

Simplified processes provide welcome boost for UK researchers

- Government to trial simplified research grant application processes, helping free up researchers to focus more exclusively on their studies
- unnecessary paperwork and funding applications currently restrict and stifle scientists who are undertaking trailblazing research
- improved methods to apply for funding will create a strong science and innovation environment that supports top talent

Science Minister Chris Skidmore today (11 February 2020) launched a new, simplified process to apply for research funding.

This builds on the Prime Minister's commitment to cut bureaucracy for scientists and the launch of a major review into [research bureaucracy and methods](#) earlier this year.

From today the government's overarching research body, [UK Research and Innovation](#) (UKRI), will trial streamlined application processes for researchers – removing the unnecessary requirement to precisely forecast the long-term benefits of projects that often have unpredictable results.

The programmes include a £10 million 'New Horizons' fund to support highly transformational research projects across maths and physical science, and a £10 million 'Pushing the frontiers' fund that will invest in and encourage environmental scientists to pursue adventurous and high risk, high reward projects.

Streamlining the research application process frees up and supports the best researchers and innovators to focus on ground-breaking, ambitious and meaningful research that could cure diseases or improve our transport networks.

The new process complements the government's ambitions to create a UK ARPA, will trial new, novel funding approaches while giving researchers greater freedom to pursue projects and tackle some of the world's greatest challenges, as well as its commitments to significantly boost research and development funding.

Science Minister Chris Skidmore said:

This government is committed to increasing research funding to record levels. But we must revolutionise the way our research system works to make the UK the best place in the world for science and innovation.

Last month, the Prime Minister announced a major review of research bureaucracy and methods. We are now getting on with the job of

freeing up our scientists to do what they do best.

Today's announcement to simplify grant application processes will help strengthen the UK's research and innovation environment, establishing the UK as a science superpower.

The review will involve removing unnecessary paperwork like arduous funding applications and will examine research selection processes and research approaches and methods.

As part of this, the government will be consulting with world-leading scientists, researchers, academics and others in the coming weeks on what more can be done.

UKRI is already taking steps to reduce bureaucracy as part of its work to streamline processes to ensure they work for researchers.

Paul Gemmill, Chief Operating Officer of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council, who is leading this work across UKRI, said:

We are seeking to ensure that we make the best possible investment decisions and free up those in whom we invest in to focus on their work of creating new knowledge and delivering social, cultural and economic benefits.

We will look for evidence of potential improvements to our processes, then act on this evidence to deliver change.

In addition, the government has asked UKRI to pilot a relaxation to eligibility requirements for the new doctoral studentships to be funded from the [Advanced Maths programme](#) announced on the 27 January. This will help to attract the best mathematicians to the UK to start their career from across the globe.

The government has also asked universities to ensure that maths funds are being spent on maths, not being diverted to other subjects. This will ensure that the government's funding for advanced maths research is delivering real and lasting impact for these important areas of research.

UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) will trial new streamlined application processes. The pilot calls, led by UKRI's [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council](#) (EPSRC) and [Natural Environment Research Council](#) (NERC), underline the organisation's commitment to strengthen best practice and explore innovative new approaches.

UKRI will make it a priority to ensure its systems and processes free researchers and innovators to focus on their work while also supporting us to make the best funding decisions.

UKRI is exploring ways to reduce administration for applicants and will

identify and pilot new approaches designed to improve the experience of applicants.