

Amanda Solloway MP
Minister for Science, Research and Innovation
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy
1 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0ET

23 June 2021

Dear Minister

People and Culture Strategy – the need for a joined-up approach crossing academia and industry

I write to you as Chair of the Royal Society's Science, Industry and Translation Committee to offer some reflections on the R&D People and Culture Strategy as a follow up to [Sir Adrian Smith's letter of 3 June](#) on the UK's offer to research talent and our Research System Community of Interest meeting on 8 June which we were delighted you could attend.

Given that industry accounts for two-thirds of the UK's total R&D investment, our ability to mobilise business and enterprise will be critical to maximising the impact of the People and Culture Strategy, and I know that this will be recognised by Government. The perception among colleagues however is that industry is often overlooked in discussions on creating an optimal environment for people working in R&D, while problems specific to academia, though important to address, seem to dominate.

To create the optimal working environment in UK R&D, we need to take a holistic view of culture, not just in and around academia but across industry where the majority of the R&D workforce is based.

A joined-up integrated People and Culture Strategy will place high value on strengthening linkages between sectors in support of wider Government objectives around innovation, levelling-up, and building back better. The benefits of taking a holistic approach are not just to those working in R&D but to people and places across the UK.

When academia and industry collaborate effectively, they are able to translate discoveries into societal gains – a prime example being the COVID-19 vaccine response. The culture in which collaborations take place is fundamental to their success or failure and should be a central focus of the Strategy.

On the skills and training agenda, we need greater emphasis on developing researchers for jobs in industry and at the interface with academia. This reflects the reality that [the majority of PhD holders \(70%\) go on to work outside academia](#) after graduating. As outlined in Sir Adrian's letter of 3 June, provision for industrial placements within doctoral training programmes and studentships must be protected and expanded.

The Strategy should also commit to review incentives for knowledge exchange and mobility between sectors where it is clear the UK still lags behind other countries. Existing initiatives, such as the Royal Society's Industry Fellowships and Entrepreneur in Residence (EiR) scheme, could be used as models of best practice and/or upscaled to increase their impact and reach.



President Sir Adrian Smith
Executive Director Dr Julie Maxton CBE

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We know from the EiR scheme that problems with research culture are often locally specific. We should use the feedback loop from such programmes to identify challenges and work out how best to address them.

As you made clear at the Community of Interest meeting, the publication of the Strategy is only the beginning of the journey for enhancing UK research culture. The hard part is in the implementation, which I know the Royal Society and others in the sector stand ready to support.

If you would like further input at this moment in time, we would be very happy to assist.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sue Ion', followed by a period.

Dame Sue Ion DBE FREng FRS
Chair, Science, Industry and Translation Committee