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14th August 2017

Dr John Kemp
Interim Chief Executive
Scottish Funding Council.

Dear Dr Kemp,

The Scottish Government has placed huge emphasis on the Mathematical Sciences and their importance in all aspects of our lives. The inaugural “Maths Week Scotland” to be held next month is something to celebrate, and the earlier “Making Maths Count” report contains important recommendations on how skills and training in the Mathematical Sciences can be enhanced. The Mathematical Sciences community within Scotland also continues to engage with Holyrood on the development of education policy via the RSE’s Learned Societies Group.

The huge value of the Mathematical Sciences to both the UK and Scottish economy is also well documented - see, for example, the Deloitte Report - Measuring the Economic Benefits of Mathematical Science Research in the UK:

<https://www.lms.ac.uk/sites/lms.ac.uk/files/Report%20EconomicBenefits.pdf>

and the Mathematical Sciences continue to underpin research – both in academic institutions and in industry – from Finance and Engineering to the BioMedical sector.

However, the magnitude of the value provided by Mathematical Sciences research to the Scottish economy does not seem to be appreciated by the Scottish Funding Council. In particular, the Research Cost Weighting (RCW) remains a considerable source of concern for the Mathematical Sciences community both within Scotland, and in the wider UK community.

More specifically:

- the reduced value placed on Mathematical Sciences research by the SFC, compared with HEFCE with Research Cost Weights (1.2 against 1.6 respectively), disadvantages the Scottish mathematics community when competing with English universities to try to hire excellent academic staff. This, in turn, effects how the community performs in REFs.

- the value placed on Mathematical Sciences research by SFC is lower when compared with other science & engineering disciplines. As well as lower RCWs it is noted that the SFC has not invested in Mathematical Sciences pooling (despite the obvious value and utility of Mathematical Sciences research). Not only does this mean that the Scottish Mathematical Sciences discipline has lost out on the initial pooling investment, but it has also meant no access to the millions spent on "continuation funding" in these other disciplines.

This lack of appreciation of the value placed on the Scottish Mathematical Sciences research by the SFC is keenly felt by the community: morale is low, with a resultant loss of key staff.

I understand that at the last meeting of the SFC's Research & Knowledge Exchange Committee that a paper was presented on research cost weightings (RKEC/17/18 Agenda Item 8) which included the possibility of a review of these weightings.

The Scottish Mathematical Sciences community have never received an explanation of why it is funded at a lower rate, as compared with funding for the subject in England, and as compared with other STEM subjects within Scotland. If the SFC is looking again at the RCWs we would welcome the opportunity to enter into a conversation with you on the value of the Mathematical Sciences to research in Scotland and hope we could convince you of the importance of the subject and why it should be funded at the same rate as other STEM subjects in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Sir Adrian Smith
Chair, CMS

CC: Mr John Swinney MSP,
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills.

Prof Alice Brown, CBE, FRSE, AcSS, FRCP Edin, FRSA, Cipfa (Hon)
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