

Government to protect UK research jobs with major support package

- Research jobs and ground-breaking projects impacted by coronavirus to be protected by 2 new government support packages
- new research funding scheme opens this autumn to cover up to 80% of a university's income losses from a decline in international students
- around £280 million to enable universities to continue their cutting-edge work, such as research into antibiotics resistance and the effects of coronavirus on society

Thousands of highly skilled researchers, scientists and technicians working at UK universities will receive greater job protection thanks to 2 significant support packages announced by Business Secretary Alok Sharma today (27 June).

From this autumn, research-active universities across the UK that have been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic will be able to access long term, low interest loans, supplemented by a small amount of government grants, covering up to 80% of their income losses caused by any actual decline in international students.

This funding will be available to bolster those universities who are taking their own steps to make efficiencies, in line with the rest of the economy, to protect their research bases. In addition, some universities may also be losing funding from charities and businesses, which goes towards vital medical research. The package will be made available to fund research and high priority projects, such as medical research, in order to support universities to continue to be at the cutting edge of innovation.

Around £200 million in new government investment will be made immediately available to support researchers' salaries and other costs such as laboratory equipment and fieldwork. This will allow universities to retain research talent and protect innovative, ground-breaking projects across the country. UK Research & Innovation will also redistribute up to a further £80 million of existing funding to support research and development (R&D) in our universities.

The 2 support schemes will ensure universities facing difficult financial decisions, in line with the rest of the economy, can offer job security to up-and-coming researchers and are able to progress their cutting-edge work, such as research into the effects of coronavirus on our wider society, antibiotics resistance, and new tech solutions to tackle plastic waste and climate change.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

The brilliance of our talented researchers and scientists has been

absolutely critical not only to our medical response to coronavirus but also as we begin to emerge from this pandemic and support the UK's economic recovery.

The support we are putting in place will give our world-leading universities a lifeline by protecting jobs to ensure our best minds can continue discovering new innovations that will benefit us all for generations to come.

Some of the ground-breaking projects benefiting from today's investment will include:

- research into antibiotics resistance, ensuring life-saving drugs and treatments remain effective
- the development of innovative new technologies to tackle climate change, including advanced computing and quantum technology
- solutions tackling the waste caused by the manufacture and use of plastics around the world; and
- work to gain a greater understanding of the effect of the coronavirus pandemic on our wider society, such as the impact of lockdown on people's mental health

R&D investment is critical to the UK economy – every £1 spent delivers £7 in economic and social benefits from helping to attract investment, boosting productivity and creating new jobs.

Science Minister, Amanda Solloway commented:

Coronavirus has shown us all the importance of the UK's world-class R&D ecosystem. It has also highlighted the inspirational dedication of our brilliant scientists and researchers.

This package will protect thousands of highly skilled jobs and ensure the UK's research community continue their vital work to solve some of the most pressing challenges facing our society today, like tackling climate change, unlocking medical discovery and unleashing game-changing new technologies.

Providing financial support for the UK's world-leading research institutions impacted by the coronavirus pandemic is a priority for the University Research Sustainability Ministerial Taskforce, co-chaired by Science Minister Amanda Solloway and Universities Minister Michelle Donelan.

Established in May, the Taskforce is identifying what support is needed to retain research talent and ensure the long-term sustainability of UK's world-class research and development sector.

Universities Minister, Michelle Donelan said:

Our world leading universities and the scientific research they undertake are a truly vital part of the UK's society and our economy and will continue to be so as we start to recover from coronavirus.

We understand the difficulties universities are facing right now, which is why we announced a range of measures last month to ease financial pressures, and now I am delighted we are able to offer universities further financial support to protect vital research.

Professor Duncan Wingham Executive Chair of UKRI's Natural Environment Research Council (NERC) said:

UKRI is acutely aware of the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Almost everyone in our research and innovation community is either facing major interruptions to their work, or a major transition to work on the coronavirus pandemic.

The purpose of today's announcement is to help sustain UKRI grant-funded research, research talent and the capability of UK research organisations all of which will underpin the post-pandemic, national recovery. This is vital support for UKRI funded research but will not address all the challenges the sector faces. UKRI continues to work closely with the government on how best to support recovery.

Climate researcher Dr James France from British Antarctic Survey said:

This is very welcome news because my NERC research grant was due to end soon. The disruption caused by coronavirus means that it has been a struggle for me, and colleagues in a similar position, to complete projects on schedule.

This package will give us breathing space to finish our current work on greenhouse gases and climate change properly. I am relieved that we'll have time to publish the results before I need to be looking for my next position.

Christine Lockey, a Post Doctoral Research Assistant in Chemistry at the University of Warwick said:

Today's announcement means that I will be able to complete important research projects, including my work on membrane protein biophysics and immune receptors in cells, that would have otherwise have been significantly affected by the loss of research time due to coronavirus and the associated loss of funding. The package announced today will safeguard my future research career and allow

me to continue to progress in my chosen scientific field.

The announcement follows the commitment by the government at this year's budget to increase public investment in R&D to £22 billion each year by 2024/25, putting the UK on the path to increase investment to 2.4% of GDP by 2027.

The government has already committed to supporting university research and last month brought forward £100 million of university research funding by a year to provide immediate financial support.

The University Support Package of loans and grants will cover up to 80% of their income losses caused by an expected decline in international students, compared with overseas student revenue in 2018/19. The package will support up to 100% of non-publicly funded research. Further details, including the conditions attached to the funding, will be available in due course.