

● Allocation method for postgraduate research funding from 2012-13: Response from the Royal Geographical Society (with IBG)

The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) is the learned society and professional body for geography. Formed in 1830, our Royal Charter is for 'the advancement of geographical science'. The Society is a charity that seeks to develop, promote and support the discipline of geography and its practitioners in the areas of research and higher education, teaching and fieldwork, policy and wider public engagement.

The Royal Geographical Society (with The Institute of British Geographers) welcomes this opportunity to comment on HEFCE's consultation on "allocation method for postgraduate research funding from 2012-13"

Q1: Do you agree that for 2012-13 we should increase the value of the RDP supervision fund, by up to £35 million?

We welcome changes to the allocation method for the research degree programme (RDP) supervision fund from 2012-13, especially the proposed increase in funds by £35 million (in addition to the current £205 million).

Q2: Which of the options we have described for linking the allocation of RDP supervision funding to quality (a threshold, or a quality weighting) best meets our aim of encouraging the supervision of students in higher-quality research environments? Why?

We support the proposal to link the allocation of RDP supervision funding to quality as this will best support meeting the aim of HEFCE to support the supervision of students in higher-quality research environments.

Q3: If we used a quality score, as described in paragraph 22, to achieve differentiation by quality does a ratio of 1:2 seem appropriate?

No response provided

Q4: Do you consider that the value of an institution's RDP grant relative to its mainstream QR grant provides a useful indicator of the sustainability of postgraduate supervisory activity at whole-institution level?

We do wish to note that while the value of an institution's RDP grant relative to its mainstream QR grant provides a useful indicator of the sustainability of postgraduate supervisory activity at whole-institution level, some universities, which contain some clusters of research excellence with strong PhD programmes, may lose out in the future. University 'averages' may dilute funds allocated to currently strong PhD programmes.

A formula based on successful completions within specific outlets (e.g. within REF units of assessment) would enable more specific targeting of funds. The latter would allow recognition of those outlets that traditionally have done well with respect to PhD supervision and completions, rather than favouring weaker outlets embedded within strong research institutions.