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Sir Alan Langlands
Chief Executive
Higher Education Funding Council of England
12th Floor, Centre Point
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Dear Sir Alan

Recognising reviewing within the Research Excellence Framework: An open letter from early career researchers

Will the Higher Education Funding Council of England recognise the contribution researchers make to science through reviewing papers and grant applications and give this due consideration in the Research Excellence Framework (REF)?

Peer review results in over 1.5 millionⁱ scholarly articles published each year and the allocation of over £3 billionⁱⁱ in UK research council funding and millions more from other funding sources such as medical charities. Reviewing is fundamental to the process of integrating new research findings in hundreds of fields of inquiry. It is essential in ensuring that research funding is targeted to scientifically credible and worthwhile proposals. On average, researchers spend 72 hoursⁱⁱⁱ reviewing research papers a year, and many hours reviewing grant applications.

As researchers at an early stage of our careers, we are under increasing pressure to secure grant funding and publish research, in order to make a contribution to our fields that will in the future be recognised in the REF. Recognising reviewing as part of the REF would ensure that it is prioritised and safeguarded by university departments in the longer term so that these activities will continue to be a significant part of the contribution we make to scholarly publishing throughout our lives. More immediately it will ensure that reviewing is approached professionally and seriously, enabling senior researchers to spend time mentoring early career researchers like ourselves in these activities. Without recognition in the REF we risk reviewing of both papers and grant applications becoming a marginal activity and inevitably inconsistent and shoddy.

We urge you to include reviewing as an impact in the criteria for assessment for the REF and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Members of the Voice of Young Science network^{iv}

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ⁱ House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Peer review in scientific publications, Eighth Report of Session 2010–12
Paragraph 23: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmsctech/856/856.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Research Councils UK <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ Peer review: benefits, perceptions and alternatives, Mark Ware, Mark Ware Consulting, 2008 Publishing Research Consortium: The Reviewer's perspective <http://www.publishingresearch.net/documents/PRCsummary4Warefinal.pdf>

^{iv} Voice of Young Science is a network of over 1000 early career researchers who stand up for science in public debates about science
(<http://www.senseaboutscience.org/pages/voys.html>)