rebuild linkages with ESRC in the context of its newly developed policy and analytical agendas. Over the last year DWP researchers and economists have been strengthening linkages with ESRC with a view to improving DWP’s engagement with and usage of ESRC work. Details of modes of closer working are set out below and Annex A lists the key areas of mutual interest where closer working between DWP and ESRC would be particularly beneficial.

3. The Strategic Plan for ESRC in 2002 signalled ESRC’s commitment to developing a “Concordat” with DWP as part of its aim to foster closer working relationships with government. A Concordat would provide a framework for joint initiatives, for example joint research projects, programmes, seminars, and joint working on training and skills issues to allow academic and government researchers to work together on developing research methods and datasets and data matching initiatives.

AREAS OF MUTUAL INTEREST

4. The ESRC’s New Strategic Framework focuses on capacity, research, engagement and performance and these are covered in turn below.

Capacity building: investing in training, methodology and quality datasets

5. This is an important issue, not just in relation to skills gaps in economics and social statistics, but also development of people, project and work management skills amongst researchers. DWP welcomes this emphasis in the Strategic Framework. We have already completed two CASE studentships whereby PhD students spend three months working in the Department as part of their doctoral studies. Both of these have been successes. I personally have benefited from this when a recent PhD student completed a literature review on family formation and children’s well-being. This helped shape our thinking on the issue.

6. The Department has now agreed with ESRC as part of our Concordat discussions to examine the possibilities for developing opportunities for:

- (a) secondments between academics and government researchers;
- (b) for 50:50 funding for postgraduate studentships to work on projects guided by DWP longer term research needs; and
- (c) short term placements for postgraduate students.

7. The Department welcomes the National Dataset Strategy and the appointment of a Data Coordinator. This will provide a valuable resource for DWP as increasingly it exploits the capacity to utilise government administrative databases and major surveys data in its analytical work for policy purposes. The Department is keen to be involved in discussions about data strategy.

8. The Department values the training provided by the ESRC Centre for Research Methods and training programmes incorporated into other centres such as the UK Longitudinal studies Centre, the Centre for Applied Social Surveys and the Research Methods programme. The forthcoming ESRC-Government Forum on research methods is a helpful initiative in terms of supporting the development of the Department's analysts.

Research: focus on cutting edge research and on areas of national importance

9. This is important, as ESRC is better placed than individual government departments to develop research programmes in some strategic topic areas. In order to strengthen policy relevance the Department has agreed with ESRC that:

- (a) ESRC will contact DWP early in thinking about new research programmes to get input before proceeding to build a joint forward agenda;
- (b) ESRC will invite DWP onto commissioning panels where there is mutual interest in a topic; and
- (c) DWP will identify areas of longer term strategic research interest and inform ESRC to enable them to consider their programme development in the light of these interests.

10. The Department has also agreed to explore actively opportunities for example for coordinating ESRC programmes with DWP programmes of research, for example forthcoming ESRC programmes on the New Dynamics of Ageing, and on Preventative Health.

11. The Department is considering with ESRC the possibility of opportunities for co-funding of longitudinal data collection, for example a Wealth and Assets Survey, as longitudinal studies are of strategic value but are costly and need to be approached in a way that maximises the value of scarce research resources.

Engagement and knowledge transfer

12. The Department commends the ESRC for introducing a proactive dissemination programme. The Department agreed with ESRC that DWP will identify areas of interest for thematic seminar series and one-off policy seminars where ESRC will commission researchers to produce papers on specific topics for discussion; and possibly a thematic research seminar series.

Performance—working efficiently and effectively including evaluation of activities and impact

13. Over the last year, with the appointment of its new Chairman, the ESRC has become more outward looking and DWP officials have found a much greater willingness to engage with government concerns than previously.

14. To this end the ESRC is finalising a draft “Concordat” for agreement with Departmental officials.

30 September 2004

Annex A

LIST OF TOPICS FOR JOINT WORKING

ESRC GROWING OLDER RESEARCH PROGRAMME ON EXTENDING QUALITY LIFE

DWP Minister, Malcolm Wicks, gave a keynote speech at ESRC's Growing Older Programme Closing Conference last December and results from the programme have actively fed into Departmental thinking.

CROSS COUNCIL PROGRAMME ON AGEING—THE NEW DYNAMICS OF AGEING

DWP will actively engage with this programme, building on the Growing Older Programme mentioned above, and we are currently consulting with the Programme Director on formalising our involvement.

ESRC—NATIONAL CENTRE FOR RESEARCH METHODS

DWP, together with the Government Chief Social Researcher, is engaging with this new centre particularly in respect of its agenda to cooperate with government on research methods and training.

NATIONAL DATASET STRATEGY

This initiative is timely given the Department's advances in the use of administrative data. We shall be closely involved with the data strategy to help further shape the use of large scale surveys for analytical purposes.

LONGITUDINAL DATA AND COHORT STUDIES

The Department has long been an active contributor to the various data collection initiatives established by or with the engagement of ESRC—BHPS, Millennium Cohort and in the past NCDS etc. Longitudinal data forms a very important part of DWP's analytical and policy making capability across the range of life cycle issues and we are continuing to discuss potential collaboration, including a Wealth and Assets survey.

APPENDIX 4

Memorandum from the Political Studies Association

RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE ESRC

We would like to commend the ESRC for the attention it has given under its current leadership to developing relations with professional associations. The steps taken have included meetings with our officers, participation in sessions at our annual and heads of department conferences and contributions to our newsletter for members. In particular, we consider that there has been extensive consultation about the ESRC's new strategic framework and priorities for 2004–05. We hope that this pattern of consultation with the various associations representing the different disciplines in social science continues. Each discipline has its own particular profile and potential contribution to ESRC activities and consultation should continue at the disciplinary level rather than being focused on bodies claiming to represent the social sciences as a whole.

FUNDING FOR RESEARCH

It is important that the ESRC continues to provide funding that is accessible to new or recent entrants to social science. Postdoctoral fellowships are important in this respect. Response mode funding is also more readily accessible to younger staff. There needs to be continual and rigorous scrutiny of the value for money offered by research centres compared to other forms of funding. There is a danger that they may reinforce a fashionable orthodoxy rather than stimulating new and innovative thinking. Some of the best value for money can be obtained from fellowships for individual academics as they enable people to have thinking time which is often at a premium in modern universities.

COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

We are aware that ESRC puts considerable effort into its communications strategy, to encouraging grant holders to develop their own strategies in conjunction with the ESRC and in ensuring that grant holders have the skills required for effective communication through the mass media. The outcome is, however, sometimes a little disappointing. Specialist stakeholder audiences are often reached, but more general public awareness of the ESRC's work is not well developed.

ESRC QUOTA AWARDS

The PSA has strong reservations regarding the ESRC's decision to move to quota awards for PhD studentships. In recent years, the ESRC has stipulated that recognition for awards was contingent upon the provision of rigorous research training. We have supported this move and it has led to large numbers of Politics departments reviewing and improving their postgraduate research training. It therefore seems illogical to now restrict the number of studentships to a select number of Departments. In short, Departments who have gained ESRC recognition for the excellence of their research training, but who are not eligible for quota awards, have no incentive to continue to provide intensive research training along the lines that the ESRC previously stipulated. The net effect is likely, therefore, to mean that the provision of research training overall will decline in quality and scope—something that is clearly counter-productive.

From the point of view of prospective research students, the move is also potentially damaging. The Departments that will receive quota awards are all fine ones (though it should be noted that not all are rated at 5 or above). Nevertheless, they do not cover all the areas of the discipline equally well. Students who wish to study a sub-field in which none of the quota Departments have any particular expertise, face a stark choice between funded research with non-specialists, or self-funded research with a more appropriate supervisor.

In sum, the ESRC competition for studentships has worked well, alongside the ESRC-led improvements in research training. We see little case for changing this approach and therefore have strong reservations about the recent changes.

4 October 2004

APPENDIX 5

Memorandum from David M Berry

I would like to submit the following information as a user of the ESRC research council. I am a third year funded DPhil student studying within the social sciences who won +3 award starting in October 2002. I study at the University of Sussex in the department of Media and Film and my research is into the social form of the Internet generally and Open Source in particular. Below I set out my comments regarding the ESRC.

ESRC RESEARCH AIMS

Generally the thematic areas are broad enough to cover the research requirements of the research communities and are useful in setting some prioritisation of the research environment.

ESRC RESEARCH QUALITY

ESRC funded research is from my own experience of meeting many other DPhil candidates (both funded and unfunded) of high quality. The requirements to submit a detailed proposal and argue the case for the research strengthens the researchers own skills and provide a genuine advantage against those that do not undertake this activity.

I would, however, suggest that an informal viva forms part of the progression requirements in moving into later years in research funding. This would ensure that the research stays on track and prepares the student for the final viva panel.

ESRC RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I feel that the ethical issues in undertaking research in the social sciences are not taken seriously enough. At the moment the ESRC application form has a one tick box that allows you to “opt-out” of having to supply any ethical considerations in your research. I feel strongly that this is unacceptable and even should there be little or no ethical issues, this should be argued cogently in the application for funding.

Although I do have issues with the overly quantitative research methodologies that appear to be privileged by the ESRC, it is possible to argue the case for qualitative research and win funding. As I believe these two approaches to be two-sides of the same coin. I am somewhat concerned that the ESRC encourages a far to quantitative approach at the expense of encouraging an understanding of a qualitative moment in all research activities.

SOCIAL FACTORS

From my own experience of ESRC procedures, ESRC has an extremely backwards approach to the provisions for students. I have a wife and a young daughter (who was unfortunately very ill at birth due to prematurity), which severely affected my capacity to undertake research. When contacted, the ESRC could only offer to freeze funding; in effect removing any income we had as a family. Additionally paternity leave although offered is unpaid (again the funding is frozen).

In an age where there is a need to widen the opportunities for education this is a damning example of structural factors that inhibit the capacity for those with children and families to undertake research. ESRC has an institutional view of the student as in their early twenties and single and consequently their policies reflect this bias. As the student demographic shifts the ESRC should seek to change its policies to incorporate these issues.

ESRC FUNDING LENGTH

ESRC funding stops at the end of the three year period. Regardless of factors this leaves the research student in a crisis situation whereby they must work to finish funding their DPhil research. It seems obvious to me that some form of extension (perhaps available through a similar competition) for an additional year of funding would be appropriate. Colleagues at Oxford University tell me the University actually accepts that it will take four years to finish a DPhil. If this is the case I would suggest that the funding reflects the reality rather than some idealised fiction of how long ESRC/Government believe it should take to finish.

ESRC INSTITUTIONAL LINKS

I believe the ESRC is very proactive in its attempts to create networks of researchers, institutional links and research programmes. However, I believe that the huge multi-million pound projects are generally less useful than the smaller programmes due to the diminishing returns in terms of explanatory value in aggregating social research. For example, when many research teams complex and valuable research is

boiled down into a final report the results are often extremely bland and banal. For politicians it may seem more advantageous to achieve an easily digestible report that can be identified as the result of the research, however, in terms of the research environment and encouraging risk-taking in research, large research teams may sometimes tend towards organisational structures that are conservative in nature and hierarchical in decision making. This can stifle the possibility for important and innovative research. Instead there should be a concentration on the formation of constellations of research groups, working in loose networks with research decisions taken in a decentralised way.

6 October 2004

APPENDIX 6

Memorandum from the Development Studies Association

The Development Studies Association broadly welcomes the ESRC's new strategic framework and priorities. The four new organising dimensions of "capacity, research, engagement and performance" appear to offer a more realistic and balanced view of the key elements that the ESRC must pay attention to in pursuit of their objectives. The DSA particularly welcomes the explicit recognition of the capacity dimension of the ESRC's responsibility and the ways that this is now being thought through in the ESRC.

The more internationalist perspective that is embedded in the new strategic framework is very important and relevant in the globalised world we encounter. In past years the ESRC has been prone to being rather narrow in its focus on the UK and near-Europe. This has meant that it has been difficult to get funding for social science that is more global in scope, or was focused on the social science issues and challenges of other parts of the world. The DSA has concern that although the new strategic framework embodies a perspective of the ESRC as an international player, the existing mission statement does not adequately reflect this. The Mission Statement needs to be modernised. If it stands as it is, then the ESRC will continue to be vulnerable to more parochial pressures in view of its role, and may be restricted in its ability to ensure that UK social sciences engage with global problems, challenges and issues, and that UK social sciences are informed in dialogue with the global (and not just US and EU) social science community.

The new strategic framework affirms the ESRC's current practise of exploring research initiatives across traditional boundaries. The ESRC's willingness to work on themes in partnership with the other research funding councils is important for the development studies community. As is their willingness to engage in discussions about how research and capacity development be supported with government departments such as the Department for International Development. The DSA strongly supports efforts by the ESRC to establish a clearer and more systematic link with DFID, so as to ensure that the efforts of each are complementary, rather than duplicative or in competition.

The new strategic framework aims for greater transparency. However, there remains some work to clarify the ways in which the broader academic community will continue to be involved in the decisions over research priorities. In particular, it is important that further thought be given to how the "college" system fits into this and especially as the "college" continues to be relied upon for basic (free) refereeing services in the ESRC system.

Finally, with this new strategic framework and with increased funding it is important that the ESRC's administrative capacity increase to meet the challenges. As it stands there is a perception that the ESRC staff are fully stretched in seeking to ensure the quality and effectiveness of their systems. Any increase in ambition with this new framework must be matched by a realistic increase in administrative capacity.

8 October 2004

APPENDIX 7

Memorandum from the British Psychological Society

1. SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH

1.1 On the whole we believe that the ESRC should be commended for its support and promotion of research, and particularly, research skills training in the Social Sciences: pure and applied.

1.2 However, the small budget that it receives, relative to the other Research Councils, imposes important constraints on its ability to fulfil more effectively its role in this regard and thus fully support the essential contribution that social science research can make in most if not all of the challenges that our society currently poses.

1.3 Social science is centrally relevant to the government agenda and to the aspirations of most individuals and groups for a healthy, safe, and fulfilling lifestyle.

1.4 It collects and analyses data, not only to discern patterns of behaviour but also to identify processes and behaviours that could contribute to informed and evidence-based decisions on the effectiveness of specific interventions and initiatives on, for example, reducing drug-related crimes.

1.5 Thus, it has a vital role in underpinning evidence-based policies in a wide range of problem domains: health, education, energy use, transport, ageing, economic competitiveness etc.

1.6 Moreover, we believe that the important role that social science research has is not fully understood in the “corridors of power” and that this thinking underpins the relatively small financial support that the ESRC receives from the Government, as well as its current position on the sideline of new research initiatives and the funding for these eg, Brain Science.

1.7 Social science research is as likely to provide solutions to current problems and dilemmas as the other science groupings (physical, biological, medical, engineering). Can physics alone solve the problem of crime? Or environmental science alone solve the problem of global warming? Can biological and food sciences adequately address the growing levels of obesity? Understanding and therefore changing attitudes and behaviours of individuals and groups play a fundamental role in solving these and other problems.

1.8 Inadequate funding creates major obstacles for the support of high quality, valuable research in the social sciences. It also constrains the ESRC’s ability to contribute fully to important inter-Research Council initiatives. For example, in the recent Science and Innovation Framework (2004–14) five key areas of research were identified including: Cognitive Systems, Systems Biology and Sustainable Environment. One of the key outcomes from the social sciences in the Cognitive Systems area were sociological studies on developing an understanding of the influence of the environment and community on mental health.

1.9 However, we suggest also that the ESRC could use its current budget more effectively to support and promote social science research. In particular, we suggest that:

1.10 The ESRC should reduce the number and/or nature of the research centres that it supports. The current concentration of its resources into 26 centres (11 of which focus on economics) in a limited number of institutions will lead to severe restrictions in research capacity and recruitment difficulties in the UK as a whole. It is vital to ensure the breadth of social science in the UK and to protect its broad institutional, regional, and departmental base.

1.11 The ESRC should increase the relative weighting for responsive mode funding, providing support not only for specific empirical projects but also for the overview and reflection on previously collected data, evaluation of current theoretical or methodological approaches, and the active dissemination of social science research.

1.12 The ESRC should seriously re-consider its recent changes in the provision of research training, particularly for postgraduate students. The current 1 + 3 scheme is too rigid and restricted to meet the needs of social science.¹ The recently adopted quota scheme for 1 + 3 studentships focuses resources on too few institutions and departments and too small a set of expertise and therefore places at risk the future health, effectiveness and international competitiveness of social science research in the UK.

1.13 The need to meet future capacity in social science research can be better achieved through greater emphasis on 1 year research methods training (usually through research methods MScs or MAs) and the separation of funding for these from funding for subsequent PhD research studentships (+ 3 scheme).

2. PSYCHOLOGY

Psychology forms one of the largest social science research communities dependent on ESRC funding. However, it does not receive the proportionate amount of funding.

2.1 The proportion of funding that it receives for responsive mode grants, for example, is substantially below that expected given the number of applications from the discipline submitted to the ESRC and the size and strength of the community (of approximately 800 applications received per year, on average, a quarter of these are from psychology). This is not a reflection of poorly constructed proposals—a very high proportion of received applications from psychology are alpha rated. While it has been suggested that reviewers in psychology are notably harsh, we suggest that this rigour reflects the relative maturity of the discipline, both as a hypothesis-testing science and as an accumulated body of understanding, built on a long-standing commitment to the integration of theory, concepts and evidence.

2.2 The proportion of funding that psychology receives for Research Centres is also notably low—only 1 of the current number of 26 centres.

¹ The ESRC funds two types of research studentships: 1 + 3 and + 3. The 1 + 3 model provides funding for research training in Year 1 and research project work in Years 2–4. The + 3 model provides three years funding for a research project and is available only to candidates with an-ESRC recognised Research Methods qualification. For October 2004 the 1 + 3 scheme operates via a quota system, allocating studentships to specific department in the HE sector. A small number of these studentships were available through an open competition. The + 3 scheme operates through open competition.

2.3 The number of psychology projects funded under specific Initiatives is also disproportionately low. We suggest that this is in part due to the nature and scope of these initiatives: very few include research questions that make contact with psychological expertise, including those for which psychology should form a core discipline eg, the Growing Older Programme, and Identities and Social Action.

2.4 Psychological research provides an important bridge between social science and the other (natural and physical) sciences. In this regard the inherently multifaceted nature of the discipline should be recognised by the ESRC. Psychology spans research that intersects with sociology and linguistics on the one hand and biological systems and medical science on the other. The use and development of different empirical tools (eg quantitative and qualitative methods) applies across the discipline.

2.5 Therefore, in the pursuit of inter (social science) disciplinary research, the importance of collaborative ventures between psychologists coming from different perspectives using different methodologies should be recognised. A collaborative project between, for example, social (concerned with group behaviours and motives) and cognitive (concerned with individual behaviours and motives) psychologists should be recognised as a truly “interdisciplinary” project.

2.6 Moreover, lack of understanding of the range of methods and topics addressed by psychology researchers risks missing the important contribution that the discipline makes in providing an important bridge between social science with other science research, in pursuit of a particular research or policy led question cf. Cognitive Systems (Foresight Project).

12 October 2004

APPENDIX 8

Supplementary memorandum from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT

1. *What parameters do you use in balancing your role in providing research to inform policy making with responding to the interests of your research community?*

The ESRC has three long established principles that guide its research funding activities: quality, relevance and independence. Within that framework we seek to establish an appropriate balance between work that is relevant to policy and practice and work that is more basic or “curiosity driven”. This does not mean that our community is only interested in the latter and we do not see a conflict between the two roles identified in the question. Many of the awards we make through our responsive mode are for work of an applied nature. Similarly, when we establish a new research programme in a policy relevant area this is generally oversubscribed in terms of the number of applications we receive.

That said, we are conscious of the need to maintain an appropriate balance between responsive funding and identifying and commissioning work in areas of national priority. Both are central to our mission. In recent years the split between the two has been roughly 3:5. The last two spending review rounds have seen an increase in the number of cross-council programmes in which we are involved but we have also increased the budget of our Research Grants Board last year and this to reflect the growing demand in that area. In addition, our recent consultation on future priorities indicated that our community would favour a shift towards responsive funding. The precise nature of this balance over the next few years is something that our Council will be making decisions about in April next year.

2. *Do you have any evidence that the appointment of Departmental Chief Scientific Advisers has improved the use of social science by the relevant Departments?*

Although there is no proven causal relationship between the appointment of Departmental Chief Scientific Advisers and the increased use of social science research, the ESRC has observed a greater demand for its research in the past five years. In fact, this is due to standards set by government for transparent decision making and the use of evidence in policy formulation. Chief Scientific Advisers have encouraged a positive approach to the benefits of social science research.

Recently, Government departments have been consulted about research methodologies. In these discussions, two trends have become apparent: first, the interest in ongoing professional development opportunities for government research staff, and second, an increased desire for regular interaction with academic social science researchers.

Other factors have also contributed. Concordat discussions have provided the ESRC and its partners with a structured forum to identify current and prospective research that is relevant. Senior ESRC staff, particularly the Chief Executive, have been pro-active in making ESRC research known as well as responding to departmental issues.

3. *Are Concordats established on the initiative of ESRC or do you wait for Departments to approach you?*

The origins of Concordat agreements fall into three categories. First, there is a small number which have been established for more than five years. Second, some have been sought by a government department which has heard of the benefits of a formal collaborative agreement from other departments. The Department of Work and Pensions is an example of this category. Third, and now the majority, successful collaborations have encouraged both parties to develop a formal Concordat agreement as a basis for a subsequent series of mutually beneficial activities.

No matter what the origin has been, the ESRC took a considered decision a little over a year ago to transform passive agreements into active strategic alliances where there is joint research, studentships, fellowships, collaboration and ongoing engagement. We are currently negotiating a number of possible new concordats with, for example, the Department for International Development.

4. *Do Concordats entail co-funding of projects and programmes by ESRC and the relevant department? How is funding divided between ESRC and the relevant Departments on joint projects?*

Joint funding is an increasingly regular feature of the Concordats and is routinely discussed. Many now entail co-funded projects and programmes. For example, joint studentships between the ESRC and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the ESRC and the Welsh Assembly Government are funded equally. More recently, we agreed shared funding with the Scottish Executive for research on demographic trends within Scotland.

For the Urban Renewal Network, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister met approximately half of the costs. The ESRC matched them.

5. *Do you have Concordats, or equivalent arrangements, with any Regional Development Agencies? How much demand is there from the RDAs for your research?*

Formal arrangements with Regional Development Agencies are not yet as developed as with Government departments and the Devolved Administrations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

However, the ESRC is increasingly interacting with RDAs. A two-day conference on Regional Policy, involving a dozen ESRC researchers, planned jointly by the Association of Regional Observatories and the ESRC will be held in Durham on 16-17 November. The Conference has attracted over 180 participants from regional bodies, an attendance that reflects significant interest in ESRC research and its application.

RDAs made submissions to the recent nation-wide ESRC consultation. They are also included in the stakeholder survey that the ESRC is undertaking. These processes and a series of bi-lateral meetings that have begun will form the basis of a client-led response by the ESRC to future collaboration and we envisage a number of concordat type agreements resulting from this.

The ESRC is a member of the South West RDA Rural Research Panel and has contributed the findings of several major research enterprises to the work of the Panel, including from the Cross-Council Rural Economy and Land Use (RELU) Programme.

RESEARCH

6. *Can you provide us with details of (a) how many of your Research Centres you have continued to fund beyond the initial 10 year period and (b) what has happened to the Research Centres once your funding for them has ceased?*

In 1994–95 the Council was supporting 21 Research Centres. Of these, five centres have had continuation of funding beyond the initial 10 year period. Of the 16 which have not, all have continued directly or indirectly in most university departments. These are:

Centre for the Study of African Economies—this is now part of the Department of Economics at the University of Oxford. ESRC funds a Global Poverty Research Group which is an interdisciplinary research programme with Manchester University;

Centre for Business Research—this centre reaches the end of its 10 year period of support in 2004–05 and was not successful in securing a further period of ESRC funding. It is too early to say how the University of Cambridge will take this forward;

Centre for Research in Development, Instruction and Training—this centre is now part of the University of Nottingham's Learning Sciences Research Institute;

Centre for Educational Sociology—this is now a centre within the University of Edinburgh's Department of Education and Society;

Centre for Research into Elections and Social Trends—this is now based jointly at the National Centre for Social Research and the Department of Sociology at the University of Oxford;

Centre for Research in Ethnic Relations—this is now a centre of the University of Warwick;

Financial Markets Centre—this centre reaches the end of its 10 year period of support in 2004-05. The ESRC understands that the London School of Economics and Political Science will continue to support its work as the Financial Markets Group;

Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure—researchers from this group are now working in the Historical and Cultural Geography Cluster of the Department of Geography at the University of Cambridge;

Centre for Housing Research and Urban Studies—was taken over by the Department of Urban Studies at the University of Glasgow;

Human Communication Research Centre—this is an interdisciplinary research centre continuing at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow;

Centre for International Employment Relations Research—some of the researchers formerly employed at the ESRC centre now work for the Industrial Relations Research Unit at the University of Warwick;

Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre—this has now merged with the Northern Ireland Economic Council to form the Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland, supported by the Northern Ireland Executive;

Centre for Science, Technology, Energy and Environmental Policy—some of the researchers formerly employed under the ESRC Research Centre award are now working at SPRU Science and Technology Policy Research at the University of Sussex;

Social and Applied Psychology Unit—some of the researchers formerly employed at this centre are now working in a new ESRC centre with a focus on Organisation and Innovation, also at the University of Sheffield;

Centre for Social Work Research—this is now part of the Department of Applied Social Science at the University of Stirling;

Transport Studies Unit—with the end of ESRC funding in 2004-05 the ESRC understands many of the researchers will be employed by the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at University College London.

7. What evaluations have you carried out to determine the effectiveness of your investment in Research Centres as opposed to other approaches to funding research (such as responsive mode grants)?

The Council evaluates the performance of all of its Research Centres before deciding whether they are eligible to bid for a further five-year period of core-funding. Last year, for example, the Council reviewed the performance of the Centre for Social and Economic Research on the Global Environment, the Centre for Research in Innovation and Competition, the Complex Products and Systems Innovation Centre, and the Centre for Organisation and Innovation. In addition, we evaluate the work of our Centres after their period of ESRC funding has come to an end.

Centre reviews are managed by the Council's Research Evaluation Committee, and include assessments from a range of independent commentators including senior international academics and research users in the private and public sectors. The results allow the Council to determine the effectiveness of its investment in Centres as opposed to other types of investment. The annual report of the Research Evaluation Committee contains analyses of all completed evaluations across the centres, programmes and responsive modes and includes comparative assessments across these approaches. In particular, the evaluations investigate how Centres have used their longer-term funding to generate added value in comparison with supporting stand-alone research projects and recent evaluations have highlighted the particular achievements of our centres in relation to the development of dynamic and responsive research agendas, capacity building, career development, sustained user-engagement and the leverage of external co-funding.

8. How do you decide on the balance between funding for research projects and for training? Has this balance remained constant over the past 10 years? Do you expect this balance to change in the future?

This forms part of the longer-term strategic role of our Council and is an issue we will be considering carefully in the coming months in the light of the responses to our consultation and current evidence on the needs of our research community and other stakeholders. Over the last 10 years training has accounted for approximately 30% of the Council's budget. This proportion has increased in the last two years but this reflects the increases in the postgraduate stipend announced in SR2002 rather than increases in volume. Given the size of our community and its future needs in the light of the demographic data we presented in our initial submission, we believe it is essential to support a minimum of 600-700 new doctoral students each year. Whether this will represent a growing or decreasing proportion of our overall budget in the future is dependent on a range of other factors not least our allocation in the current spending review.

9. *Please provide us with a breakdown of the success rates for Research Centres, programmes and responsive mode awards for the last 10 years.*

Attached at Annex 1.

TRAINING

10. *What research have you done to understand the reasons behind the skills shortages in subjects such as statistics, economics and management?*

In addition to our own data on applications and awards for both studentships and research grants, a number of reports have highlighted the shortage of economists and the need to address urgently the recruitment of economists. These include the ESRC commissioned report on UK Economics PhDs and ESRC Studentship Demand in 1999 undertaken by Stephen Machin and Andrew Oswald and more recently the British Academy's Review of Graduate Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences, and the Commission on the Social Sciences report in March 2003 "Great Expectations: the Social Sciences in Britain". Although there are a range of explanations for these shortages, financial considerations such as the increasing burden of undergraduate debt and the alternative salaries and career prospects available to people in these disciplines are key factors.

Capacity problems in quantitative methods were highlighted in the ESRC's commissioned Review of UK Social Statistics in 1999. This followed the Office for National Statistics' review of multi-purpose surveys in 1996. In 2000, Dr Gordon Marshall's paper "UK Capacity in Quantitatively Based Social Science and Analytical Economics" resulted from a consultation exercise involving the four ESRC Research Boards, the academic community, government departments and other key users, exploring the extent of the problem and seeking possible solutions. In terms of capacity building at the postgraduate level, these reviews resulted in the introduction of the Centre Linked Studentships and Secondary Analysis Studentships and the identification of Statistics as a priority area for studentships and postdoctoral fellowships.

11. *What proportion of your studentships are prioritised for subjects where there are skills shortages (please indicate how many for each subject) and what proportion are prioritised for your Research Centres and programmes (please provide details)?*

23.3% of our awards this year were earmarked for identified priority areas and this proportion will increase in the future. These were as follows:

Economics	62 awards (10% of the total)
Statistics and demographics	14 awards (2.3% of the total)
Management and Business Studies	58 awards (9% of the total)
Socio-Legal Studies	13 awards (2% of the total)

Our centres and programme award holders are, of course, able to apply for ESRC studentships through the existing routes. In addition, we run a separate scheme for studentships linked to ESRC Centres and 16 awards were allocated across nine centres this year.

12. *What proportion of your studentships are allocated by the quota system and what proportion are available for open competition?*

In 2004, 332 of the 630 standard studentships were allocated through the 1 + 3 quota allocations (53%). 237 awards were offered through the + 3 competition (38%) and 61 through the 1 + 3 competition (9%). In addition to the standard studentships a further 137 awards were allocated on a competitive basis through a number of other dedicated schemes including CASE and joint studentship schemes with NERC, MRC, ODPM and the Welsh Assembly.

13. *In future will all ESRC studentships provide funding for four years? If so, is there a timetable for this? How will you ensure that this does not lead to a decrease in the number of studentships that you are able to fund?*

Over half of current ESRC studentships provide funding for four years to include an initial year of intensive research training at Master's level as part of an integrated four year programme of research training. Three year studentships are however still available for candidates where the equivalent Master's level training has already been completed and it is anticipated that whilst the demand for three year studentships is expected to decline gradually over time, there will always be provision on this basis.

14. *What evaluations will you undertake before deciding whether to expand the 1 + 3 scheme?*

A full independent evaluation of the 1 + 3 model of funding will be conducted during 2005 as the first 1 + 3 cohort completes. The outcome of this review will be considered along with a review of the demographic profile of the social science research base and a review of employers' needs, both of which have also been commissioned by the Council and are due to report in 2005. These reviews will inform the Council's short and long term strategies for the allocation of awards and the development of the 1 + 3 model.

15. *Do the demographics of your postgraduate students differ significantly from those of other Research Councils? Please provide us with information on the numbers of part-time students and any relevant data that you hold on the diversity of ESRC students and award-holders.*

In terms of the current full stock of ESRC studentships, 59% of award holders are female and 41% male. Indeed from the 2003 intake of students the percentage of offers to female candidates was significantly higher for ESRC students than for the AHRB. Over the last three years of allocations, the average distribution of awards by ethnic origin is 60% to White UK/Irish candidates, 24% to White European candidates, 3% to Asian (Indian) candidates and 1.5% mixed race. The remaining proportion covers candidates across all the other Asian or Black origin categories.

Data from other Research Councils indicates that the ESRC has a higher proportion of older student starters (ie in the 26-39 age bracket), than other councils. For example, based on an average of student intake at PhD level between 2002 and 2004, 56% of ESRC students are in the mid range age bracket compared to just 16% of EPSRC students. The largest proportion of EPSRC students are under 25. Similarly, 32% of the current stock of NERC students are in the mid-range age bracket with a larger proportion under 25. Data on the age distribution of this year's new starters (+ 3 award only) is at annex 2.

Fifty out of the current stock of 2,300 studentships are part-time award holders on either a 1 + 3 or + 3 basis.

KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

16. *You state in your memorandum that ESRC programmes commit 5% of their budget for dissemination and engagement activities. On what basis was the figure of 5% selected? Do you expect this percentage to increase in future?*

Five per cent of an average budget for a research programme represents about £130k. This is regarded as an appropriate amount for the employment of staff, the organisation of events and the publication of materials without being so large that it would reduce the amount of research that we could support within such a programme.

We have no immediate plans to increase this percentage across the piece. However, this does not preclude the allocation of additional resources for specific activities as appropriate to the particular programme and area of work. For example, we have supported the use of media fellows linked to programmes to help disseminate research findings and have allocated some additional resources to programmes and centres to develop their websites. We would expect this targeted additional funding to continue.

17. *How do you assess the effectiveness of the engagement activities of individual ESRC Centres and programmes? What steps do you take when the engagement activities of your Centres or programmes do not meet your standards for effectiveness?*

At the outset centre and programme Directors are asked to submit engagement plans which are assessed by the Strategic Research Board liaison member and ESRC officers. If these are not satisfactory they are asked to make changes.

We review the level and effectiveness of communications activities via troika meetings [regular management meetings between ESRC Office staff, Strategic Research Board liaison members and Centre/ Programme Directors] and also through programmes' and centres' annual reports, where they are asked to set out their dissemination and engagement strategy.

We do not have any formal sanctions for unsatisfactory performance, but will discuss these concerns with our investments and consider appropriate supportive action. A recent example of this is where one of our centres made a bid for additional funds and was told that its communications proposals were unsatisfactory and required improvement before the funding request could be considered.

We also support Centres and Programmes in their engagement activities in various ways. For instance, we run media training courses and have developed a “Communications Toolkit” to promote best practice. We also encourage the sharing and dissemination of good practice through, for example, regular directors’ meetings. As mentioned above, we have also appointed a number of media fellows to support specific investments in their dissemination and engagement activities.

18. *What role has the Advanced Institute of Management played in your knowledge transfer activities? What concrete outcomes has the centre achieved to date?*

The Advanced Institute of Management Research (AIM) was founded in October 2002 and is jointly funded by ESRC and EPSRC. With activities at over 34 institutions in the UK, AIM’s mission is to increase significantly the contribution of and future capacity for world class management research. One of AIM’s core objectives is to engage with practitioners and other users of research within and beyond the UK as co-producers of knowledge about management. Work within AIM underpinned the recent productivity seminar referred to in our submission and was featured in an article in last week’s *Financial Times*.

AIM has a stakeholder engagement plan. This includes:

- Management Research Forums—twice yearly events, held in partnership with a third party, aimed at senior policy makers, practitioners and academics. The purpose is to debate issues of current management importance. Past forums have been on topics including “Solving the Skills Gap” and “Knowledge & Skills Transfer between Universities and Local Industry”.
- Publications from topics arising from these Forums are produced by the AIM scholars which are aimed at the academic audience. These publications are now being summarised and translated into brochures aimed at businesses.
- The first of these has been published on the topic of Innovation Networks. Publications which are in the pipeline include “How UK firms can Create More Value?” and “Promising Practises”.
- Conferences aimed at practitioner audiences eg the forthcoming “Outsourcing and Offshoring of Services in the UK”.
- A book about national competitiveness is currently being written, for publication next year, which will summarise the key findings from the Competitiveness Fellows research aimed at the business community.
- The AIM website gives up-to-date progress of the Initiative and details of forthcoming events.

19. *How much demand from industry is there for your work? What statistics do you keep on this?*

There is considerable demand from industry for our work. This is evident in our partnerships with a range of private sector organisations within the CASE (Collaborative Studentships) and KTP (Knowledge Transfer Partnerships) schemes, other co-funding arrangements and participation in our user networks such as the Connect Club. Above all many of our major investments have very direct working links with industry. Our corporate level data is not at present as comprehensive as we would wish and we are currently working on improving this. Particular examples of demand and interest from industry are:

The Innovative Health Technologies Programme has very close links with GlaxoSmithKline, including holding regular meetings and workshops;

Several of the projects under the Teaching and Learning Programme, such as “Learning as Work: Teaching and Learning Processes in the Contemporary Work Organisation”, have industry links. In the case of this particular project they include Avon Cosmetics, the CBI, and Cisco Systems;

A one-day conference event organised by the E-Society Programme earlier in November was very much industry-oriented. Those attending included representatives of BT and Yahoo. The conference focused on research which has explored trust and the internet;

The Centre for Organisation and Innovation has attracted £1.5 million of co-funding from users. A particular example of that is the BAE Systems-Rolls Royce University Technology Partnership (UTP). Co-funding is attached to a research programme whose agenda is jointly agreed by the sponsoring companies and the academic researchers;

The Centre for Organisation and Innovation provides advice and consultancy to Armeg Ltd, BAE Systems, Barclays Bank, Birtley Engineering, BMW, BP, British Aerospace, British Steel, Caterpillar, Excel, Engineering Employers Federation, Rolls Royce, Lyons, Unilever, Shell, Twinings, Rover Group;

The Complex Product Systems Innovation Centre works with industry through its teaching/training module on managing innovation in capital goods and systems. Last year they worked with American

Express, Ericsson and several companies working in the built environment and construction industries. It also works with a number of major companies in the area of complex information technology systems;

There has been considerable interest in the research that the UK Longitudinal Studies Centre and the Research Centre on Micro-social Change do and enable. For example, the expertise in survey management, coupled with understanding of dynamics within and between households, have led to British Telecom funding a specific project led by a team of staff across these two ESRC centres on “Home On-line Information and Communications Technology in the Home”.

ADMINISTRATION

20. *What was the rationale behind the merger of the ESRC and EPSRC human resource functions in 2003–04? What have the effects been?*

The quinquennial review of the Research Councils in 2000 proposed an increased emphasis on the harmonisation of the administrative operations of the Councils, including the HR function. ESRC and EPSRC, although covering diverse scientific areas, were based at one location in Polaris House, Swindon and employed only research administrators as neither Council administered Research Institutes with active scientific staff. Following the devolution of pay and employment conditions in the mid 1990s both Councils had adopted a similar 5 Band staff grading system. In this context there was clear common ground between the Councils to look to establishing a joint HR function. The Group created took responsibility for the oversight of the Joint Recruitment Unit (JRU) which provided a recruitment service for all the Swindon based councils and from 1 November will assume responsibility for AHRB also.

Over a period of years the Councils are looking to realise some savings on HR costs—already the staffing has been reduced by 1 Band 5, 1 Band 3 and 1.5 Band 4 posts. The pay structure between the two Councils has been re-configured and combined from 2003 to suit the needs of both organisations. A programme is in place in conjunction with the other Swindon based Councils to harmonise other terms of employment across the Councils. The ESRC/EPSRC HR Group in its role of oversight of the JRU has been a prime mover in taking forward an initiative to administer the recruitment of Band 5 administrators jointly for all the Swindon based Councils generating substantial savings in advertising and other recruitment costs. An increase in staff mobility across all the Councils is gradually taking place and opportunities for combining processes and encouraging good practice are pursued wherever possible.

21. *Why is the cost of processing a grant application rising? What steps are you taking to ensure that the cost of processing applications remains as low as possible?*

The cost of processing applications has been decreasing steadily since 2000–01, and was lower in real terms in 2003–04 than for any year since 1996–97, with the exception of 2002–03. It was some *one-third lower* in real terms in 2003–04 than the average cost between 1996–97 and 2001–02.

Annual figures are however subject to variation determined by the number, size and complexity of applications in any one year. As explained in the footnote to the ESRC Operating Plan 2004–05 the increase in 2003–04 over 2002–03 (but not over any other year) was largely due to a slightly lower number of applications being processed, but these being of a more complex nature, involving substantially the commissioning of cross-Council programmes in the areas of rural economy, sustainable energy, and stem cells.

ESRC pays close attention to the cost of processing applications and seeks to streamline and minimise costs wherever possible. This includes using electronic application processes. During 2004–05 it is also, with other Councils, seeking to minimise the information which it requires to review. It has very streamlined proposals for applications below £45,000, giving decisions within 8-14 weeks. Procedures for cross-Council programmes and for international comparative applications, which can be particularly costly, are currently being reviewed to achieve appropriate economies wherever possible.

At the same time ESRC must ensure that the application review process is reasonably thorough, especially as high quality applications at the margin cannot be funded. Systems must be reasonably robust to make appropriate distinctions. Undue economy in the reviewing process could lead to less good scientific decisions, which would reduce value-for-money, and must be avoided.

22. *Do you fund researchers who are not UK nationals? Why/why not?*

Yes, in common with the other Research Councils we do fund researchers who are not UK nationals. Our aim is to fund excellent research at UK institutions; nationality of the researcher is not a factor in this.

FUTURE CHALLENGES

23. *Which areas of social science have been particularly affected by problems with the RAE? To what extent have these problems been resolved by the plans for the 2008 RAE? What further improvements need to be made? How effectively are the Research Councils working together to address these issues?*

As we indicated in our initial submission, we believe that those areas whose output is particularly relevant to policy and professional practice, and activities geared towards engagement with the non-academic users of research, have been disadvantaged by previous RAE rounds. In the context of work relevant to professional practice we have commissioned a good practice review by Professor John Furlong of the Department of Educational Studies at the University of Oxford to inform this debate. We intend to work closely with the funding councils to address these concerns, particularly over the coming year as the individual panels develop their assessment criteria. Issues to consider here will include giving greater weighting to outputs other than articles in refereed journals and the number and role of non-academic members of particular subject panels.

The research councils have worked together closely in identifying and raising these issues and will continue to do so. In particular we will continue to emphasise the importance of not disadvantaging interdisciplinary work and will seek to ensure that the incentives created by the RAE are not in tension with the requirements of the research councils. In this respect we believe it is important that the perceptions and expectations of the research community are clearly addressed well in advance of 2008.

24. *How are you addressing the need to improve the quantitative and linguistic skills of social scientists who are already established researchers? Is there a demand from the research community for ongoing training in these areas?*

The ESRC supports a number of initiatives which aim to improve the quantitative skills of social scientists who are already established researchers. These include:

The ESRC Centre for Applied Social Surveys, which develops and runs a series of modular courses in applied social survey methods and produces associated course materials on the design and conduct of surveys. Between 2000 and 2004 the Centre provided 36 courses totalling 105 teaching days. The number of participants is normally limited to around 20 per course. The majority of the courses have waiting lists and are regularly oversubscribed.

The Research Methods Programme's (RMP) principal aim is to develop quantitative and qualitative methods within the context of substantive research. It is also geared towards the effective dissemination of good practice through a range of related training activities. Many of the 38 projects funded under the programme are now developing and running training courses. The indications to date are that most of the courses have been hugely oversubscribed with a lot of demand for additional provision. For example the Royal Economic Society Easter School in Econometrics has typically had 90 applications for 20 funded places at the School.

The recent ESRC Research Methods Festival, which provided an opportunity for researchers to explore and discuss new methods, was also heavily oversubscribed despite providing places for 600 participants. It is planned to hold this event again in 2006. Through the RMP the Council also makes available 50 training bursaries a year (for up to £1,000) to enable staff in the UK engaged in teaching research methods and supervising research students and contract researchers to undertake training courses to update their skills.

The new £6.5 million National Centre for Research Methods will build on the work of the RMP and will provide a focal point for an integrated programme aimed at promoting a step change in the quality and range of methodological skills and techniques used by the UK Social Science community. We will shortly be announcing the funding of six Centre Nodes which will be responsible for delivering the Centre's training and capacity programme.

The development of the call for the Centre's Nodes was informed by a national consultation exercise. Respondents to this and to our broader consultation on future priorities stressed the need for more training in research methods and for ongoing training throughout researchers' careers. In response to this the Council will announce in early 2005 a new Researcher Development Initiative which will focus on the provision of both generic and subject specific training at intermediate and advanced levels, building on the core provision at the postgraduate level.

In terms of language training we do of course provide additional time and funding for this at doctoral level and are currently developing a new initiative with HEFCE to provide training in Arabic, Chinese and Japanese. At the level of the established researcher we do not at present have any specific schemes but this is something we will be looking at closely in partnership with the funding councils and the institutions themselves.

RESEARCH GRANTS SCHEME

<i>Year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>%</i>
1994–95	878	178	20
1995–96	811	225	28
1996–97	896	181	20
1997–98	958	195	20
1998–99	593	188	32
1999–2000	668	167	25
2000–01	595	209	35
2001–02	676	219	32
2002–03	680	191	28
2003–04	772	267	35

FELLOWSHIPS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>%</i>
1998–99	67	16	24
1999–2000	29	14	48
2000–01	20	14	70
2001–02	58	12	21
2002–03	65	14	22
2003–04	59	16	27

PROGRAMME APPLICATIONS

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Shortlisted</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>%</i>
Science in Society (2)	2003–04	73	24	12	16.4383562
New Security Challenges	2003–04	135	71	21	16
Cultures of Consumption	2002–03	264	47	16	6
E-Society	2002–03	125	42	15	12
Environment and Human Behaviour	2002–03	59	59	15	25
Evolution of Business Knowledge	2002–03	146	20	13	9
PACCIT Link	2002–03	78	33	12	15
Science in Society (1)	2002–03	99	99	15	15
Sustainable Technologies	2002–03	36	16	7	19
Teaching and Learning Phase 3	2002–03	258	56	16	6
Devolution and Constitutional Change (2)	2001–02	147	33	17	12
PACCIT (2)	2001–02	37	11	6	16
Innovative Health Technologies (2)	2001–02	37	37	11	30
Devolution and Constitutional Change (1)	2000–01	142	41	18	13
Evolving Macro Economy (2)	2000–01	45	27	17	38
PACCIT (1)	2000–01	260	37	13	5
Future of Work (2)	2000–01	56	23	8	14
Innovative Health Technologies (1)	2000–01	149	51	20	13
Teaching and Learning (1 and 2)	1999–2000	255	42	17	7
Democracy and Participation	1999–2000	190	55	21	11
Devolution Northern Ireland	1999–2000	21	21	8	38
Devolution Scotland/Wales	1999–2000	71	37	9	13
Devolution London	1999–2000	13	13	5	38
Evolving Macro Economy	1999–2000	42	23	18	43
Future Governance	1999–2000	213	53	31	15
Future of Work (1)	1998–99	221	42	20	9
Growing Older	1998–98	202	49	24	12
One Europe or Several	1998–99	242	44	24	10
Health Variations (2)	1998–99	153	23	13	8
Transnational Communities	1998–99	173	44	19	11
Youth Citizenship and Social Change	1998–99	213	46	15	7
Public Understanding of Science	1998–99	42	42	9	21

<i>Programme</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Shortlisted</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>%</i>
Informal Economic Activities	1997-98	2	2	0	0
GEC Fellowships	1997-98	76	76	9	12
Intellectual Property (2)	1997-98	3	3	1	33
Virtual Society	1997-98	241	51	22	9
Violence	1997-98	243	72	20	8
Children 5-16	1996-97	296	57	22	7
Cities	1996-97	156	53	23	15
Health Variations	1996-97	132	30	13	10
Euro Context of UK Science Pol (2)	1996-97	17	17	6	35
Innovation (2)	1996-97	120	29	12	10
Risk and Human Behaviour	1996-97	172	24	11	6
Cognitive Engineering	1995-96	98	38	15	15
Innovation (1)	1995-96	146	30	13	9
Intellectual Property	1995-96	35	35	11	31
Learning Society	1995-96	328	57	12	4
Media Economics and Media Culture	1995-96	168	48	17	10
GEC Phase 4	1995-96	285	47	22	8
Whitehall Phase 2	1995-96	25	25	7	28
Whitehall	1994-95	112	30	16	14
Pacific Asia	1994-95	173	46	19	11
Euro Context of UK Science Pol (1)	1994-95	90	20	8	9
Macro Economic Modeling	1994-95	15	15	10	67
GEC Phase 4 Starter Grants	1994-95	97	47	14	14

CENTRE APPLICATIONS

<i>Year</i>	<i>Applications</i>	<i>Shortlisted</i>	<i>Awards</i>	<i>%</i>
1995-96	50	10	3	6
1996-97	68	8	2	3
1997-98	44	8	1	2
1998-99	Data unavailable	8	2	-
1999-2000	22	7	2	9
2000-01	46	46	5	11
2001-02	23	22	6	26
2002-03	36	6	2	6
2003-04	12	12	5	42

includes continuations

Annex 2

ESRC RESEARCH COMPETITION 2004: CANDIDATES AND OFFERS BY AGE

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Candidates</i>			<i>Offers</i>			<i>Take-Up</i>		
	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>
Area Studies	13	28	6	3	3	1	3	3	0
Economic and Social History	21	11	4	5	1	1	4	1	1
Economics	44	54	1	8	17	0	8	17	0
Education	15	28	22	2	13	1	2	13	1
Human Geography	52	31	10	14	7	0	14	5	0
Linguistics	12	17	2	7	9	2	7	9	2
Management and Business Studies	31	51	5	16	25	5	15	24	5
Planning	2	8	2	0	3	1	0	3	1
Political Science and International Relations	65	76	6	9	15	1	8	13	1
Psychology	70	75	19	16	13	0	16	12	0
Social Anthropology	12	33	4	4	6	0	3	6	0
Social Policy	14	33	20	2	16	6	2	16	5
Socio-Legal Studies	7	12	2	2	3	1	2	3	1

<i>Subject Area</i>	<i>Candidates</i>			<i>Offers</i>			<i>Take-Up</i>		
	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>	<i>up to 25</i>	<i>26-39</i>	<i>40+</i>
Sociology	46	77	17	15	19	5	15	18	5
Science, Technology and Innovation	14	13	1	10	7	1	10	6	1
Statistics, Computing and Methodology	3	4	0	1	2	0	0	1	0
TOTAL	421	551	121	114	159	25	109	150	23

ISBN 0-215-02097-9



9 780215 020970