



Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales

A submission from the British Academy

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Introduction

1. The British Academy is the UK's national academy for the humanities and social sciences. A Fellowship of over 1000 of the country's leading academics, it exists to promote and champion its disciplines. The humanities and social sciences provide a critical lens through which society can address the wide-ranging challenges we face today.
2. The following submission expands on comments made in the British Academy's [response](#) to the Reid Review of Government Funded Research and Innovation in Wales in June 2017. In our response to the Reid Review, we commented on the proposal in the White Paper 'Public Good and a Prosperous Wales' to establish a Tertiary Education and Research Commission for Wales.
3. The British Academy broadly supports the proposal to establish Research and Innovation Wales (RIW) as a statutory Committee within the proposed new Commission. However, we have some additional thoughts regarding the relationship between RIW, the Commission, and the wider UK research and innovation architecture.
4. In particular, the Academy does not feel that the prescriptive and limiting approach to membership of RIW or the restrictions on RIW's engagement with the UK Government are in line with comments in other sections of the consultation around the protection of the Haldane Principle and in ensuring 'sufficient autonomy and freedom to operate'.

The engagement of RIW with other stakeholders

5. In our response to the Reid review, the Academy highlighted the importance to Wales of wider changes to the research funding architecture brought about by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017, with the creation of UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) in particular.
6. The Academy believes that it is essential for Wales that the voice of Welsh higher education is appropriately represented in UKRI and that the Welsh Government ensure that UK decisions about research funding and investment are appropriate for Wales, particularly in ensuring that there is suitable funding for excellent research across the broadest range of disciplines in Wales.
7. It is unclear, however, whether the current proposals will provide the most effective means of engagement for Wales within the governance and strategy for research across the whole of the UK.

8. The removal of any role for RIW to engage directly with the UK Government without expressed permission from the Welsh Government seems an unnecessary constraint on important lines of communication and influence between RIW and decision-makers in UK Government departments. HEFCW has strong relationships within BEIS and the DfE and uses these to help ensure the voice of Welsh higher education is represented in wider UK policymaking. Removal of such autonomy poses a threat to these relationships as it may act as a disincentive and burden on such constructive engagement.

Membership of RIW Committee

9. Wales produces excellent and impactful research across the Humanities and Social Science disciplines that the British Academy represents. We are keen for this to continue and for the proposed reforms to build on existing strengths to fund excellent research across the widest range of disciplines, ensuring that funding flows to excellence wherever it is found.
10. The current proposals raise questions as to whether the breadth and balance of representation is suitable for RIW to support excellence across the full range of disciplines.
11. The Academy believes that having only one, or possibly two, higher education representatives on RIW committee is inadequate representation for the higher education community considering the size and breadth of the role it plays in research and innovation. Such limited representation will fail to ensure representation across the breadth of academic disciplines engaged in research and, as a result, could lead to funding decisions being made without the knowledge, expertise and scrutiny of key stakeholders.
12. The proposed membership of RIW Committee is misaligned with that of other UK research funding bodies, where there is greater representation from higher education and where there is representation from across the disciplines. Both the UKRI Board and Research England's Council have considerably more representation from higher education and there is a range of disciplinary backgrounds. The Scottish Funding Council currently has four members from higher education institutions and a breadth of academic experience from across STEM, the arts, humanities, and social sciences.
13. To ensure sufficient higher education representation, the Academy proposes increasing the size of the committee from 9 to 12, putting it on par with the size of Research England's Council and of similar size to the other UK research councils, which have between 10 and 13 members.

14. The Academy also proposes that at least one higher education representative on RIW committee should have an academic background in the humanities and social sciences as a minimum.
15. The Academy does not wish to be prescriptive as to the method by which appointments are made, but ultimate decisions about the membership of the committee should be made in a way which ensures RIW has suitable autonomy and flexibility.

QR funding

16. The British Academy strongly supports the UK's dual support funding system, which seeks to fund excellent research wherever it is found. We therefore welcome the recommendations of the Reid Review on QR funding and the Welsh Government's commitment to them, as outlined in the consultation. REF 2014 demonstrates that pockets of research excellence exist in universities throughout Wales and the UK. It is crucial that quality related funding continues to be targeted at supporting this excellence and that QR funding for Welsh institutions is in line with their counterparts in England.