Sir Alan Langlands  
Chief Executive  
Higher Education Funding Council of England  
12th Floor, Centre Point  
103 New Oxford Street  
London WC1A 1DD  
12th July 2012  

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 million scholarly articles published each year and the allocation of over £3 billion 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 hours 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
Brian Azzopardi
Senior Lecturer, electrical engineering and energy economics

Victoria Bird
Research worker and PhD student in health Services and Population Research

Dr Georgia Black
Research Associate

David Briggs
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Structural Biology and Biophysics

Paul Campbell
PhD Lecturer

Carolyn Clarke
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Cardiovascular Sciences

Alison Cooper
PhD Student in Immunology

Lynda Coughlan
Postdoctoral Researcher in Gene Therapy

Anne Dance
PhD Candidate in Environmental History

Iain Darby
PhD Nuclear Physics

Emanuele De Luca
PhD Student, Cognitive Neuroscience

Jaime Earnest
MPH, Doctoral Candidate in Behavioural Epidemiology and Health Policy

Sara Evans-Lacko
Lecturer in Mental Health Services Research

Simone Farrelly
Scientific Coordinator

Kieran Flanagan
PhD STFC Advanced Fellow

Helen Gilburt
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Health Services Research

Nora Hanson
PhD, Marine Ecology

Dr Claire Hanworth
Lecturer and British Academy Research Fellow

Margaret Heslin
Health Economist and PhD student in Health Services and Population Research

Manuela Jarrett
Research Worker, Prison Mental Health Services

Dr Rehana Jawadwala
Programme Leader, MSc Weight Management

Nikiforos Karamanis
Language Engineer, PhD in Informatics
Olga Korostynska  
Niall Mac Dowell  
Energy Systems Engineer  
Sarah Martin  
Jamie McClelland  
Postdoctoral Research in Medical Image Computing  
Andrew Melbourne  
Medical Imaging  
Sabina Michnowicz  
PhD Student  
Lauren Morgan  
PhD in Ergonomics, Research Scientist  
Dr Cecily Morrison  
Postdoctoral Researcher in eHealth  
Tamlyn Peel  
PhD in Immunology  
Dr Amit Pujari  
Research Associate Bioengineering  
Kerstin Rindt  
PhD Candidate in Virology  
Dr Esther Robinson  
Medic  
Jess Rowley  
PhD in Translational Medicine  
Dr Tom Russon  
Postdoctoral Research Associate in Geoscience  
Dr Kritika Samsi  
Research Associate  
Dr Juliet Stevens  
Junior Medic  
Dr Paul Stevenson  
Lecturer in Nuclear Physics  
Dr Karen Syres  
Research Fellow in Chemistry  
Graham Wheeler  
PhD Student in Biostatistics

---

1 House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Peer review in scientific publications, Eighth Report of Session 2010–12  
4 Research Councils UK http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/Pages/Home.aspx  
9 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)