

Highlights of RCUK Progress on Review of Physics Recommendations

A February meeting of stakeholders, convened by RCUK, highlighted how partners are collectively taking forward the recommendations from the RCUK Review of Physics. Attendees included RCUK, DIUS, DCSF, the Higher Education Funding Bodies, the Institute of Physics, the Institute of Physics and Engineering in Medicine and the Royal Astronomical Society.

Good progress has already been made against many of the recommendations and the meeting's discussions centred on how to build on this momentum.

One key area of progress is the commissioning of a review of nuclear physics and engineering in the UK, recently announced by EPSRC and STFC, which will be chaired by Dr Sue Ion. The terms of reference have been agreed and the panel are due to report this autumn.

Progress has also been made on future support for solar terrestrial physics (STP). NERC and STFC have reached broad agreement on which parts of STP research are most relevant to the NERC mission and this has led to ongoing discussions on a potential new set of principles to guide the division of future STP research funding between NERC and STFC.

In terms of large facilities, RCUK and DIUS have agreed that large facilities which serve a range of Councils will be considered separately to those that are germane to one Council, prior to overall prioritisation. This will be implemented in the next large facilities Capital Fund exercise which will commence in 2010.

RCUK also plans to engage with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) to maximise the flow of people and information between industry and academia, building on the recently launched RCUK Knowledge Transfer Portal.

Further progress has been made in other areas:

- Through the Research Concordat Strategy Group, RCUK is working with the sector to ensure researchers are supported, developed and provided with realistic advice about their careers;
- EPSRC and STFC are engaging with their research communities on the provision of transferable practical skills;
- RCUK is engaging in discussions on additional courses for people with physics qualifications in order to meet the needs of employers, including in the finance sectors.

A second meeting of stakeholders is planned to review progress made and identify further opportunities for collaboration.