

A summary of the proposals for UK research within the Higher Education and Research Bill

This document provides a summary and illustration of the proposed changes to UK research, based on the available information within the Higher Education and Research Bill and White Paper *Success as a Knowledge Economy*. The National Academies have produced this to support parliamentary scrutiny of the Bill to ensure the best outcomes for research.

Background

In 2014, the Coalition government published a UK science and innovation strategy. In this they commissioned two reviews – one by Sir Paul Nurse on how the research councils can support research most effectively, and one by Dame Ann Dowling of business-university research collaborations. The Dowling review was published in July 2015.

After the general election, the Conservative government consulted on proposals for the future of research, higher education and innovation, including a Teaching Excellence Framework and making changes to the UK's research landscape in a Green Paper *Fulfilling our Potential* in November 2015. The Nurse review of Research Councils was published shortly afterwards in November 2015.

In the 2015 Autumn Statement, the government announced that it would be taking forward the recommendations of the Nurse review. Government also announced that it would look to integrate Innovate UK in the new body proposed by Nurse. This announcement was followed by a government consultation on the proposal in February 2016.

On 16 May, the government published a White Paper on higher education, *Success as a Knowledge Economy* confirming plans to improve teaching quality and changes to the structures that govern and fund research and innovation in the UK including:

- Introducing a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) to link funding to the quality of teaching in universities.
- Creating a new market regulator of higher and further education and alternative providers, the 'Office for Students', in place of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), and creating a research and innovation funding body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI).
 - UKRI will incorporate the functions of nine Councils, each led by an Executive Chair and with delegated autonomy and authority.
 - Seven of the Councils will reflect the functions of the existing Research Councils, one will reflect the functions of Innovate UK and one, Research England, the research funding and knowledge exchange functions that are currently performed by HEFCE.
 - The UKRI board will have responsibility for overall strategic direction, cross-cutting decision making and advising the Secretary of State on the balance of funding between research disciplines.
- The paper restated the government's commitment to the Haldane Principle, and its intention to put in place legislative protection for the dual support system in England.

John Kingman has been appointed as interim Chair of UKRI. He will both set up the new organisation in shadow form and lead the search for a CEO. He was previously Second Permanent Secretary to the HM Treasury.

On 19 May, the Government introduced the Higher Education and Research Bill to the Commons that includes primary legislation intended to make these changes.

Following the EU referendum, Jo Johnson confirmed in a speech on Thursday 30 June that the government will continue to take forward the Higher Education and Research Bill. He also highlighted the role of UKRI going forward:

“I have no doubt that the formation of UKRI will provide indispensable support to our research and innovation leadership during this period of change in our relationship with the European Union. Now, more than ever, as these communities face new challenges, we need a strong and unified voice to represent your interests across government, across Europe and around the world.”

Key concepts

UK research and dual support

The UK has a dual support system for research where much public funding flows through two complementary streams, one of which supports specific research projects and the other provides general funding for higher education institutions. Currently, the former is disbursed by the 7 Research Councils and the latter through HEFCE and its devolved counterparts: the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for the Economy in Northern Ireland (DfE NI).

The proposed reforms would bring the 7 Research Councils and the England only research funding functions of HEFCE, in the form of Research England, into one umbrella body, UKRI, that also incorporates Innovate UK. SFC, HEFCW and DfE NI would remain the same, sitting outside UKRI.

It is intended that as part of the proposed integration of Innovate UK into UKRI, Innovate UK will retain its distinctive business focus and separate funding scheme.

The Haldane Principle

The Higher Education and Research White Paper commits the Government to enshrining in legislation the Haldane Principle. The principle means that decisions on individual research proposals are best taken by researchers themselves through peer review by committees of experts. Ministers provide overall strategic direction for funding, while experts identify exactly which research proposals should be supported as those at the cutting edge of their field are best placed to make such technical decisions.

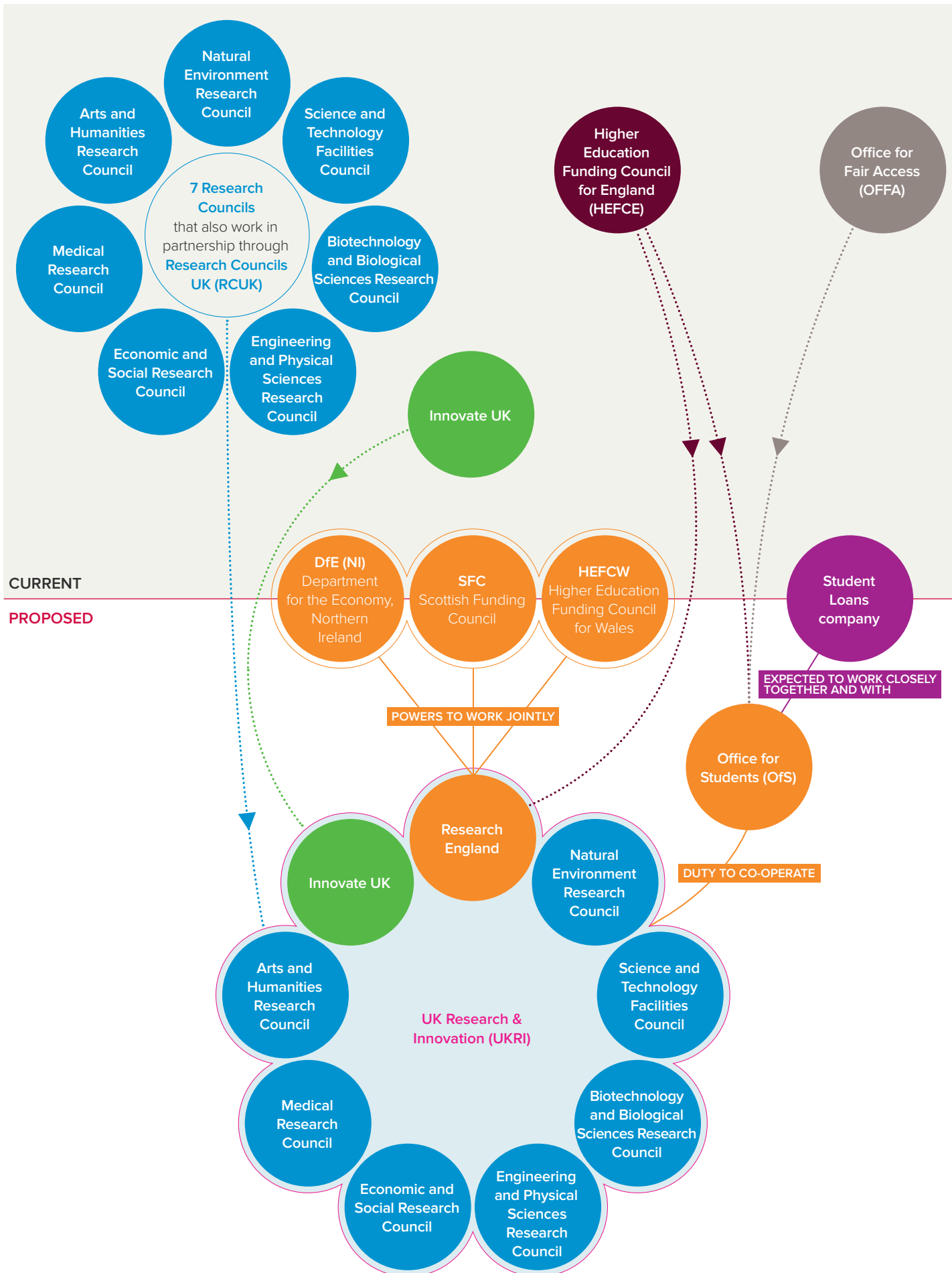
New providers

At present the process for creating a new higher education institution from scratch is lengthy. Degree awarding powers currently take at least six years to obtain, with courses initially needing to be validated by an existing higher education provider. The government is proposing a risk-based system where the OfS can grant provisional degree awarding powers as soon as they are satisfied that the conditions of being an approved provider are met. A new provider could be granted full awarding powers once they have a 3 year track record. The government is also proposing to make it easier for an institution to achieve a university title.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The government's proposed TEF is intended to encourage higher education institutions to raise standards in their teaching. TEF panels will assess institutions based on common metrics including student satisfaction and additional evidence provided by the institutions. The exact details are currently being consulted on. Institutions will be awarded a TEF level and will be able to raise their fees by RPI inflation or a proportion of it. A TEF award will last three years, with a history-blind model in place where institutions' fee levels can rise to the new top level or fall back to £9,000 depending on the level awarded.

UK higher education, research and innovation current and prospective landscape



Innovate UK

Function Business-facing public support for innovation including the Catapult network

Governance Chief Executive, non-Executive Chair, Governing Board

Remit UK-wide

7 Research Councils

Function Support excellent research that has an impact on the growth, prosperity and wellbeing of the UK

Governance Chief Executive, Chair, Council

Remit UK-wide

Research Councils UK (RCUK)

Function Optimise the ways that Research Councils work together to deliver their goals. It is not a separate legal entity

Governance RCUK Strategic Executive led by the Research Council Chief Executives

Remit UK-wide

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)

Function Funding and regulation of higher education in England, including capital and grant funding, Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF), knowledge exchange, and quality assurance. Also works with devolved funding councils on the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Governance Chair, Chief Executive, Board

Remit England-only

Office for Fair Access (OFFA)

Function Independent body regulating fair access to higher education and widening participation in England

Governance Director of Fair Access to Higher Education and Advisory Group

Remit England-only

HEFCW, SFC, DfE (NI)

Function Responsible for funding and regulation of higher education in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively

Governance Varies between organisations. Their structure and function would be unchanged by the proposals

Remit Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland respectively

UK Research & Innovation (UKRI)

Function Single research and innovation funding body including 9 Councils: the 7 Research Councils, Innovate UK and Research England

Governance Board (CEO, CFO, Chair, 9 – 12 representatives of academia and industry). Each Council headed by an Executive Chair with 5 – 9 ordinary Council Members

Remit UK-wide (with exception of Research England)

Innovate UK (a Council of UKRI)

Function Business-facing public support for innovation including the Catapult network.

Governance Executive Chair with 5 – 9 ordinary Council Members.

Remit UK-wide.

7 Research Councils (Councils of UKRI)

Function Support excellent research that has an impact on the growth, prosperity and wellbeing of the UK

Governance Executive Chair with 5 – 9 ordinary Council Members

Research England (a Council of UKRI)

Function Takes over the England-only funding of research and knowledge exchange formerly performed by HEFCE (working with OfS on HEIF). Also works with devolved funding councils on the Research Excellence Framework (REF)

Governance Executive Chair with 5 – 9 ordinary Council Members

Remit England-only

Office for Students (OfS)

Function Single market regulator of higher education providers including new entrants, Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), allocating teaching grants, fair access and widening participation in England

Governance Board (Chief Executive, Chair, non-Executive Board Members)

Remit England-only

This map provides a high-level overview of the changes proposed to government support for research and innovation in the 2016 Higher Education Research White Paper and Bill. Many of the details of the current structures have not been included for clarity. The proposed changes are based exclusively on the White Paper and Bill, and many further details remain to be determined by Parliamentary and other processes. Other governmental sources of support for science and innovation, being largely unaffected by the Bill, have not been included.

About the Academies

The Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society are working together to highlight the value of research and innovation to the UK, and to support researchers, industry and policy makers to make the UK the location of choice for world class research, development and innovation. We are working with our research communities to maximize the value of research funding and to support the translation of knowledge into benefits for individuals and society at large.

For further information

The Royal Society

Becky Purvis, Head of Public Affairs

T 020 7451 2261 / 07703 700097

E becky.purvis@royalsociety.org

Royal Academy of Engineering

Dr Helen Ewles, Research Policy Advisor

T 020 7766 0659

E helen.ewles@raeng.org.uk

British Academy

Jonathan Matthews, Policy Manager
(Higher Education)

T 020 7969 5214

E j.matthews@britac.ac.uk

Academy of Medical Sciences

Dr Ben Bleasdale, Policy Officer

T 020 3141 3219

E ben.bleasdale@acmedsci.ac.uk