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Dear James,

We thought it might be helpful if we further set out the Government's thinking on how the OfS and UKRI will work together on matters concerning Research Degree Awarding Powers.

It has always been our intention that decisions concerning the grant, variation or revocation of degree awarding powers should be informed by a peer review process, as this reflects current practice. Having listened to the strength of feeling during the passage of the Bill about the need to ensure that the best decisions are made about these important matters, we brought forward a Government amendment at Lords Report on 8 March to set out in legislation that the OfS must, before deciding whether to grant, vary or (on grounds of quality) revoke degree awarding powers, first request advice from the designated quality body or – where there is no such body – an OfS committee. Whilst not wanting to be overly prescriptive about the makeup of the advice committee, the new clause sets out that all advice provided must be informed by the views of persons who between them have a wide range of experience, including experience of “research into science, technology, humanities or new ideas”.

However, we also wanted to find a way to recognise the very specific expertise that UKRI will be able to provide. Therefore the new clause also requires that the advice provided to the OfS must be informed by the views of UKRI where the advice concerns RDAPs specific matters.

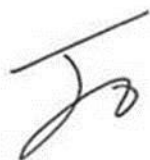
This represents a very significant strengthening of the current system. There is currently no express provision requiring DAPs decisions to be informed by an expert body of this nature and no role whatsoever for bodies such as Research Councils on matters concerning the granting of RDAPs.

We envisage that the expert advice provided by the designated quality body or OfS committee will be extremely influential given that the OfS will be under a legal duty to have regard to that advice before making any decision. Further, we intend to make clear in guidance that we

expect the OfS to share with UKRI all information it receives from a party making representations relevant to a proposed decision, including any follow up information that has been provided during the assessment process. This will mean that UKRI will have a comprehensive view on which to base its opinion before the OfS makes its final decision.

We also want to draw on UKRI's expertise more generally. For example, we are committed to giving a UKRI an important advisory role in preparing the criteria against which applications for RDAPs will be assessed.

We believe that it is right that the OfS, as regulator for the higher education sector, is responsible for final decisions on matters like degree awarding powers, and should be held accountable for those decisions. I hope this letter provides reassurance that the Government has listened to the very relevant points made about the need to involve UKRI on RDAPs matters and that the measures we are taking will guarantee that this will be the case. We hope this helps address your concerns, we will also be laying a copy of this letter in the libraries of both houses.



JO JOHNSON MP



DAVID PRIOR