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## Review of Research Funding

**RIBA response submitted to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for the review of its method for allocating research funds**

### **Proposal 1**

For the duration of the current RAE funding cycle, we propose to distribute the funds available for the leading 5\* departments between:

- departments rated 5\* in both 1996 and 2001, and
- departments rated 5\* for the first time in 2001 which achieved this without a drop in the number of staff submitted.

We envisage that the amount of grant allocated in this way for 2004-05 will be similar to the £20 million we have allocated for 2003-04.

### **Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 1?**

Neither approve nor disapprove

### **Comments on Proposal 1**

The RIBA understands that HEFCE is required to support the Government's intention to focus resources for research to the very best HE research departments. The RIBA appreciates that the most effective method of identifying leading research departments, without imposing an additional audit requirement, is to use the results of the RAE's 2001 & 1996 exercises.

However, we are concerned about the impact of this policy on the discipline of architecture and the capacity of our schools of architecture to deliver high quality professionally validated courses leading to Chartered membership of the RIBA. We have already expressed to you our unease regarding the outcome of the UoA 33, (Built Environment) in the last RAE for departments of architecture, in that no school of architecture achieved a 5\*. Architecture will therefore be excluded from this concentration of research funding, with a consequential loss of prestige and growth opportunities for the discipline, particularly given the impact of your second proposal for capping funding for 4-rated departments at £118 million. We have already seen the consequence of the policy at one of our leading schools of architecture, where the Institution has decided to close the final two years of the course so that the effort can be put to improving research performance rather than teaching. Our concern is that we may see further reductions to course provision in architecture in research-led institutions as the full impact of resource concentrated is felt in the sector.

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**Proposal 2**

We propose to maintain the sum available for allocation to institutions with 4-rated departments at £118 million, allocated through our present formula. We wish institutions to consider how best to respond to our policy aim for the continuing selective development of promising departments and units. We also propose to maintain our funding for capability in selected subjects until the next RAE, and to keep the list of eligible subjects under review.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 2?**

Disapprove

**Comments on Proposal 2**

Given that the majority of our best performing research departments in architecture are 4-rated, the RIBA is concerned that to cap research funding at £118 million for these departments until 2005-6 will stifle research growth and limit the potential for our schools to build research capacity with the profession. The RIBA strongly supports the view that architecture should be included in the list of selective subjects eligible for additional support on the basis that research in architecture has not had an opportunity to develop a distinctive and authoritative research base on its own terms.

**Proposal 3**

The Government has earmarked £8 million for additional capital support for the leading research institutions. We propose to allocate this by formula to four institutions with the greatest amount of high quality research (using the same measure of research income as for SRIF). This funding will be subject to satisfying ourselves that these institutions have strong and appropriate management and governance arrangements.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 3?**

Neither approve nor disapprove

**Comments on Proposal 3**

Again, the RIBA is concerned about the impact of this policy on the discipline of architecture. Concentrating additional capital support in four leading institutions, (we assume these are Oxbridge, Imperial and one other), given that no school of architecture achieved a 5\* in the last RAE, may result in the exclusion of the architecture from this 'magic circle' of high – performing internationally acknowledged research-led institution, with a consequential impact on the discipline.

The UK has an enviable reputation in the training & education of architects. This is reflected in the achievements of our architects world-wide, and our success in recruiting overseas students to study architecture in the UK, (22% of first year students in architecture were from overseas in 2002). Our reputation in research is equally cutting edge, but failed to be recognised as such in the last RAE, due in part, we feel, to the composition, terms of reference and method of working of UoA 33. The effect of the concentration of research funding, whilst understood in terms of meeting Government intentions, could have a disastrous impact on the coherence and international reputation of our discipline.

**Proposal 4**

We will use the Strategic Development Fund actively to promote substantial research collaborations, and propose to seek opportunities for 'mainstreaming' collaboration through the design of other funding streams. We welcome suggestions for what more we might do to recognise and support collaborative activity through the RAE and QR funding.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 4?**

No comment

**Proposal 5**

We propose to establish a Promising Researcher Fellowship Scheme. In designing the scheme we will look for ways to encourage lasting collaborative relationships between HEIs.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 5?**

Approve

**Comments on Proposal 5**

We support the comment made in para. 41 regarding the concerns of 4-rated departments in less research-intensive institutions that this scheme could lead to researchers being lost to higher rated departments. We encourage you to devise a scheme where promising researchers can be supported within a diversity of institutions, thereby helping to build research capacity in less research-intensive institutions.

**Proposal 6**

We propose from 2005-06 to pull together the Council's supervision fund grant for students on research degree programmes into a single stream within the block grant for research; and to pay this at a level reflecting a study of RDP costs to be conducted in the meantime. We also propose to investigate further the options for maintaining the level of grant per student and for supporting collaborative provision.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 6?**

No comment

**Proposal 7**

We propose to cease counting numbers of postgraduate research students within the QR volume measure with effect from 2005-06.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 7?**

No comment

**Proposal 8**

We propose to move towards funding arrangements following the next RAE in which all of the minor volume indicators are eliminated, and the treatment of charity funding better reflects our policy aims and the imperative for sustainability. In the meantime we propose to prevent significant growth in the amount of QR funding allocated using each of the indicators as set out above.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 8?**

No Comment

**Proposal 9**

We propose to review the basis for subject weightings and to calculate new weightings to be used after the next RAE. We welcome views on how this might be done. We do not propose to undertake further work on a possible policy factor to be incorporated in our allocations, unless a significant number of our partners and stakeholders feel that this now merits further investigation.

**Do you approve or disapprove of Proposal 9?**

No Comment

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Royal Institute of British Architects  
November 2003