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Joint submission from the Academy of Medical Sciences, the British Academy, the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Royal Society to the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee inquiry on an immigration system that works for science and innovation

The UK National Academies welcome the opportunity to respond to the Committee's inquiry into an immigration system that works for science and innovation. The remits of our four Academies cover medicine, the humanities and social sciences, the natural sciences and engineering. Each organisation is a self-governing Fellowship. Our Fellows include over 5,000 of the world's most distinguished researchers across a broad range of disciplines in academia, industry, charities and the public sector. We are working together to support researchers, industry and policy makers to make the UK the location of choice for world class research, development and innovation. This short submission seeks to highlight the importance of ensuring that the immigration system works for research and innovation across the full range of disciplines that we represent.

Research excellence and innovation flourish when researchers collaborate and work across borders. The UK excels at this. UK research and innovation excellence draws extensively on collaboration with colleagues in other EU Member States and around the world. A survey of Fellows and grant recipients of the UK National Academies revealed that 95% of respondents had been part of at least one international collaboration in the previous five years.¹ UK-based researchers most frequently partner with researchers from the US, with seven EU countries also among the UK's top ten collaborators.²

Following the UK's departure from the EU, the National Academies have called for a continued close association with European research and innovation programmes. It will be essential that the UK's future immigration system is designed to realise this.

An immigration system that works for science and innovation must enable the UK to both retain and attract talented people to study or take up permanent or limited-tenure positions. It must also facilitate the short-term visits for conferences, collaborations or exchanges that are fundamental to the practice of research.

The UK will need to attract and retain highly-skilled people to UK academia to underpin business, industry and research, which are key components of a modern economy and industrial strategy. Strategically valuable individuals include not just successful leaders in research fields, but the early-stage researchers, technologists and technicians with specialist expertise that support them, as well as the students that learn from them.

It will be equally important to maintain the opportunities UK nationals presently have to work elsewhere in the EU and around the world. This is because the UK benefits from researchers being able to work overseas to develop expertise and networks, which they then bring back to the UK.³

Furthermore, the wider, global system should be streamlined so as to improve the speed and efficiency of immigration processes. This would decrease the administrative burden, enhance cutting

¹ The role of international collaboration and mobility in research; Findings from a qualitative and quantitative study with Fellows and grant recipients of the Royal Society, British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Academy of Medical Sciences; Opinion Leader, March 2017

² The Royal Society, 2016 UK research and the European Union: The role of the EU in international research collaboration and researcher mobility. Data & Analysis: Thomson Reuters, with some additional analyses by The Royal Society.

³ International mobility of researchers, A review of the literature; Rand, commissioned by the Royal Society, 2017

edge research and make us more competitive in the global market for talent. Any new system should be fair, transparent and efficient.

Further information can be found in the UK National Academies' submissions to the Migration Advisory Committee.