

## Future of Aimhigher: response form for comments

This form is available on the web with the main document at [www.hefce.ac.uk](http://www.hefce.ac.uk) under Publications. Please complete the electronic version, and e-mail it to [aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk](mailto:aimhigher@hefce.ac.uk) by midday on **Monday 27 June 2005**.

In the interests of transparency, and in the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act, we will make all responses publicly available, unless we consider that there is a risk that they might breach legislation. Responses will be anonymous.

Name: .....Mrs Libby Steele, Manager, Professional Education and Development.....

? Individual response.

! Response on behalf of the following group or organisation:

Aimhigher National Activity – **Royal Society of Chemistry**.....

### Response from the Royal Society of Chemistry

The RSC is the largest organisation in Europe for advancing the chemical sciences. Supported by a network of 45,000 members worldwide and an internationally acclaimed publishing business, our activities span education and training, conferences and science policy, and the promotion of the chemical sciences to the public.

In 2004 the RSC orchestrated the development of a bid to HEFCE for Aimhigher National project funding and was successful in securing funding for a two year pilot project.

*Chemistry: The Next Generation* is a project to promote chemistry to school students who are currently under represented in higher education. A consortium from the chemical community secured almost £1 million from the HEFCE Aimhigher National Activity initiative, to develop and deliver innovative outreach activities to motivate and excite students to take up undergraduate courses in chemical sciences. Another objective of the project is to initiate effective regional and national collaboration between universities, between universities and industry and to ensure clear access to resource to do this at the subject level. Further information is available at [www.rsc.org/outreach](http://www.rsc.org/outreach)

*The major concern with the proposal is that of devolving funds into schools. This fragmentation of the money may mean that the impact (value for money) could be reduced. Individual schools could go down the route of reinventing wheels and building on good practice could be lost. Subjects like chemistry may not be a priority in this sort of system. Often in schools, the number of students taking chemistry and related subjects is far outweighed by humanities and business studies so funding could be diverted to these areas..*

## Response template

### Section 1: The changing context: schools, further, and higher education

- a. **What is the distinctive contribution of Aimhigher in the new context? To what extent is it still an important part of the widening participation landscape?**

*Not sure*

- b. **Given the new funding arrangements, what are the risks and opportunities for partnerships? How great are they?**

*Aimhigher has been an important vehicle in promoting links between schools and colleges and HEIs in delivering widening participation. The new context does not appear to explicitly continue to promote such links and would not appear to fund any national projects This will have specific detrimental effects for Chemistry and other subjects of strategic importance (e.g. physics, engineering)*

*The profile of chemistry will be difficult to raise in areas where there is little HE chemistry provision.*

*By dispersing the funding to individual schools there is a great risk that the impact of the funding will be greatly reduced. Economy of scale will be lost and the monitoring will become very burdensome and costly.*

- C Can Aimhigher develop a successful 'brokering' role, bringing different programmes and initiatives together?**

*There has been some brokering taking place but with the devolvement of the funds to individual schools there will not be the need to work through an overarching organisation.*

*Chemistry: The Next Generation has been exploring links to the other national projects (e.g. Achievability, The Brightside Trust and the HE gateway and the London Thematics) and based on these experiences it would be essential for Aimhigher to continue to promote potential synergies. C:TNG regional coordinators have made strong links with Aimhigher partnerships and coordinators based at area and borough level. C:TNG as a project has benefited from the communication channels set up through Aimhigher; via coordinators, conferences and jiscmail.*

*Without funding for such national projects these type of links are unlikely to be sustained or developed.*

### Section 2: Funding

- d. **Do you agree that regional forums should advise us on the appropriate distribution of overall funding between areas and regionally-led programmes, with a strong steer that underlines the importance of regions?**

*Yes*

- e. **What funding should be earmarked for the summer school programme?**

*The RSC believe that national funding should be maintained to enable subject specific initiatives and projects to access this sub-set of Aimhigher students in a coordinated, time and cost effective way.*

- f. **Should we use the same formula for distributing partnership funds as HEFCE uses to distribute the widening access allocation (that is, on the basis of a combination of measures – HE participation for young people and average educational attainment for mature and part-time learners)? Should we explore the scope for smoothing any significant fluctuations in the way funding is distributed?**

*There is concern about how Aimhigher funding will be ring fenced within school budgets.*

- g. **Do you agree that LEAs should be able to hold back funds in the way described in order to continue to employ Aimhigher (formerly Excellence challenge) co-ordinators?**

*Proper coordination of Aimhigher activities is essential and therefore we would support employment of Aimhigher co-ordinators by LEAs. But their role needs to be clearly defined and should not impose any additional tiers of bureaucracy.*

### **Section 3: Proposed revised guidance for partnerships**

- h. **Should the aims and objectives of the programme give greater weight to work with mature and part-time learners, and with work-based and vocational learners more generally whatever age bracket they fall into?**

*The number of mature and part-time learners and work-based and vocational learners are likely to be quite subject specific. It may therefore be inappropriate to give greater weight to this area across the board.*

- i. **How can we use Aimhigher to support the development of provision for gifted and talented pupils?**

*Through the national project entitled HE gateway which is organised by NAGTY.*

- j. **Do we need to make any changes to the guidance we provide on management and governance structures of Aimhigher?**

*Probably*

**k Is the structure of Aimhigher broadly right, that is a National Partnership Board, Regional Partnership Boards, and area and regional organisation?**

*There appear to be too many subgroups.*

**Additional comments**

*The major concern is that of devolving funds into schools. This fragmentation of the money may mean that the impact (value for money) could be reduced. Individual schools could go down the route of reinventing wheels and building on good practice could be lost. Subjects like chemistry may not be a priority in this sort of system. Often in schools, the number of students taking chemistry and related subjects is far outweighed by humanities and business studies so funding could be diverted to these areas..*