

## **Review of the Teaching Funding Method**

### **Response from the Royal Society of Chemistry**

The Royal Society of Chemistry is the learned society for the chemical sciences and the professional body for chemists in the UK with a membership of 43,000 worldwide. Chemistry in higher education has been identified by both government and HEFCE as being strategically important, but vulnerable. We acknowledge that a contributory factor to vulnerability is student demand and we are pleased to be working with HEFCE to address this issue and look forward to further collaboration.

We also consider that funding issues, both of higher education overall and to chemistry within higher education contribute significantly to vulnerability and is counter to the government expressed priorities. Our response to the consultation addresses these issues.

The major points we wish to make are:

#### **Protecting strategic priorities through funding (Q1)**

We agree that HEFCE should support and protect strategic priorities through the funding method. We urge greater emphasis on enhancing HE's contribution to the economy and society. This will require addressing subject weightings more speedily and having concern for geographical provision of strategically important subjects. We remain concerned that even if and when TRAC resourcing is applied the funding for chemistry is likely to be less than is required to make UK chemistry truly competitive on an international basis.

#### **Subject weighting (Q4) and cost information (Q3)**

In late 2003 HEFCE consulted on splitting price group B in a way that could have moved towards an improved allocation for chemistry. This was not implemented and since then we have seen further loss of provision in the discipline. At the time HEFCE indicated that it wished to collect accurate cost data as a basis for reviewing the weighting. We are therefore concerned that HEFCE appears not to propose to move on this until a further consultation towards the end of 2006, three years later. We urge HEFCE to accelerate the process of collecting cost data using TRAC and bring forward the review of the cost weightings.

We have conducted a study of the cost of university chemistry using the TRAC methodology. The outcome demonstrates that university chemistry is underfunded in the five main activity areas, including publicly and privately funded teaching. We enclose a summary report of the study which we are happy for HEFCE to place in the public domain and a copy of the full report, which we ask remains confidential. We would welcome a discussion of our findings.

#### **Assumption of income from fees (Q5&6)**

We support the proposal to continue to make an assumption about fee income and the assumption should be as set out. If an assumption of this nature is not made, universities will be incentivised to move away from higher cost provision in science to lower cost subjects, contrary to the government's strategy for science.

We are concerned that the reason for the assumptions is not immediately easy to understand from the consultation paper: we have been helped by the additional material available on the web and discussion with HEFCE staff. We urge HEFCE takes care in reviewing responses to these questions.

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### Part-time Study (Q10)

We support measures to enhance opportunities for part-time study. Such opportunities are important both to widen participation in HE and to support the education and training needs of employers. There has been a significant loss of part-time provision in chemistry which has been to the detriment of potential students and to chemistry based enterprises.

### Funding on the basis of credit awarded (Q7)

We ask that HEFCE carefully considers the full implications of such a move as there are dangers of unintended consequences. A study of credit frameworks at higher levels is currently being undertaken by QAA, QCA and others. Credit in the context of the consultation paper is a payment to an institution for the input it makes to students learning. An unintended consequence may be that, for example a particular quantity of credit is then required for a Masters, or 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle in Bologna terms, degree. If that quantity of credit is less in England than is the norm elsewhere in Europe, English HE, and its graduates may be placed at a competitive disadvantage.

We wish to make the following additional comment that does not directly relate to specific questions.

### Possible lifting of the fee cap

We urge HEFCE to undertake further research into the possible effects of higher and more variable levels of fees after about 2009. The role of government, and of HEFCE may need to change to act as a purchaser of HE, or at least the guardian of the public interest in ensuring that HE provides the graduates the country needs.

We feel that government is currently too passive in this regard.

We would be happy to engage with HEFCE on this issue.

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