

Recommendations of the Review Steering Group to the Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh

The recommendations of the Steering Group to the Council of the Royal Society of Edinburgh concerning the Personal Research and Support Fellowships schemes are set out below. They follow on from the evidence provided by the independent review conducted by Dr Alison Graham. The underlying concept behind the recommendations is the need to retain and attract outstanding talent within an overall Scottish environment.

1) Accordingly, the recommendations of the Steering Group are that:-

- i) the Scottish Executive accepts the need for future schemes to operate on the basis of full economic costing (fEC) and provide additional funding accordingly, in order not to jeopardise the relative attractiveness of the scheme for HEI's and other Research Institutes in Scotland.
- ii) *at the very least* Council should seek to maintain the number of Personal Research fellowships at 3 per year. In the opinion of the Steering Group, a smaller number would neither be viable nor cost effective.
- iii) in the judgement of the Steering Group the success of the Personal Research Fellowships Programme to date will not be sustained in quality terms without significant enhancements to the scheme

2) The Steering Group considers that the goal of the Personal Research Fellowship scheme should in future be defined as:-

'To create conditions to attract those with outstanding potential and conducive to their becoming research leaders, establishing their careers in Scotland and making long term contributions to the Science base and its application in Scotland.'

3) To achieve this goal, the recommendations of the Steering Group concerning the main provisions of the Personal Research Fellowships scheme are that:-

- i) The duration of the fellowship should be increased to 4 years as a minimum in order to:
 - make the Fellowships competitive with other comparable schemes
 - provide time to allow Fellows to make grant applications to Research Councils
 - reduce the pressure to begin to search for a permanent position early on in the tenure of the Fellowship
 - give time to become established in Scotland and so become familiar with Scottish culture and lifestyle
 - maximise attractiveness for people who, at the time of application, are working outside Scotland
 - facilitate the possibility for the supervision of graduate students

ii) The number of awards made annually should be increased to 6 in the first instance in order to:

- raise the visibility of the scheme
- make the number of Fellowships offered more consistent with the rest of the UK
- increase the pool of potential academics and researchers within Scotland
- satisfy demand (The Group was told, for example, that historically at least 6 quality researchers per year could have been appointed.)

The Group was assured that the current level of administration could cope with 6 appointments without significant extra cost.

4) Despite the success of the Support Fellowship programme, the view of the Steering Group is that funding at a level to cover fEC is of lower priority than that for the Personal Fellowship scheme.

5) The Steering Group is strongly of the view that partnerships with institutions should be built into the schemes in order to provide routes to an open ended contract of employment, (tenure track), for Personal Research Fellows. In the view of the Steering Group such appointments will help to attract and retain outstanding talent within Scottish Institutions.

6) The Steering Group wishes to ensure that Personal Research Fellows are eligible under both institutional procedures and those of the main research funders to apply for research funding in their own right.

It therefore recommends that Council should identify the advantages to the HEIs and Research Institutes of partnerships. Since the Research Councils (RCs) allow Royal Society University Research Fellows to apply for research funding in their own right, the Steering Group would expect that RCs would be equally receptive to a formal approach from the RSE.

7) The Steering Group applauds the manner in which Fellowships are awarded and, in particular the minimum of bureaucracy involved. It considers that no procedural changes are required. However, Council may wish to consider:-

- i) ways in which communication about the scheme can be promoted with a view to attracting outstanding candidates who will maximise the scientific base in Scotland
- ii) reviewing the ways in which guidance is given to candidates, referees, assessors and the host organisation
- iii) how the management, review and audit of the scheme can be strengthened without creating unnecessary bureaucracy.

8) The Steering Group recommends that Council give consideration to the special needs of the Arts and Humanities, given their importance to Scottish heritage and tourism. The Steering Group did not feel that models for funding the arts and humanities would necessarily follow those appropriate for science, engineering and technology, but within the time-frame available it had not been possible to consider this matter in detail.

9) Council may wish to consider the human resources required by the RSE for the effective implementation of proposals for the transition to fEC and any subsequent audit requirements.