Overview 2
MAJOR CHEMISTRY FUNDING BODIES IN UK 4
Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, EPSRC 4
The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, BBSRC 7
Natural Environment Research Council, NERC 7
Medical Research Council, MRC 7

CHEMISTRY RESEARCH FUNDING SCENE IN UK

OVERVIEW

Public funding for research in UK higher education institutions is provided from two separate sources – the UK higher education Funding Councils and the Research Councils. These two funding sources together constitute the "dual support system" for research. Under this system, the research funding provided by the Funding Councils supports the basic infrastructure which institutions require in order to undertake research – staff, equipment and facilities. The funding provided by the Research Councils supports specific research projects, selected on the basis of competitive peer review.

Research Councils UK (RCUK) is a strategic partnership through which the UK's eight Research Councils work together to champion the research, training and innovation they support.

The Research Councils are the main public investors in fundamental research in the UK with interests ranging from bio-medicine and particle physics to the environment, engineering and economic research. RCUK works alongside the Office of Science & Technology (OST) to support the UK's finest academic researchers and to ensure the best investment of public money in research.

The Research Councils are the main public investors in fundamental research in the UK with interests ranging from bio-medicine and particle physics to the environment, engineering and economic research. RCUK works alongside the Office of Science & Technology (OST) to support the UK's finest academic researchers and to ensure the best investment of public money in research.

Each of the eight UK Research Councils are established under Royal Charter. The Councils fulfil the objectives set out by Government in the White Paper "Realising our Potential" (1993). Statutory control of the Councils is exercised by the Department of Trade & Industry, supported by the Director-General of Research Councils, Professor Sir Keith O'Nions, within the Office of Science & Technology.

The UK Research Councils are:

- Arts & Humanities Research Council
- Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council
- Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils
- Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council
- Economic & Social Research Council
- Medical Research Council
- Natural Environment Research Council
- Particle Physics & Astronomy Research Council

Most of the Research Councils have their headquarters at Polaris House, Swindon, as does the Research Councils UK Secretariat. The MRC's headquarters is in London, while CCLRC's is at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory (near Didcot).

The Research Councils also jointly sponsor the UK Research Office. The office promotes UK participation in European Community research and higher education programmes.

The Government's Quinquennial Review of the Grant Awarding Research Councils (QQR) in 2001 recommended that a new high level strategy group be established to enhance the collective leadership and influence of the Research Councils and secure greater strategic coordination in the funding of science. The review also concluded that:

- The Councils need to develop a clearer identity and purpose, whereby they will be able to establish stronger links with the other major science funding organisations, including the funding councils, Government departments and the major charities; and

- A closer relationship is needed between the Councils and other key stakeholders, including the universities and the business and public service organisations which use their research and expertise.

In response to the QQR's findings and the Quinquennial Review of the Council of the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (April 2002) a new venture Research Councils UK was launched on 1 May 2002. The venture was led by the Research Councils UK Strategy Group. The membership and terms of reference of this group comprised the Chief Executives of the eight Research Councils and the Director General of the Research Councils.

The main funding bodies for basic chemistry research in the UK are the following:

- EPSRC – Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
- BBSRC – Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council
- MRC – Medical Research Council
- NERC – Natural Environment Research Council

MAJOR CHEMISTRY FUNDING BODIES IN UK

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council, EPSRC
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon, SN2 1ET
Contact: Mr. John BAIRD, Programme Manager Chemistry
Phone Switchboard: +44 (0) 1793 444000
EPSRC Helpline: +44 (0)1793 444100
Email: infoline@epsrc.ac.uk
http://www.epsrc.ac.uk/default.htm

The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) is the UK Government's leading funding agency for research and training in engineering and the physical sciences. EPSRC invests aound £500 million a year in a broad range of subjects – from mathematics to materials science, and from information technology to structural engineering. EPSRC operates to meet the needs of industry and society by working in partnership with universities to invest in people and scientific discovery and innovation. Its work is complementary to other research investors including other research councils, government agencies, industry and the European Union.

EPSRC is a non-departmental governmental public body (NDPB), funded by the Government through the Department of Trade and Industry's Office of Science and Technology. It is one of seven Research Councils funded by the Government and works collectively with those Councils on issues of common concern via Research Councils UK.

EPSRC senior decision making body is the EPSRC Council which is responsible for determining policy, priorities and strategy. A Resource Audit Committee reviews the administrative effectiveness of EPSRC and reports to Council on these matters.

EPSRC receives advice from two independent bodies, the Technical Opportunities Panel (TOP) and the User Panel (UP). TOP membership is drawn predominantly from the academic sector whereas UP membership is drawn from the EPSRC user sectors, including industry, commerce, government and education. These advisory bodies provide advice from the academic and commercial/industrial perspective respectively.

EPSRC's yearly average funding budget for chemistry is around 36 million pounds for research and 10 million pounds for training (mainly at doctoral/PhD level). This is the budget for the Chemistry Programme, but this does not cover the entire remit/subject/discipline of Chemistry. Within EPSRC the subject/discipline of Chemistry is supported by other Programme areas, such as the Materials Programme, the Life Sciences Interface Programme, the Engineering Programme and the Physics Programme. This joined up approach to funding research caters very well for interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research and allows new and upcoming areas to be developed.

Main characteristics of funding policy and procedures

EPSRC funds basic research, although it does sponsor Technology Transfer activities such as *'Knowledge Transfer Partnerships'*. The involvement of an industrial partner is not mandatory, but very desirable.

The drive for projects is mainly bottom up. EPSRC's Chemistry programme operates mainly in responsive mode (80%). This means applicants can submit a proposal in any area at any time. Around 20% of the budget is focused on managed activities. The focus in these is to target certain areas, (such as Green Chemistry, High Throughput Technologies, Adventurous Chemistry, Chemical Engineering/Chemistry interface). These focused activities tend to be 'top down', but arise from consultation with the community etc.

EPRC funds individual researchers as well as small groups. For the Chemistry Programme about 80% of the funds are 'responsive' to individual research grants and 20% to coordinated projects.

Projects proposals have to be written in English. There is no deadline for submission of proposals in the responsive mode whereas the managed (or coordinated) activities do have a deadline. Electronic submission is possible, although at the moment it is not mandatory. The use of e-submission is encouraged and the UK's Research Councils are acting together to harmonise processes and procedures (see https://je-s.rcuk.ac.uk/eforms/secure/login.asp for further details). The average processing time between submission and decision of a proposal is about 18 weeks. Peer review depends on obtaining sufficient constructive comments from referees.

EPSRC's research grants provide funds to meet the direct costs of a research project, together with a contribution to the indirect costs of the research organization. Salary costs of principal investigators and premises costs are excluded. Applications are made at current prices (including VAT where applicable), with no allowance for inflation. The funds awarded will include a sum to take account of expected inflation and anticipated future pay awards over the duration of the grant.

Costs are divided into the following headings:

- Staff
- Travel and Subsistence
- Consumables
- Exceptional Items
- Equipment
- Large Capital
- Public Communication Training Funds
- Indirect Costs
- Services

Certain items are NOT eligible costs. These are known as 'Inadmissible Costs'. Inadmissible costs are those items that the EPSRC expect the applicant's organization to provide from its own resources or from the indirect addition.

The following costs will not be funded:

- Salaries of all academic staff
- Building and premises costs including:
    - construction and maintenance of buildings including animal houses and glass houses
    - land purchase/lease;
    - refurbishment/renovation/adaptation;
    - basic services and utilities, heating, lighting and communications;
    - office furnishings;
    - lease/rent/rates;
    - insurance;
    - cleaning/portering/security/safety

- Teaching and demonstration fees
- Staff facilities
- Public relations
- Recruitment and advertising costs
- Hospitality
- General office consumables, such as stationery and photocopying
- Basic laboratory consumables
- Purchase of vehicles
- Redundancy benefit
- Utilities costs, such as telephone and electricity unless exceeding the thresholds set out in Exceptional Items and separately metered
- Central and distributed computing including flat-rate and per capita charges for use of computer networks
- Other costs not specifically related to or justified for the project

Over the 12 month period March 03 to April 04 success rates were 34% by number and 40% by value.

Project Evaluation is always conducted by peer review. Most of EPSRC's peer review is undertaken by a 'College' of almost 4000 research active people who have been nominated by the respective communities. They include industrialists and overseas people. Strategic Advisory Teams (SATs) have been established to provide greater visibility and recognition to the input from the external community. They provide strategic advice to EPSRC on the research and training elements of particular programmes, paying particular attention to multidisciplinary opportunities.

EPSRC also makes occasional use of Visiting Panels comprising of externally nominated members to provide an independent view on principal business systems (for example, business planning, peer review, evaluation). Referees and panel members are anonymous, although membership of the ad hoc panels are published on the EPSRC website 21 days after the panel meeting.

Project outcome is assessed through a final report (Individual Grant Review) which is peer reviewed.

EPSRC is possibly interested in participating in transnational research funding programmes, but this would need to be discussed with the colleagues in EPSRC's International Section.

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, BBSRC
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon, SN2 1UH
Phone Switchboard: +44 (0) 1793 413200
Central Fax: +44 (0)1793 413201
Email: firstname.lastname@bbsrc.ac.uk
http://www.bbsrc.ac.uk/

The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) is the UK's principal funder of basic and strategic biological research. To deliver its mission, BBSRC supports research and research training in universities and research centres throughout the UK, including BBSRC - sponsored institutes; and promotes knowledge transfer from research to applications in business, industry and policy, and public engagement in the biosciences.

BBSRC, a non-departmental public body, is one of eight Research Councils supported through the Science Budget by the Department of Trade and Industry via the Office of Science and Technology. BBSRC works with partner Research Councils through Research Councils UK.

Natural Environment Research Council, NERC
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon, SN2 1EU
Phone: +44 (0)1793 411500
Fax: +44 (0)1793) 411501
Email: username@nerc.ac.uk
http://www.nerc.ac.uk/

The United Kingdom's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) provides independent research and training in the environmental sciences. NERC is the research council that does earth system science, covering the full range of atmospheric, earth, terrestrial and aquatic sciences, from the depth of the oceans to the upper atmosphere.

NERC uses a budget of about 220 million pounds a year to fund scientific research in universities and at its own sites. About 2,700 people are employed in NERC research centres and a further 1,800 are funded annually through a variety of research and training awards in university departments and other bodies.

Medical Research Council, MRC
20 Park Crescent
London W1B 1AL
Phone: +44 (0)20 7636 5422
Fax: +44 (0)20 7436 6179
Email: firstname.surname@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk; corporate@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk
http://www.mrc.ac.uk/

The UK Medical Research Council (MRC) is a national organisation funded by the UK taxpayer. MRC promotes research into all areas of medical and related science with the aims of improving the health and quality of life of the UK public and contributing to the wealth of the nation.

The MRC supports basic biomedical research and health services and public health research through its own institutes, e.g. like the Max-Planck-Gesellschaft (MPG) and by awarding grants to universities and medical schools. Universities receive most of their funding from the Higher Education Funding councils.

The MRC is funded by the UK Government and receives an annual Grant in aid from Parliament via the Office of Science and Technology, which is now part of the Department of Trade and Industry. Working through its Council, scientific boards, and committees, the MRC is independent in its choice of which research to support. It does however work in close partnership with Health Departments, other Research Councils, industry and others to identify and respond to current and future health needs.