

STFC COUNCIL MEETING, 28-29 January 2008

STFC funding for university research grants in physics will remain broadly level for the next year it was confirmed last week.

The Science and Technology Facilities Council [STFC] met and discussed its delivery plan for the next three years [2008-9 to 2010-11] on the 28th and 29th January, 2008. It did this in the context of the programmatic review and prioritisation exercise, which had been led by the Council's Science Board, chaired by Sir Peter Knight. The Council will finalise its science priorities by the end of February 2008.

The Chairman of STFC, Peter Warry, said "I would like to thank the STFC Science Board and its sub-committees for carrying out a complex task to such a high standard and I recognise that, as always, prioritisation can be a difficult process. The STFC will have a programme moving forward that addresses some of the most exciting scientific questions facing us today".

Sir Peter Knight, chair of STFC Science Board, said, 'this has not been an easy task. On the contrary Science Board and its advisory committees had to make some extremely difficult decisions particularly when presented with a wide range of exciting science projects and in the knowledge that our recommendations would have far reaching effects on some research areas. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the resulting programme will ensure the UK remains at the forefront of global research'.

The Council considered the implications of the Delivery Plan on the STFC's science programme and the development of the Science and Innovation Campuses at Daresbury, Cheshire, and Harwell, Oxfordshire.

STFC Council emphasised that the underlying funding for physics exploitation grants would remain broadly level in the next financial year [see Notes to Editors]. This follows large increases in funding last year and would mean that there would be no major reductions in physics funding before the outcome of the Wakeham Review* is known.

The Council confirmed its commitment to the development of Daresbury and Harwell as Science and Innovation Campuses. It is expected that major inward investment in both campuses will be announced shortly.

Professor Keith Mason, STFC Chief Executive, said “ The development of the Science and Innovation Campuses in collaboration with universities, the private sector and local authorities, will support the entire UK research base, and will enable more science to be done within the STFC portfolio and elsewhere, while helping to maximise the economic benefit to the nation.”

The Council re-affirmed the decisions already taken with respect to withdrawal from the International Linear Collider [ILC] project and ground-based Solar-Terrestrial Physics [STP] facilities and to negotiate reduced funding for the Gemini telescopes.

STFC Council confirmed that it had not taken a decision on whether compulsory redundancies (other than those relating to the Daresbury Laboratory based Synchrotron Radiation Source [SRS] closure) would be needed and, in any event, these would not be implemented before the summer 2008.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

Research Grants

Astronomy exploitation grants (responsive mode) are reviewed every three years, with approximately one third coming up for reconsideration each year. .

The numbers of Post Doctoral Research Assistants (PDRA's) supported by STFC through astronomy grants by year, taking into account the awards that will shortly be announced for next year, are:

- 2006/2007: 278
- 2007/2008: 329
- 2008/2009: 323

Including the impact of Full Economic Costing, which is being rolled out across all the research councils, the overall funding for *Astronomy* exploitation grants will have risen by 67% in 2008/09 compared to 2005/06. Full Economic Costing will put university research on a sustainable footing, an initiative that is strongly supported by vice-chancellors.

Particle Physics rolling grants are awarded every three years and make up the bulk of the funding in this area. The next rolling grants review is in 2009, and will take effect in October 2009, the second year of the CSR period. Thus there will be no major change in *Particle Physics* exploitation funding, other than for programmatic reasons, until after the Wakeham Review has reported in summer 2008. The amount of funding in this area will be 43% higher in 2008/09 than it was in 2005/06 due to the introduction of Full Economic Costing.

2. Wakeham Review

A health of disciplines review of physics, chaired by Professor Bill Wakeham, vice-chancellor of the University of Southampton. The review is expected to report in the summer 2008.

For further information on the Wakeham Review see:

<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/review/physics/default.htm>

3. Higher Education Statistics Agency [HESA, see <http://www.hesa.ac.uk>]

HESA data shows that in 2004/5 Physics research in the UK received almost £500m in funding. STFC total grants amounted to £79M of this figure plus a further £15M for studentships and fellowships.

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