Excelling Together: The future of Scotland’s universities
Academics Together is made up of those who believe Scotland's world-leading scientists, researchers and universities benefit from being part of the United Kingdom and includes leading experts from a range of academic fields from across Scotland.

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

**Professor Arthur Allison**, Former Vice-Principal of the University of Glasgow
**Dr Stuart Bramley**, Former Dean of Science, University of Strathclyde
**David Caldwell**, Former Director of Universities Scotland
**Professor John Coggins**, Former Vice-Principal of the University of Glasgow
**Professor Jim Gallacher**, Emeritus Professor, Glasgow Caledonian University
**Professor Jim Gallagher**, Oxford University & Visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow
**Dr Patrick Harkness**, University of Glasgow
**Professor Peter Holmes**, Former Vice-Principal of the University of Glasgow
**Professor Hugh Pennington**, Emeritus Professor of Bacteriology at the University of Aberdeen
**Professor Susan Shaw**, Former Deputy and Vice Principal of the University of Strathclyde
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. As part of the United Kingdom our universities are thriving. We have the best of both worlds: a strong Scottish Parliament taking decisions about our universities and the benefit of being part of a large, thriving UK research community which delivers disproportionate research funding to our world-leading universities.

2. The White Paper fails to provide credible answers to the most fundamental questions on how funding currently delivered through UK Research Councils, UK charities, the UK Government and the private sector would be replicated.

3. Through their excellence in research Scottish institutions receive over 13% of UK Research Council funding which is disproportionate to our population share of around 8%. The only way to guarantee UK Research Councils continue to fund research in Scotland is to remain part of the UK.

4. It is a fantasy to pretend that we can leave the United Kingdom but keep the benefits of UK membership: the White Paper wishes to keep a common research area with the rest of the UK but provides no details as to how this can be achieved nor any contingency plan if a mutually acceptable agreement cannot be negotiated.

5. Leading charities have highlighted the uncertainty and risk to funding of Scottish universities if Scotland leaves the UK: this highlights the weakness of the White Paper and demands a response from the Scottish Government.

6. In the White Paper the Scottish Government proposes charging students from the rest of the UK tuition fees if Scotland leaves the UK. We believe this policy to conflict with European law. We urge the Scottish Government to publish immediately any legal advice on this issue.

7. Research in the UK has benefited by allowing researchers who are the most knowledgeable to make decisions on research directions. The White Paper is unclear as to whether this would be preserved or whether decisions would be more subject to short term political interference.

8. Despite making a whole series of uncosted promises such as a pledge to keep university tuition free for Scottish students, there is no acknowledgement in the White Paper of the severely constrained fiscal content in which an independent Scotland would find itself.

9. We are concerned that leaving the UK research system would jeopardise the access of Scottish universities to the common large scale research infrastructure afforded by a larger country and that collaboration between researchers throughout the UK would be threatened.

10. We believe the brightest future for Scotland’s universities in an era of greater global competition is best delivered by being a dynamic part of the thriving UK research system: benefitting from the greater scale, integration and coordination we have as part of the UK.
INTRODUCTION

Scotland has a long and proud history of intellectual excellence and success in research, innovation and discovery. Every day Scottish inventions touch the lives of people across the world. People in Scotland rightly take enormous pride in our history in the fields of medicine, science, engineering and many other disciplines. We are rightly proud that Scots “invented the modern world”, as Arthur Herman put it.

As part of the UK, Scotland performs considerably better than any other comparable European country and better than many larger countries.

**The UK has 31 universities in the world’s top 200, 5 of which are here in Scotland: more per head of population than any other country**

Source: Times Higher Education

Our reputation for world-leading intellectual thought is richly deserved: from the Scottish Enlightenment which fostered the birth of modern philosophy and economics right through to the discovery of the Higgs boson ‘God Particle.’ The breadth of achievement across disciplines has immeasurably improved our understanding of our society, the human condition, and the very building blocks of the universe itself.

**Scotland produces more papers per researcher than most other countries with over 11,000 research papers produced in 2010**

Source: Scotland Analysis

Today our thriving university sector promises new advances in everything from medicine and the life sciences finding new cures, to physics, engineering and the humanities. This excellence offers unmatched opportunities and reaps economic benefits for wider society. Our universities are a major industry in their own right contributing £6.7 billion to the Scottish economy and employing 142,000 people as well as enriching Scottish cultural life. Scottish businesses and government also benefit from access to academic expertise and the creation of spin-outs from university research.

**Scottish Higher Education Institutes contributed £6.7 billion to the Scottish economy in 2012/13.**

Source: Universities Scotland

This paper sets out the many positive benefits to our universities, our students and the wider research sector of being part of the United Kingdom. It also points to areas where the Scottish Government’s White Paper does not provide a credible explanation as to how an independent Scotland could preserve our position.

We passionately believe the best choice for our future is to remain a nation proud of our achievements while continuing to benefit from the greater opportunities offered as part of the United Kingdom. We have achieved so much together. By continuing to work together as part of the UK, we all can achieve so much more than we could apart.
Scotland as part of the United Kingdom has unrestricted access to an extensive, highly integrated, and thriving research base. The UK research infrastructure, UK Research Councils, and our institutions are recognised and respected globally.

The UK's share of the world's top 1 per cent most cited publications is on an upward trend. 
Source: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

The UK has one of the most effective scientific communities in the world, producing almost sixteen times its per capita share of the world's best science. Research activity is supported by government through the UK Research Councils and UK Government departments. In addition, the UK's network of charitable organisations funds significant amounts of research as do private sector businesses. The work itself is carried out using a network of UK facilities to which Scotland has free access.

The UK was ranked second globally for world-class research in 2011.
Source: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

UK Research Councils and other research bodies work together across the whole of the United Kingdom. For example, the Medical Research Council supported Ayrshire's Alexander Fleming as he discovered penicillin in London over eighty years ago, just as it contributed to understanding the structure of DNA and the development of MRI scanning. More recently, the Medical Research Council has invested in the UK's largest centre for viral research at the University of Glasgow.

The UK Astronomy Technology Centre, based in Edinburgh, is the national centre for astronomical technology. It is an excellent example of our international expertise in building instruments for many of the world's major telescopes and in project-managing collaborations across the UK. It has also recently been announced that this facility will host the new Higgs Centre to support high-tech start-ups and leading researchers specialising in particle physics following an £11 million investment by the UK Government.

The UK was ranked third globally for innovation in 2013.
Source: Global Innovation Index 2013

The global reach and influence of the UK provides the opportunity to locate and supply facilities where the scientific expertise and interest is greatest. Often facilities are in Scotland but Scottish scientists can take advantage of the investment wherever it is located in the UK. Scotland's scientists are an integral part of the UK's research community working with colleagues across the UK, not just to attract funds and investment, but as teams wherever the expertise lies. For example, Scottish scientists work with the UK's Halley Research Station in the Antarctic. This was directly involved in discovering the emerging hole in the ozone layer, and the rapid response of the international community to its findings has meant that the levels of ozone-destroying chemicals in the atmosphere are now falling.

The UK research system offers us the best of both worlds: we have a strong Scottish Parliament making real decisions over our universities and our world-class universities are backed by integrated UK research facilities.
The Scottish Government’s White Paper lacks clarity in its plans for Scottish universities should Scotland vote to leave the United Kingdom. It states its intention to remain part of the UK research system after independence. It also asserts that the position of UK charities which provide significant investment in research would be unaffected by this irreversible change. This raises a number of serious questions for which the White Paper has no credible answers.

The first question is whether post-independence funding for Scottish universities would be adequate to maintain their high international standing. The White Paper proposes a funding model for research in an independent Scotland which would be based on continuing membership of UK Research Councils. Tax contributions to UK Research Councils would be made in proportion to size of population, although rewards, as at present, would depend on excellence in research. Scottish academics would receive grants for specific research as well as continuing to use UK research infrastructure such as JANET, the central computer facility and other facilities such as those provided by the Science & Technology Facilities Council.

Explicit in the White Paper is the assumption that the rest of the UK would consider it advantageous to continue to be part of the present system:

“It is clearly in the interests of both Scotland and the rest of the UK to maintain a common research area.”

The White Paper does not explain the basis of this emphatic assertion. We find it difficult to imagine a situation where the rest of the UK would continue to allow a net outflow of scarce research funding to what would then be a foreign country. It is common sense that you cannot leave a club and expect to keep the benefits so it is a fantasy to pretend that we can leave the United Kingdom but keep the benefits of UK membership. Furthermore, the White Paper does not set out any contingency plan if an acceptable agreement cannot be reached. It is deeply troubling that the Scottish Government has failed to set out a credible Plan B.

Scottish Higher Education Institutions secured £257 million of UK Research Council funding in 2012-13: 13.1% of the UK total, significantly more than our 8.4% of the UK population

Source: Research Councils UK

In any case, it would become increasingly difficult to operate an effective single system over time. Different countries develop different political and economic priorities. Operation of a single system would become increasingly challenging as two independent countries start to diverge across areas such as regulations and legal frameworks. So, while the intention in the White Paper is to continue the benefits of the shared UK system, it can only be an intention. It may simply not be possible.

Next, the White Paper suggests that any subsequent funding gap from the potential loss of UK funding would not be a problem:

“This government plans to ensure that levels of public investment in university research are sufficient to enable our researchers to remain internationally competitive.”

As with many of the promises made in the White Paper there is no accompanying budget. There are suggestions that more funding would come from the European Union. The reality is that Scottish universities can already access European funds within our devolved system and are exceptionally well prepared for the European Horizon 2020 Programme to which the White Paper refers.

The White Paper further suggests that more funding would be sought from the private sector, yet our universities are already highly active in working with business organisations throughout the UK. It is not clear how easy it would be to work with UK based businesses if the economies are
separate post independence. The loss of wider funding provided by the UK Government bodies such as the Technology Strategy Board and UK Government departments such as the Department of Health should also be considered.

Cancer Research UK spent around £34 million in 2012-13 in Scotland on some of the UK’s leading scientific and clinical research.

Source: Cancer Research UK

UK charitable organisations invest approximately £1.1 billion in UK research per annum, 13% of which was spent on research in Scotland. The White Paper claims that nothing would change for this funding in Scotland if we leave the UK:

“Charities, like businesses, will make decisions to fund research in an independent Scotland based upon reputation, excellence and value for money - just as they do now.”

This outcome is not clear. In the event of independence UK charities would be forced to take a view on whether and how much funding Scotland should receive. It may be challenging for many of them to finance research in a foreign country when the majority of their donations come from elsewhere in the UK. For example, the Wellcome Trust is a leading charitable organisation which has invested over £600 million in Scottish health research over the last decade. Commenting on the future of this significant investment if Scotland leaves the UK, the Wellcome Trust noted:

“Our future commitment, and the eligibility of Scottish institutions for Trust support, would need to be reviewed. There is no guarantee that our funding would be maintained at current levels. The majority of the trust’s awards are provided by researchers to UK institutions; the funding that we provide overseas is largely focused at low and middle-income countries.”

“Differences in the regulations and governance systems that introduce additional burdens, or that are perceived to be burdensome, can restrict international collaborations and make countries less competitive. Introducing new and different sets of approvals could jeopardise Scotland’s competitive position for research.”

Wider concerns have been expressed by the Association of Medical Research Charities, which represents over 120 leading charities including The British Heart Foundation and Cancer Research UK. Sharmila Nebhrajani, Chief Executive of the Association of Medical Research Charities, has stated:

“Scotland punches above its weight in life sciences and as a recipient of medical-research funding. My worry is the uncertainty and the risk to funding in that interim period, which could last some time. It may be that going forward, people would then think twice about setting up an institute in what became an independent country. It may mitigate towards grant funding.”

The impact that separation would have on UK-wide clinical trials was noted as an area of particular concern:

“Multi-site trials are set up across tens of hospitals across the UK, and at present they don’t have to worry about differing regimes. If Scotland was to be independent and that consistency was lost, the multi-site trial becomes much more difficult. That is probably bad for the Scottish population.”

This intervention from leading research charities demands a response from the Scottish Government as it shows the White Paper’s assertions to be without foundation.

The White Paper fails to provide credible answers to the most fundamental questions on how the UK’s integrated funding would be replicated. The risk and uncertainty of independence isn’t a choice we have to take. There is a better choice in which we remain part of the UK and of the present systems of research funding within which Scottish universities thrive. The only way to guarantee we continue to have access to UK Research Council funding determined by the excellence of our research and not our population is to vote to remain part of the United Kingdom.
RESEARCH PRIORITIES & COLLABORATION

We are concerned that the White Paper proposes changes to Scottish research priorities, arguing that being outside the UK with the Scottish Government contributing to UK Research Councils would:

“create more transparency and clearer accountability around our investment, enabling Scottish interests to be better and more consistently reflected in the identification of Research Council priorities.”

This has several aspects. The claim that Research Council decisions need to be made more transparent and accountable is puzzling. All Research Council strategy documents are already made available for widespread consultation before they are approved. Full details of funding criteria and decisions are publicly available and included within annual reports. Full accountability for financial decisions and management of research projects is maintained by rigorous reporting requirements, inspection of accounts and reports on research outcomes. The transparency, efficiency and effectiveness of our Research Councils is widely admired internationally.

Next, at present decisions are made by scientists on their understanding of the relevant science and the contribution it can make – not by politicians. The Scottish Government proposals appear to misunderstand the hugely influential contribution to the success of Scottish research which comes from basing it on the “Haldane” principle. This distinguished Scottish statesman - Richard Burdon Haldane – understood very clearly that the best results are achieved when funding is directed by researchers, not politicians. The application of this principle has played an important role in achieving our world-leading status. Scottish researchers have been involved in all these decisions.

We are concerned that the White Paper proposes changes to Scottish research priorities, arguing that being outside the UK with the Scottish Government contributing to UK Research Councils would:

“The UK is ranked in the top five globally for university-industry research and development collaboration

Source: World Economic Forum

At present Scottish researchers benefit from a highly integrated and interdependent UK research system, in whose management and decision-making Scottish academics are represented at all levels. This facilitates interactions between researchers across the UK, as well as projects with industry and academics overseas. The result is a high level of collaboration between researchers throughout the UK, especially in areas which are highly interdisciplinary and areas which require large scale investment in facilities. World-leading research demands world-leading facilities and equipment.

As part of the UK, we can better unlock Scotland’s research potential by sharing the costs of investing in the highly technical and often expensive infrastructure required across 60 million people. According to the Big Science and Innovation Report, our researchers have access to some 221 large scientific facilities across the UK. It is simply not conceivable that an independent Scotland could afford to replicate all of these facilities on a smaller scale.

Our researchers benefit from career opportunities across the UK, including senior positions within professional organisations such as the British Academy and a wider peer-review system which drives up standards. Our graduates have the opportunity to pursue their careers by moving within a UK jobs market ten times Scotland’s size. In 2011-12, 8.2% of Scottish graduates from Scottish Higher Education Institutions took advantage of the opportunities available in the rest of the UK to start their careers. These opportunities
are enhanced by the ease of movement across a single UK labour market. As part of the UK we also benefit from our international reputation to attract the best students and academics, further enabled by the British Council which supports our universities internationally in 100 countries. Scottish universities are already uniquely marketable internationally drawing on the reputation of Scottish research while being part of the renowned UK research system.

**The UK ranked seventh globally as an attractive location for scientists and researchers.**

Source: International Institute for Management Development

Building collaborative partnerships takes time. Independence would make such partnerships more difficult if academics were working within different structures, with different employment conditions and potentially different research and funding bodies. As the Wellcome Trust have noted:

“Science is a collaborative enterprise. Any differences in the regulations and governance surrounding research can restrict international partnerships... Differences in the regulations and governance systems that introduce additional burdens, or that are perceived to be burdensome, can restrict international collaborations and make countries less competitive.”

As part of the UK, Scottish researchers can follow the very best ideas and innovations – unhindered by new, unnecessary borders and barriers. Being part of something bigger means bigger opportunities for our students, young researchers and leading scientists.
Teaching quality is at the heart of ensuring that our world-leading research output enriches the student experience, inspiring and expanding the opportunities open to future generations of university graduates. While we benefit from a UK wide system of research management, the devolution of funding for teaching has enabled us to pursue a separate system for student fees and support from the rest of the UK. Devolution empowers us to pursue distinctive policies determined by the priorities of the Scottish Parliament. Our students thrive through having the best of both worlds.

The White Paper intends to continue the present funding system for Scottish students, pledging to “protect free tuition fees for Scottish students”. If we are to deliver world-class teaching we must invest in it. This pledge is made despite no detailed costings or any acknowledgement in the White Paper of the severely constrained fiscal context in which an independent Scotland would find itself.

The independent Institute for Fiscal Studies calculate that even under the most optimistic scenario an independent Scotland would face a gap between tax income and spending more than twice as large as the rest of the UK. The report suggests that between £3-10 billion of cuts or tax increases would be required to get our finances on a sustainable path – this would require either an 8% cut in public services, a 9% increase in the basic rate of income tax or a combination of the two. We believe this to be a very significant consideration for the future of Scotland’s universities. It is not credible that the White Paper simply ignores this challenge and restricts its financial analysis to just a single page.

In the White Paper the Scottish Government asserts that the status quo in relation to charging fees to students from the rest of the UK will be maintained: “continuing our policy of allowing Scottish Higher Education institutions to set their own annual tuition fees for students from the rest of the UK.”

However, we believe that this policy would run into significant problems with European law.

At the moment, European law requires that students from other EU member states are treated in the same way as Scottish students. They cannot be discriminated against because of their nationality. As a result, students from other European countries cannot be charged fees. Scotland therefore educates students from all across the European Union for free. The only exceptions are young people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland: they are not from another European country, but from the United Kingdom, of which Scotland is part. Here the rules are different and fees can be charged.

If Scotland leaves the UK, and joins the EU as a separate state, the rest of the UK will become like any other European Union country. As a result, Scotland will be legally obliged to provide university education free to students from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Even if the numbers of students from elsewhere in the UK stayed at the same level as today, this would represent a loss of income to Scottish universities of £150 million. If the numbers were to increase – and there would be a very strong incentive for young people from England to come to Scotland for a free education – the effect could be even greater.

The Scottish Government suggests that because so many English students might come to Scotland, this would persuade the European Court that the normal rules should not apply to Scotland. However, many lawyers disagree with this view. For example, Paul Beaumont, Professor of European Union and Private International Law at the University of Aberdeen, says:
“It is hard to see the Court of Justice of the EU accepting the Scottish Government’s arguments as to how this overt discrimination against students from rUK can be justified. There is therefore a substantial hole in the Scottish Government’s plans for funding higher education in Scotland.”

Niamh Nic Shuibhne, Professor of European Union Law at the University of Edinburgh, has argued:

“The Scottish Government would face an extremely steep uphill battle to convince the EU institutions that it should be entitled to retain a practice involving systemic direct discrimination against one particular cohort of EU citizens.”

The Scottish Government has offered no legal basis for their argument, and do not appear to have taken any formal legal advice on it. Perhaps they do not want to hear the answer. Regardless, it would be overwhelmingly in the public interest for any legal advice to be in the public domain. If any advice does exist, the Scottish Government should immediately publish it.

We believe the White Paper’s assertions on charging tuition fees from students in the rest of the UK do not stand up to scrutiny and would increase the annual funding gap between institutions in Scotland and the rest of the UK. This would have negative consequences for our ability to teach Scotland’s students and raises serious questions over the affordability of free tuition for Scottish domiciled students. Ironically, the only way to be sure of keeping the Scottish Government’s policy of no tuition fees is to vote to remain in the United Kingdom.

This debate cannot afford to ignore the position of Scotland’s colleges. Today, there are 128,000 fewer people going to college than five years ago, with a disproportionate fall among women of 77,000. Part-time students have also been negatively affected, with a 46.9% fall in students studying in evenings and weekends between 2007-08 and 2011-12 according to the Scottish Funding Council. Of students combining study at college with work through day release there has been an even greater fall of 56% in the same period. By cutting £50 million from college budgets in recent years the Scottish Government has contributed to a decline in student numbers, disadvantaging women and people from non-traditional educational backgrounds in particular.

We are concerned too about access to education for those from non-traditional backgrounds and for those in part-time education. Scotland has a lower percentage of young full-time first degree students from lower occupational groups at 27.7% than the UK average of 30.7% in 2011/12. Similarly, the percentage of students entering from state schools is lower than the UK average.

Our aim should be to create a fairer, more equitable system of funding higher education teaching which genuinely recognises ability by opening access to higher education of all types to all those living in Scotland, young and mature, who are capable of benefiting from it. Devolution gives us the necessary powers to do so. It is not constitutional upheaval and uncertainty we need. It is the vision and the will to change now.
Looking to the Future

Research in Scotland and the rest of the UK has been world-leading for more than 300 years. Our universities have been educating the next generation of scientists, social scientists, and those in the humanities for over 500 years. Through working together across the UK we have built a valuable environment for science and research to thrive, enabling Scottish universities and researchers to excel internationally. Our students are educated in world-class institutions and have the opportunity to pursue their career in a UK market ten times Scotland’s size.

The future challenge for Scotland’s universities is to retain our world-class position. Other countries, particularly in Asia, are investing heavily in their universities, competing with our research and affecting flows of students to the UK. Their higher levels of research spending and university infrastructures funding will help their economies to grow even stronger. To compete will require not only a commitment to high levels of funding for research. It will also require commitment to efficient and effective use of funds for teaching and unhindered access to large scale UK research infrastructure. This is best achieved within an integrated research system through the greater scale and broader economy we have as part of the UK.

The proposals in the White Paper do not address these issues and do not offer a vision to allow our universities to flourish. Furthermore, the proposals in the White Paper would not match the strengths of our UK research infrastructure. The risk and uncertainty of independence is not a choice we have to take. The future of Scotland’s universities and of those south of the border is best nurtured through being a dynamic part of the UK wide research system.

We can have the best of both worlds - a strong Scottish Parliament taking decisions about our universities and the benefit of being part of a larger, thriving UK research community.
The White Paper proclaims to answer 650 questions. It doesn’t. It simply provides a response. It makes many promises which would not be in the gift of an independent Scottish Government to deliver. Indeed, a recent analysis revealed that 26% of the responses provided are reliant upon agreement with third parties such as the rest of the UK or the EU. The Question and Answer section would therefore more accurately be named Question and Assertion. In this alternative Q&A we provide our own answers and outline some of the many facts the Scottish Government omit.

WHAT WOULD INDEPENDENCE MEAN FOR EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND?

The fact is education is already almost entirely devolved to Scotland. We have a strong Scottish Parliament taking decisions about our education system in Scotland and we enjoy the benefits of being part of larger, thriving UK research community. However, separation risks removing Scottish universities from accessing significant sources of funding and the benefits of being part of a wider community of academic excellence. With more universities in the world’s top 200 per head of population than any other country on the planet Scotland’s universities are thriving as part of the UK. The biggest threat to the success of Scotland’s universities is independence.

WOULD SCOTLAND STILL CHARGE STUDENTS FROM THE REST OF THE UK TUITION FEES?

The White Paper proposes to charge fees to students from the rest of the UK studying in Scotland, as happens today. Legal experts have said this policy would run into significant problems with European law. If Scotland leaves the UK, but remains in the European Union, the rest of the UK will be like any other European Union country. As a result, Scotland could be legally obliged to provide free university education to young people from England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Even if the numbers of students from elsewhere in the UK stayed at the same level as today, this would represent a loss of income to Scottish universities of £150 million. If the numbers were to increase - and there would be a very strong incentive for young people from England to come to Scotland for a free education - the effect could be even greater.

WOULD CHARGING STUDENTS FROM THE REST OF THE UK TUITION FEES IN AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND BE COMPATIBLE WITH EU LAW?

We think not. Legal experts have said this policy would run into significant problems with European law. There is no legal consensus on the White Paper’s assertion that the potential influx of students from the rest of the UK would provide a justification sufficient to persuade the European Court that the normal rules should not apply to Scotland. The Scottish Government have offered no legal basis for their argument, and have not recently found that even under their most optimistic scenario an independent Scotland would require cuts almost two and a half times as deep than if we stayed in the UK. The report suggests this would require either an 8% cut in public services, a 9% increase in the basic rate of income tax (an average increase for basic rate tax payers in Scotland of around £1,000 per year) or a combination of the two.
confirmed whether any formal legal advice exists. We believe it is overwhelmingly in the public interest for the Scottish Government to publish any such legal advice.

**WILL STUDENTS FROM PARTS OF THE EU OTHER THAN THE REST OF THE UK PAY TUITION FEES?**

European law requires that students from other EU member states should be treated in the same way as Scottish students. They cannot be discriminated against due to their nationality. The White Paper proposes that Scotland should offer free higher education to students from every other EU country but demand fees from students from our closest friends and neighbours in the rest of the UK. And yet at the same time they will expect the rest of the UK to share research facilities, and even fund research in those very universities. So not only is the policy likely to be in contravention of EU law it is also profoundly unfair.

**WILL OTHER INTERNATIONAL (NON-EU) STUDENTS BE ATTRACTED TO STUDY IN AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND?**

Right now, as part of the UK, Scottish universities are highly attractive to overseas students because of their world-leading research and elevated position in world rankings. International students recently ranked Scotland the number one worldwide destination for overall learning experience. This success is underpinned by UK Research Funding and being part of an integrated research system pooling resources and infrastructure across the whole of the UK. Access to the well-established and internationally respected Research Excellence Framework makes Scottish universities more attractive to overseas students and funding. There is no precedent for national excellence criteria operating across borders.

**WILL NON-EU/INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS BE CHARGED TUITION FEES?**

This will be subject to a decision by each individual Higher Education Institution. Devolution already allows us to set the rules for student fees in Scotland.

**HOW WILL RESEARCH BE SUPPORTED IN AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND?**

As part of the UK, Scotland already punches above its weight, receiving more than 13% of UK Research Council funding despite making up around 8% of UK population. The White Paper makes no attempt to detail how the proposed cross-border research area, were it to be agreed, could be more effective than the fully integrated system we are part of today. There is little precedent for such an arrangement between countries, typically national governments fund national research. Even the extraordinarily co-operative and long-established Nordic countries share a research pot that amounts to less than 5% of the support that Scotland receives from the UK Research Councils alone.

**WILL AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND SET UP ITS OWN RESEARCH COUNCILS?**

The White Paper seeks to continue our existing arrangements through a negotiated agreement to maintain access to UK Research Councils. However, this is something that would be subject to negotiation and therefore cannot be guaranteed by the Scottish Government. The option of establishing a Scottish Research Council is also proposed, meaning additional set-up and operating costs in order to replicate what we already have as part of the UK.

**WHY WOULD UK RESEARCH COUNCILS CONTINUE TO FUND RESEARCH IN AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND?**

The White Paper seeks to continue our existing arrangements through a negotiated agreement to maintain access to UK Research Councils. However, even if such an agreement could be reached, it is highly unlikely that the UK Research Councils would continue to provide the same disproportionately high share of research funding as we enjoy today. The benefits of our fully integrated UK research system with significant economies of scale are widely acknowledged. A competitive peer review process determines the allocation of Research Council funding based on excellence, regardless of where in the UK it takes place. Scottish institutions receive over 13% of this UK Research Council funding which is disproportionate to our population share of around 8%. Independence puts this at risk.

**HOW WOULD THE RESEARCH COUNCILS BE FUNDED?**

In the event of independence, the Scottish Government would be responsible to set or negotiate a funding infrastructure and decide the level of research funding against competing priorities for public spending. What is clear is that we would lose automatic access to UK Research Council funding which because of our scientific and academic excellence we have been
disproportionately successful in earning. The only way to guarantee this continues is to remain part of the UK.

WILL INDEPENDENCE WEAKEN UNIVERSITY RESEARCH IN SCOTLAND?

The biggest threat to the success of Scotland’s universities in world-leading research is independence. The White Paper proposes to negotiate access to UK Research Council funding in the event of independence. There can be no guarantee that an agreement with the rest of the UK would be reached in which the contribution from Scotland is unchanged. Scotland’s scientific and academic excellence means our Scottish universities receive over 13% of UK Research Council funding, disproportionate to our population share of around 8%. If an acceptable agreement could not be reached, separation would remove Scottish universities from direct access to a community of academic excellence and UK Research Council funding. It is by no means clear why a common research area would be in the interests of England, Wales and Northern Ireland, which would retain over 90% of the UK’s assets and could therefore replace their lost capability much more easily. The White Paper attempts to replicate what we already enjoy but the only way to guarantee our universities remain world-leading is to stay part of the UK.

HOW WILL SCOTTISH RESEARCH CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM UK CHARITIES’ RESEARCH FUNDING?

UK charities fund significant amounts of research here in Scotland. The UK’s network of charitable organisations invest approximately £1.1 billion per year, 13% of which was spent on research in Scotland. The White Paper just provides assertions on the impact of separation on this vital source of funding for Scottish research. UK charities would be forced to take a decision on continuing the disproportionate 13% share of funding which is spent on research in Scotland. Leading charities have raised significant concerns. The Wellcome Trust has stated that the eligibility of Scottish institutions for support would need to be reviewed with no guarantee that funding would be maintained at current levels if Scotland leaves the UK. Wider concerns have also been expressed by the Association of Medical Research Charities highlighting the uncertainty and risk to funding alongside the negative implications for things like UK-wide clinical trials.

HOW WILL INDEPENDENCE AFFECT JOBS OF ACADEMICS AND THOSE IN RELATED AREAS?

Our researchers benefit from greater career opportunities across the UK, access to senior positions within professional organisations such as the British Academy and a wider peer-review system which drives up standards. Our graduates have the opportunity to pursue their career moving in and out of a UK jobs market ten times Scotland’s size, as opportunities arise. Being part of something bigger means bigger opportunities for our students, young researchers and leading scientists.

Serious concerns also exist around the impact of EU regulations on cross-border pensions if Scotland leaves the UK. The Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) manages funds worth £34 billion to pay future pensions to more than 280,000 lecturers and university staff across the UK. The USS has warned that EU pension regulations have “considerable implications” for its viability and Universities Scotland has identified a £9.8 billion shortfall in USS’s total liabilities. This poses significant challenges to satisfy EU requirements for cross-border schemes to be fully funded in the event of separation.

HOW WILL POSTGRADUATE STUDY BE SUPPORTED IN AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND?

Education is almost entirely devolved to Scotland. We have a strong Scottish Parliament taking decisions about support for postgraduates here in Scotland and the benefit of being part of larger, thriving UK research community. Researchers across the UK currently benefit from initiatives like the Research Council Doctoral Training Centres to develop skills to ensure they reach their potential from PhD level onwards. Through devolution Scotland also has the powers to pursue distinct initiatives such as the Scottish Research Pools for doctoral training. The fully integrated UK research system enables the easy flow of people, funding and ideas to nurture the discoveries and breakthroughs of the future.
GET INVOLVED IN THE MOST IMPORTANT CAMPAIGN IN SCOTLAND’S HISTORY

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