

Philip Augar
Review of Post-18 Education and Funding
Department for Education
20 Great Smith St
Westminster
London
SW1P 3BT

By email: post18review.evidence@education.gov.uk

15 November 2018

Dear Philip,

Re: Review of Post-18 Education and Funding – further clarification

The Royal Society previously made a submission to the Review of Post-18 Education and Funding on 1 May 2018. We are now writing to follow up in light of recent speculation in the media about potential outcomes from the Review.

As we said in our original submission, the demand for science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) skills and for competency in mathematics, computing, data analysis and machine learning in particular, is growing and the nation's economy depends on its delivery.

The government will not be able to deliver its commitment to increase overall investment into UK R&D to 2.4% of GDP by 2027 and a longer term goal of 3% – a considerable increase in R&D underway in the UK - without increasing the research capacity of the UK's research workforce. This will require more STEM graduates.

Recent speculation that the Review may suggest major changes to student numbers or will recommend different fee levels for different subjects could affect the number of students enrolling for STEM degrees. Anything that is likely to dissuade young people from studying STEM subjects will starve our economy of the skills that are vital to the UK's future. The opportunity to pursue a career in STEM needs to be open to everyone, and increased fees for STEM subjects could well turn away many highly talented people from less privileged backgrounds. The Review should very carefully consider the possible impact of any changes to the system on both the numbers and demographics of people who take up STEM, looking at any available evidence before making any such recommendation.

The Royal Society is resolutely opposed to any changes that are likely to result in STEM degrees appearing less attractive to our young people.

Yours sincerely,



Venki Ramakrishnan
President, The Royal Society

cc

The Rt Hon Theresa May MP – Prime Minister

The Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP - Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Rt Hon Damian Hinds MP - Secretary of State for Education

The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP - Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

Sam Gyimah MP - Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation

Dr Patrick Vallance - Government Chief Scientific Adviser and Head of Government Science and Engineering Profession