

## The British Academy's contribution to the call for evidence on 'Future Frameworks for International Collaboration on Research and Innovation'

### Summary

1. The British Academy welcomes this opportunity to contribute to Professor Adrian Smith's review on the design of future UK funding schemes for international collaboration, innovation and curiosity-driven blue-skies research. **It is the British Academy's view that the UK should seek the closest achievable association with the current and future EU Framework Programmes, which have proved vital for the health of the UK's capacity and internationally recognised quality in the arts, humanities and social sciences.** The Academy supports greater international research collaboration. However, if the UK loses the deep and shared intellectual and scientific collaboration with our European colleagues through EU funding that includes broad-ranging international research in its research focus and partnerships, there will be a significant loss that could not be replaced by more international collaboration with other partners.<sup>1</sup>
2. **The Discovery Fund should provide the same disciplinary distribution as is currently achieved through the European Research Council (ERC) and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Humanities and social sciences research will be disproportionately affected by the loss of EU funding, and this should be factored into any new arrangements.** For example, the funding won by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences from the ERC has been equivalent to 24% of the average annual ESRC and AHRC budget combined. The equivalent figures for the life sciences and the physical and engineering sciences come to around 8.5%.<sup>2</sup> The humanities and social sciences in the UK have proven themselves to be world-leading in an international research competition that supports excellence. This must be continued in the Discovery Fund. **Given the vital importance of discovery research to the humanities and social sciences in the UK, the Academy strongly believes there should be no gap in the provision of such funding.** Any gap in support for discovery research would cause significant damage to the UK's attractiveness to scholars in the humanities and the social sciences, which could take many years to recover.
3. In the Academy's view **the Discovery Fund should be overseen and managed by an independent board of leading researchers with experience in grant management, with a consequent role for the National Academies.** It should provide funding at all career stages, including, crucially, for early career researchers; support excellent investigator-driven curiosity-led research; be awarded through open competition; support disciplinary and inter/multi-disciplinary research; attract researchers to the UK to work in international teams; and support individual fellowships.
4. **The Government should support third country participation in EU Framework Programmes wherever such participation is possible.** Adopting this approach would be

---

<sup>1</sup> Brexit means...? The British Academy's Priorities for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Current Negotiations, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/brexit-means.pdf>; Colin Crouch, 'Knowledge beyond frontiers', *The British Academy Review*, No.31, Autumn 2017, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-beyond-frontiers>; Opinion Leader, The role of international collaboration and mobility in research: Findings from a qualitative and quantitative study with fellows and grant recipients of the Royal Society, British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Academy of Medical Sciences, March 2017, <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/international-mobility/national-academies-opinion-leader-survey.pdf>; The Royal Society, UK research and the European Union: the role of the EI in international research collaboration and researcher mobility, <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/eu-uk-funding/phase-2/EU-role-in-international-research-collaboration-and-researcher-mobility.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2011-12 to 2014-15', December 2010, p.17, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf); Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2016-17 to 2019-20', March 2016, p.6, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf)

the most straightforward and effective way to enable the continuation of partnerships and maintain the UK as a global research leader. In addition, it would provide the greatest certainty to our European counterparts at a time when there is considerable uncertainty for them, including whether UK partners are a viable prospect going forward.

5. **The Academy strongly recommends that any new international research collaboration opportunity should follow the model of the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) where match funding is not required.** The Academy sees UKRI taking the lead in the development of such an opportunity. It will be important to develop any new opportunity so that it is attractive to researchers internationally and speaks to international research priorities.

### The Review & EU Framework Programmes

6. It is the British Academy's view that the UK should seek the closest achievable association with the current and future EU Framework Programmes, which have proved vital for the health of the UK's capacity and internationally recognised quality in the arts, humanities and social sciences.
7. EU Framework Programmes support world-class research and deliver significant added value which extends far beyond their funding alone. For example, kitemarking from EU funding also makes it easier for partners to draw on complementary funding from their own national research bodies, thereby enhancing the resources available to support projects within which UK institutions are partners. They have become a core feature of UK higher education competitiveness and research excellence. Of the nations that the UK collaborates with seven out of the top 10 and 13 of the top 20 are other EU Member States.<sup>3</sup> International collaborations lead to research with greater impact as measured by citation impact, and 60% of the UK's internationally co-authored research papers are with EU partners.<sup>4</sup> Given the UK's geographic proximity, historical links and the relative strength of the research base in many EU countries, UK research excellence in the humanities and the social sciences is closely connected to EU research collaboration.<sup>5</sup>
8. Disciplines within the humanities and social sciences have been amongst the most successful in gaining EU funding. This matters to the UK because of the contributions made to UK higher education institutions, to the vibrancy and health of the UK research base, as well as the wider socioeconomic benefits this brings. There are some particularly vulnerable fields of study that risk being dislocated by the UK's withdrawal from the EU. For example, of the top 15 disciplines with the highest amount of funding from 'EU Government Bodies'<sup>6</sup> as a total proportion of those disciplines' funding 13 are in the arts, humanities and social sciences.<sup>7</sup> These are:

| Discipline (by HESA Cost Centre) | 'EU Government Bodies' income as a proportion of total research income in 2014-2015 |
|----------------------------------|---|
|                                  |   |

<sup>3</sup> UUK, Evidence to Commons Science & Technology Committee inquiry on 'Leaving the EU', p.3, 7 September 2016.

<sup>4</sup> International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base – 2013, A report prepared by Elsevier for the UK's Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), December 2013, p.59-69, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/263729/bis-13-1297-international-comparative-performance-of-the-UK-research-base-2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263729/bis-13-1297-international-comparative-performance-of-the-UK-research-base-2013.pdf); Digital Science, 'The implications of International Research Collaboration for UK Universities: Research assessment, knowledge capacity and the knowledge economy', February 2016, p.3, [https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pfigshare-u-files/4786699/Digital\\_Research\\_Report\\_Collaboration.pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pfigshare-u-files/4786699/Digital_Research_Report_Collaboration.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> Brexit means...? The British Academy's Priorities for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Current Negotiations, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/brexit-means.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> 'EU government bodies' is a HESA income classification category. It includes all research grants and contracts income from all government bodies operating in the EU, including the European Commission as well as bodies outside EU Institutions. It is not possible to fully disentangle funding from the EU from other sources of funding within the geographic area that the EU covers. This data, however, remains as the best proxy available to investigate the importance of EU funding to UK research.

<sup>7</sup> Technopolis, 'The Role of EU funding in UK research and innovation', 10 May 2017, p.16, <https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2017-05-22%20TG%20Role%20of%20EU%20funding%20-%20MAIN%20FINAL.pdf>

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Archaeology  | 38% |
| Classics   | 33% |
| IT, systems sciences & computer software engineering | 30% |
| Media studies  | 27% |
| Law  | 26% |
| Philosophy   | 25% |
| Modern languages                                     | 24% |
| Anthropology & development studies                   | 23% |
| Business & management studies                        | 23% |
| Chemistry  | 23% |
| Area studies   | 23% |
| Politics & international studies                     | 21% |
| Architecture, built environment & planning           | 21% |
| Art & design   | 21% |
| Sociology  | 20% |

Table A: The HESA Cost Centres that received the most income from 'EU Government Bodies' as a proportion of total research income in 2014-15.

9. In addition, there are disciplines such as linguistics in the humanities and social sciences that are not readily captured by HESA Cost Centres. Such disciplines have often found themselves falling between the cracks in the UK research system whilst have been very effective in gaining EU and particularly ERC funding. If these sources of funding and the non-financial attributes they come with are not retained then discipline such as linguistics and the important interdisciplinary work they do will find very limited opportunities in areas the UK has shown research excellence.
10. A key issue for this review is how to maintain the close partnership and collaboration options and opportunities with our EU counterparts if the UK is not able to associate fully to Horizon Europe. The Academy supports greater international research collaboration. However, if the UK loses the deep and shared intellectual and scientific collaboration with our European colleagues through EU funding that includes broad-ranging international research in its research focus and partnerships, there will be a significant loss that could not be replaced by more international collaboration with other partners, and important investments to date would be squandered.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, there are important synergies between collaboration with European partners, and international collaborations with those in other parts of the world: many of the international consortia making greatest progress to address current global challenges include a mix of EU and non-EU partners, including those in low- and middle- income countries. The UK's contribution to research and innovation can be greatly enhanced by linking UK and other European partners' international networks.
11. Any alternatives to EU Framework Programmes must replicate the benefits – financial and, equally important, non-financial - they provide as fully as possible and with further opportunities for international research collaboration to be developed in addition to, rather than instead of, these existing strengths.

<sup>8</sup> Brexit means...? The British Academy's Priorities for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Current Negotiations, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/brexit-means.pdf>; Colin Crouch, 'Knowledge beyond frontiers'. *The British Academy Review*, No.31, Autumn 2017, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/knowledge-beyond-frontiers>; Opinion Leader, The role of international collaboration and mobility in research: Findings from a qualitative and quantitative study with fellows and grant recipients of the Royal Society, British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering and the Academy of Medical Sciences, March 2017, <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/international-mobility/national-academies-opinion-leader-survey.pdf>; The Royal Society, UK research and the European Union: the role of the EI in international research collaboration and researcher mobility, <https://royalsociety.org/-/media/policy/projects/eu-uk-funding/phase-2/EU-role-in-international-research-collaboration-and-researcher-mobility.pdf>

## The Breadth of the Review

12. We would encourage the review to ensure consistency in its recommendations with the Government's new International Education Strategy and International Research & Innovation Strategy. And though this review will look importantly at the connection between research and innovation, we suggest it should focus also on the link between education and research, and especially the value and importance of students to higher education and research in the UK. This should include the important role, and potentially counter-productive role, that any future immigration system may play.<sup>9</sup>
13. Choosing where to live, study and/or work is a personal choice as well as a professional one. The cost, complexity and perception of the UK's immigration system are important factors that are not currently helping to attract and foster students, researchers and staff. The Government's research has shown that "international research collaboration and international researcher mobility are interrelated and interdependent" with a positive correlation between international research collaboration and citation impact.<sup>10</sup> If the UK wishes to boost its international collaborations and networks in the humanities and social sciences, then our immigration system must stop closing down such opportunities and raising burdens and barriers incommensurate and inappropriate for what is required.
14. The Academy encourages the review also to take into account a broad understanding of international research collaboration when considering the future international research landscape. The review should take into consideration, for example, the partnerships, mobility, exchange, career development and intellectual life that underpins the UK's research success, as well as participation in research infrastructures, such as those related to longitudinal surveys and databases including the European Social Survey. For example, the Academy views the European University Institute as an important part of the UK's European and international collaborations and we believe the UK should remain as a member or maintain ties that are the same as membership. As the Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation has highlighted recently we need to continue to build more and better opportunities for research careers in the UK, not least for citizens of EU27 countries who work in UK institutions.<sup>11</sup> In the current environment of uncertainty, the precarious contracts that early career researchers in particular often find themselves on drive further insecurity. This places UK institutions at a significant disadvantage in retaining and attracting talented researchers.

## Potential Future International Funding Schemes

15. The review is asking for contributions related to potential future funding schemes. It is important, however, to recognise the non-financial attributes that EU Framework Programmes provide to the UK and the importance of securing such non-financial benefits in any alternatives and in designing future plans for international research collaboration.<sup>12</sup> EU Framework Programmes provide opportunities for research excellence through:
  - international competition;
  - incentivisation of cross-country, cross-disciplinary partnership;
  - a common international framework and reliable funding cycle;
  - the ability to tackle global challenges at scale;
  - the ability to attract talented researchers to the UK at all career stages and provide opportunities for UK-based researchers to undergo outward mobility;

---

<sup>9</sup> The British Academy, Statement on the UK's future immigration system for higher education and research, February 2019, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Immigration-statement-The-British-Academy.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> A report by Elsevier for BEIS, *International Comparative Performance of the UK Research Base 2016*, October 2017, p.14

<sup>11</sup> Reaching 2.4%: Securing the research talent of tomorrow, 7 May 2019, <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/reaching-24-securing-the-research-talent-of-tomorrow>

<sup>12</sup> Europe on the Horizon: Examining the Value of European Research Collaboration, British Academy Brexit Briefing, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Europe-on-the-Horizon-British-Academy-Brexit-Briefing.pdf>

- the building of networks and partnerships between multiple institutions and nations around the world;
- involvement in large-scale research infrastructures such as the European Social Survey;
- bringing a plurality to the UK research system and culture attractive to a broad and international range of scholars that includes multiple funding nodes with varied peer review mechanisms and assessment.

### **Plurality and Complementarity across the UK's Research Landscape**

16. The UK currently enjoys a plural research funding system with a range of complementary research funders in the UK, elsewhere in the EU and internationally offering various scales of funding aimed at individuals, teams and broader consortia that focus on discovery research through to more applied and instrumental research. It is also this combination of different types of funding that make EU Framework Programmes particularly attractive in and of themselves, and also how those opportunities strengthen the UK research landscape.
17. In considering potential future international research collaboration opportunities, it is important to maintain this plurality of forms of funding and funders. There cannot be any replacement of discovery research, such as from the ERC, by instrumental or applied research. The value of applied research is beyond question, but it is only one part of the research landscape. It is the crossover and combination of funding opportunities from discovery to applied research that is of critical importance and why in particular a Discovery Fund should be prioritised if the UK cannot associate to Horizon Europe. This is because the scale and duration of the ERC's discovery research funding plays an important role in the UK research landscape that differs whilst complementing UKRI's and the National Academies' own funding opportunities.

### **Discovery Fund**

#### *The Success of the Humanities and Social Sciences in EU Framework Programmes*

18. Given the evidence below of excellence in the humanities and social sciences and the importance of these subjects to the health of creative and service industry sectors of the UK economy, the Discovery Fund should provide the same disciplinary distribution as is currently achieved through the ERC and MSCA. The humanities and social sciences in the UK have proven themselves to be world-leading in an international research competition that supports excellence. This must be continued in the Discovery Fund.
19. The ERC and the MSCA are highly prestigious, internationally competitive EU programmes providing funding for individual academics to conduct basic research over multiple years at all career stages. They are vital for the health of UK humanities and social sciences: researchers in the humanities and social sciences in the UK perform exceptionally well in these excellent research programmes.
20. Between 2007-15 UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences won some €626 million from Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants from the ERC. This sum won by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences through the ERC represents 33.2% of all the funding that was available in the humanities and social sciences from the ERC. This is a far higher proportion than UK-based academics won in the life sciences (19.7%) or the physical and engineering sciences (19.8%), and is well above the UK-based average of 22.1%.<sup>13</sup> It is also far more than any other country participating in the ERC. In MSCA Individual Fellowships, UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences have won more than 25% of the awards given to UK-based researchers.

---

<sup>13</sup> Aggregate data regarding ERC-funded projects provided by the ERC Executive Agency.

21. The success of the humanities and social sciences must be recognised for what it is: an area of UK-based excellence that should be preserved and enhanced by the Government. The loss of this funding would be highly significant for researchers in the humanities and the social sciences in the UK (as well as their institutions), and it would be particularly difficult in certain disciplines, such as archaeology which currently receives more funding from EU sources than from the UK.<sup>14</sup>
22. The latest independent study on the output of frontier research funded by the ERC shows that 79% of projects were of major impact: 19% led to a breakthrough and 60% to a major advance in knowledge and understanding. Almost half of the projects have already left their mark on the economy, society and policy-making, whilst around three quarters are foreseen to do so on the medium- and long-term.<sup>15</sup> The ERC has also the highest category normalised citation impact, the highest percentage of papers in the world's top 1% and the highest percentage of papers involving international co-authorship of the top 50 funders.<sup>16</sup>
23. Divided per annum, the €626 million secured by UK-based academics in the humanities and social sciences amounts on average to €70 million per year over the time the ERC has been in place. As a rough comparison, the ESRC and the AHRC budget from 2011-16 in average per annum terms was almost £257.5 million.<sup>17</sup>
24. Thus, the funding won by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences from the ERC (just one part of Horizon 2020) was equivalent to 24% of the average annual ESRC and AHRC budget combined. The equivalent figures for the life sciences and the physical and engineering sciences (the other two disciplinary categories the European Research Council uses) in comparison with the MRC and the BBSRC as the equivalent life science funders in the UK, and the NERC and the EPSRC as the equivalent physical science and engineering funders come to around 8.5%.<sup>18</sup>

### *Principles & Governance*

25. In the Academy's view the Discovery Fund should be overseen and managed by an independent board of leading researchers with experience in grant management with a consequent role for the National Academies. The independence of such a board will be an important signal to the UK and international research community that it will be run by and for excellent researchers. A majority of representatives should be outstanding UK and international researchers and innovators from universities, the National Academies, UKRI, civil society and industry. The representation will need also a balanced mixture of disciplines and sectors, including those from the humanities and social sciences, as well as the natural sciences. This would mirror the ERC's model of governance.
26. Establishing such a new structure will require efforts across the research system and the Academy would be keen to help such a structure become a success by playing a role in the joint delivery of the Discovery Fund across various partners. The ERC's and MSCA's emphasis on individual research excellence and mobility is a kitemark of the National Academies, as is the

<sup>14</sup> Frontier Knowledge for Future Gain: Why the European Research Council Matters, British Academy Brexit Briefing, [https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/BA\\_European%20Research%20Council.pdf?\\_ga=2.218304158.600710581.1557912891-1228264884.1543351428](https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/BA_European%20Research%20Council.pdf?_ga=2.218304158.600710581.1557912891-1228264884.1543351428)

<sup>15</sup> [https://erc.europa.eu/news/impact\\_study\\_breakthroughs\\_major\\_advances](https://erc.europa.eu/news/impact_study_breakthroughs_major_advances)

<sup>16</sup> 'The European Research Council The first 10 years (2017)' – a report by Clarivate Analytics.

<sup>17</sup> Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2011-12 to 2014-15', December 2010, p.17, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf); Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2016-17 to 2019-20', March 2016, p.6, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2011-12 to 2014-15', December 2010, p.17, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf); Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2016-17 to 2019-20', March 2016, p.6, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf)

prestigious nature of the ERC and MSCA schemes. In addition, the vital principle of independence of the ERC and the international reach to world-leading academics is also emblematic of the National Academies. This could include, for example, helping with governance, expertise, and staff. The Academy has a proven track record of setting up and delivering new funding schemes in short order and would be keen to bring this experience to bear on this new Fund. It is possible, if necessary, for an independent board to be delivered in the immediate short-term.

27. The Discovery Fund should have a protected budget. This funding should be ring-fenced within BEIS to prevent funding being allocated to other priorities. In addition, current UK funding levels for curiosity-led research should be protected. Both the National Academies and UKRI already provide funding for frontier research, allowing a disciplinary spread. As any domestic replacement funding for the ERC is introduced, current levels of funding for curiosity-led research currently provided through the National Academies and UKRI should be maintained at least at the same level with the same disciplinary distribution.
28. The Discovery Fund should provide also funding beyond the usual Spending Review cycle. The ERC's seven-year cycles of funding and the certainty this provides ensures a level of recognition that more regular budget cycles would dissipate. The Academy's preference would be for an initial ten-year commitment ring-fenced for the Discovery Fund. The size of the Discovery Fund should be at least on a scale commensurate with the budget of the EU Framework Programmes but larger to offset some of the inevitable damage to research excellence in the UK that not being associated with Horizon Europe would cause. This would help also make clear that the UK remains a world leader for discovery, curiosity-driven research.
29. It should provide funding at all career stages, including, crucially, for early career researchers. In addition, it should:
  - Support excellent investigator-driven curiosity-led research (a huge strength of the ERC) – funding should be awarded on the basis of the excellence of the research using high quality international peer review. Funded researchers should have the flexibility to change direction and follow their curiosity.
  - Be awarded through open competition - funding should only be allocated through programmes which have a very broad disciplinary remit and which are not limited by thematic priorities (bottom-up funding).
  - Support disciplinary and inter/multi-disciplinary research – as well as providing support for research within disciplines, programmes should also enable research which crosses traditional disciplinary boundaries by removing barriers.
  - Attract researchers to the UK to work in international teams – all programmes should be open to researchers wishing to move their research to the UK and open to developing teams internationally (i.e. the research consortia must not be limited to those solely based in the UK but open to anywhere in the world as the ERC is currently), in addition to being open to researchers already based in the UK. Successful researchers should be eligible (based on the existing immigration rules) for the Tier 1 exceptional talent accelerated route to ensure improved access to the UK with the grant being able to be used for related visa and resettlement costs. In terms of MSCA, there should be support for inward and outward mobility from the UK.
  - Support individual fellowships – such fellowships under MSCA play a crucial part in attracting early career researchers to the UK and forming lasting, international collaborations, as well as providing international experience overseas to UK-based researchers with opportunities to return to the UK on prestigious, internationally kitemarked programmes.

New funding arrangements should facilitate training and mobility for researchers at all stages of their career as a replacement for MSCA. Such a scheme should support both the UK to host talented overseas researchers and for the mobility of UK researchers for fellowships overseas.

### *Delivery & Timescales*

30. There is a tension between having sufficient time to establish new programmes whilst having no gap in discovery research funding. This will be challenging as the UK will likely not know whether it can secure formal association to Horizon Europe until 2021 given that formal negotiations are unlikely to start until late 2020.<sup>19</sup> In this light and given the vital importance of discovery research to the humanities and social sciences in the UK, the Academy strongly believes there should be no gap in the provision of such funding. Any gap in support for discovery research would cause significant damage to the UK's attractiveness to scholars in the humanities and the social sciences, which could take many years to recover.
31. We would therefore encourage plans for any alternative to be in place in case the UK cannot associate to Horizon Europe. Given the danger such a situation poses for the humanities and the social sciences in the UK, the Academy is willing to play a role in ensuring this precarious position is avoided.
32. The Academy believes that the current programmes provided through the ERC and MSCA are world-leading and highly attractive to the research base in the UK. They are also well-known and familiar, which in a scenario where the UK is not able to associate will be helpful in orienting the community and institutions in understanding any new opportunities.
33. With respect to the alternatives to ERC and MSCA, we recommend that as much as possible the programmes be utilised as they stand. It should, however, be recognised that the UK will struggle to replicate the prestige and international kitemarking of the ERC and MSCA. The Government has announced its International Research & Innovation Strategy recently. The review should consider how in conjunction with this Strategy the UK can communicate with partners that in the UK there are still significant opportunities for international research collaboration.
34. It will be critical that any alternatives match the scale, type and length of funding available through the ERC and MSCA. For example, with regards to the ERC the length of the award should be up to five years, which is longer than the norm in the UK, particularly in the humanities and social sciences; and the scale of the funding should be aligned with the ERC's Advanced Grants of up to €2.5 million, which includes valuable support to UK institutions. This scale and funding is justified by the returns such discovery research achieves.

### *International Peer Review*

35. The UK should follow as closely as possible the principles of the ERC. This importantly includes the international peer review process that the ERC follows. The Discovery Fund would need to attract (and provide incentives to) top evaluators from around the world which could match the quality of the ERC. The peer review process used by the ERC is more costly than domestic processes as the ERC convenes reviewers in Brussels to discuss proposals, however, it is very effective and is well-regarded by past and current award holders that the Academy has surveyed.
36. As such, a core part of building prestige and supporting excellence, the UK should invest in ensuring the peer review process is as international and robust as possible. The ERC's peer review process includes the opportunity to meet world-leading international researchers as assessors in person, which has been singled out for recommendation by those award holders the

---

<sup>19</sup> Association with European Framework programmes for Research & Innovation: Challenges and Opportunities, British Academy Brexit Briefing, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/EU-Framework-British-Academy-Brexit-Briefing.pdf>

Academy has surveyed. The global prestige and international kitemarking that the ERC peer review process provides ensures a level of visibility and prestige to award holders, and attracts hopeful applicants, that any UK alternative will need to meet in order to be similarly effective.

## **Further International Collaboration**

### *Third Country Participation to EU Framework Programmes*

37. Beyond any Discovery Fund, the Government should support through separate funding third country participation in EU Framework Programmes wherever such participation is possible. The European Commission is designing Horizon Europe to enable further international collaboration and is looking actively for partners in this regard. In addition, supporting third country participation has the advantage of being a tried and tested approach that is well understood by the UK research community. In addition, this approach would be underpinned by robust and well-established European Commission peer review mechanisms. To design and deliver effective alternative mechanisms will be challenging and costly and raise questions concerning assurance and value for money. Adopting this approach would be the most straightforward and effective and would enable the continuation of partnerships and maintain the UK as a global research leader. In addition, it would provide the greatest certainty to our European counterparts at a time when there is considerable uncertainty for them, including whether UK partners are a viable prospect going forward.

### *International Collaboration beyond EU Framework Programmes*

38. The GCRF and the Newton Fund have provided significant new opportunities for international research collaboration. These are both funded as UK official development assistance (ODA) and thus target developing countries and the Sustainable Development Goals. GCRF, in particular, has enabled a step change for the UK's contribution to multi-disciplinary research on major challenges, through equal international partnerships. It is being widely appreciated and praised in other countries, and is serving to enhance not just UK science but also contributions to impact, global soft power and thought leadership. It is important that ODA research funding, through programmes such as these and through DFID research, continue at the same or increased levels. However, they could valuably be complemented by additional funding from non-ODA UK government funding aiming to achieve further international research collaboration beyond those countries. To be clear, this funding would also be beyond the Discovery Fund and would need to be separate additional funding.
39. The Academy recommends that it would be helpful to learn from the experience of the Newton Fund and GCRF in developing any new opportunity in partnership with international funding partners. Identifying and developing research priorities in common with international funding partners raises certain practical issues, including the need for sufficient planning, time and resource to develop shared agendas. Considering the timeframe outlined above with regards to association this may well be impractical in the short-term and unsuitable more longer-term.
40. In this context, the Academy strongly recommends that any new opportunity should follow the model of GCRF where match funding is not required. The experience of large international collaborative match funding programmes is that they often lead to considerable complexity, delay and exclusions. The Academy sees UKRI taking the lead in the development of such an international research collaboration opportunity distinct from the Discovery Fund. It will be important to develop any new opportunity so that it is attractive to researchers internationally and speaks to international research priorities. GCRF does this effectively through its close alignment to the Sustainable Development Goals. It will be important in any new opportunity that a similarly internationally-oriented approach is taken. In this respect, the domestic focus and inception of the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund is unlikely to resonate with our international partners. The Academy would encourage a broader, more expansive focus for any new opportunity that focused on interdisciplinary research challenges broadly scoped, including

prominently the humanities and social sciences, to enable excellent researchers to collaborate internationally as they see fit.

41. The value of the humanities and social sciences in a world of considerable uncertainty and change is immeasurable. The challenges facing societies today internationally are as much human and societal as they are technical and scientific, meaning that to navigate these international challenges successfully the need for the humanities and social sciences is more critical than ever. Research on our pasts and presents can offer ideas to fashion the futures that can improve human existence and wellbeing and enhance social cohesion.