Summary

This response focuses on the role of DFID in facilitating other UK Government departments and other UK organisations to assist developing countries, particularly the effectiveness of collaboration between UK Research Councils and DFID to deliver world-leading science for development.

ANNEX 1: Portfolio of RCUK – DFID co-funded programmes

ANNEX 2: RCUK – DFID Concordat
1. This response focuses on the role of DFID in facilitating other UK Government departments and other UK organisations to assist developing countries, particularly the effectiveness of collaboration between UK Research Councils and DFID to deliver world-leading science for development.

2. Research Councils UK (RCUK) is the strategic partnership of the UK's seven Research Councils. Each year the Research Councils invest around £3 billion in research covering the full spectrum of academic disciplines from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities. We support excellent research, as judged by peer review, which has an impact on the growth, prosperity and wellbeing of the UK. To maintain the UK’s global research position we offer a diverse range of funding opportunities, foster international collaborations and provide access to the best facilities and infrastructure around the world. We also support the training and career development of researchers and work with them to inspire young people and engage the wider public with research. To maximise the impact of research on economic growth and societal wellbeing we work in partnership with other research funders including Innovate UK, the UK Higher Education Funding Councils, business, government, and charitable organisations.

3. DFID’s strategic engagement with the UK Research Councils is welcomed. Several research councils, both individually and in cooperation with each other, support joint funding programmes with DFID’s Research and Evidence Division. The total portfolio of programmes is listed in the table in ANNEX 1.

4. The total funding committed since 2005 to collaborative programmes including UK Research Councils and DFID is nearly £390m. Taken together, these commitments represent a major co-funding arrangement with a UK government department for the Research Councils.

5. The aims of UK Research Councils, to support excellent research with impact, and DFID, to commission world-class research that directly improves people’s lives, are complementary. The collaboration has stimulated both partners to work in new ways, with positive results. For example, DFID co-funding enhances the ability of Research Council-managed schemes to fund international collaboration. Collaborations also bring together the strengths of individual partners and allow the best use of resources. For example, on joint calls or projects, the Research Council partner may manage the peer review and evaluation process and provide access to the research community, while DFID delivers access to a number of international partners and donors that the Research Council infrequently consults.

6. In the past year, many aspects of Research Council/DFID collaboration have been clarified and systematised through the adoption of a Concordat Agreement signed in March 2014 (ANNEX 2).

7. In addition, MRC has had a Concordat agreement with DFID and its predecessor, the Overseas Development Administration, since 1993 which forms the basis of a partnership to support biomedical and public health research which tackles the priority health problems of people in developing countries. Since 2003 they have
together invested around £290m in global health research within the joint remit of the Concordat.

8. The Research Councils welcome the investment and emphasis which DFID - through its Research and Evidence Division - now places upon scientific research, including social science, to inform development policy. The creation of this centralised division has proved to be an effective move that has enhanced the ability to coordinate research and retain relevance to policy and regional strategies. It has placed research and evidence collection at the heart of DFID’s activities, rather than side-lining research to a peripheral activity. This has enabled collaborations with the Research Councils.

9. The Research Councils believe that research has an essential and substantial role to play in supporting countries towards sustainable growth and development. For example, the importance of cutting-edge social science was recently recognised by the Secretary of State for International Development (in a speech of 7th July 2014). The ESRC in particular welcomes his comments that you cannot replicate the critical services available in developed countries without “a deep understanding of the institutions that were the catalysts for their existence”. Another example is the MRC and DFID collaboration on a number of joint projects and schemes, including joint support of large international trials on microbicides and antiretroviral therapy for HIV, which has a clear link to delivery of the UN Millennium Development Goals.

10. The Research Councils further welcome the increased emphasis in DFID of the importance of scientific excellence and rigour, and the key role of robust peer review in ensuring funding is focused on the highest quality research. Collaboration has allowed the Research Councils to share their expertise in this area with DFID. There are significant challenges in funding and delivering high quality research in an international development context, and the Research Councils and DFID continue to work together to address these. For example, it may not be feasible to conduct research in some DFID priority countries, particularly fragile states, but related research in other countries may be highly relevant and translatable. Appropriate quality control mechanisms are also more complicated. A number of these issues have been addressed in the recently signed Concordat (Annex 2).

11. Ongoing challenges that the Research Councils and DFID will continue to address together include the tension between the need to produce timely and rapid results and the need for long-term investment in research for development to ensure findings are robust.

12. Capacity-strengthening efforts also require long-term strategic planning and joined-up engagement at the individual, institutional and systemic levels. The ultimate aim is to transition to a situation in which national developing country governments recognise the importance of investing in research. If they are to be sustainable, capacity building activities should complement and add value to individual countries’ own ambitions and strategies to develop research capacity.

13. In addition, the implications of the “open access revolution” for developing country research need to be thoroughly considered, to ensure developing country research systems can benefit from this. Access to information can be a fundamental issue in supporting the research base; online access to journals can be as important as investing in people or training.

14. In addition to collaboration with DFID, the Research Councils are a key delivery partner in the Newton Fund, a £375m investment of UK Official Development Assistance through international research collaboration. RCUK views activity under the Newton Fund as complementary to its partnership with DFID, offering important new opportunities to deliver excellent research with development impact. The relationship with DFID and experience of the joint research programmes has strengthened the Research Councils’ capacity to ensure effective delivery of ODA.
under Newton, and the Research Councils and DFID are cooperating effectively to deliver particular components of Newton.

15. The Research Councils strongly value their partnership with DFID, particularly with the mutual values that can be found in informing development decisions and policies with cutting edge science and evidence.

16. The Research Councils would welcome the opportunity to provide the inquiry with further information, particularly on the impacts of funded programmes or projects.

Words: 1,157
## ANNEX 1: Portfolio of RCUK – DFID co-funded programmes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme name</th>
<th>Participating Research Councils (plus others)</th>
<th>Start year</th>
<th>End year</th>
<th>Total Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation (ESPA)</td>
<td>NERC, ESRC</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>£40.5M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRC/DFID Joint Fund for Poverty Alleviation (Phases 1-3)</td>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>£62.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combating Infectious Diseases of Livestock for International Development (CIDLID)</td>
<td>BBSRC (Scottish Government)</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>£13M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Agriculture for International Development (SARID)</td>
<td>BBSRC</td>
<td>2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>£6.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Crop Production Research for International Development (SCPRID)</td>
<td>BBSRC (Gates Foundation, Department of Biotechnology of India’s Ministry of Science and Technology, Indian Council of Agricultural Research)</td>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>£16M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DFID/ESRC Growth Research Programme (DEGRP)</td>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>£20.9M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unlocking the Potential of Groundwater for the Poor (UpGro)</td>
<td>NERC, ESRC</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>£12M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Energy Solutions in Developing Countries</td>
<td>EPSRC (DECC)</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>£12.5M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESRC/DFID China Africa Research Programme (DECARP)</td>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>£4.5M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Development: Raising Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>ESRC</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>£20M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Systems</td>
<td>MRC, ESRC (Wellcome Trust)</td>
<td>2013</td>
<td></td>
<td>£15M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Climate for Africa (FCFA)</td>
<td>NERC</td>
<td>2014</td>
<td></td>
<td>£20M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joint Global Health Trials (JGHT)</td>
<td>MRC (Wellcome Trust)</td>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>£120M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoonoses in Emerging Livestock Systems</td>
<td>BBSRC, ESRC, MRC, NERC</td>
<td>2012</td>
<td></td>
<td>£20M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preamble

1. RCUK and DFID have developed productive relationships in recent years resulting in a series of joint calls which are delivering substantial outcomes in the area of Research for Development¹.
Future calls are being planned which will mean that at least five of the seven Research Councils are in active co-funding research partnerships with DFID. Both funders are committed to commissioning world class research and ensuring the results are available for policymakers and the development community worldwide.

2. With the growth of joint working in Research for Development there is potential for the collaborative environment to become quite complex and it is timely for RCUK to consider with DFID a concordat to provide a framework for harmonisation and to guide joint working. The aim is to ensure that existing and new initiatives can be designed and delivered smoothly and efficiently, and that opportunities are not missed in terms of cross-cutting work between initiatives and cross and inter-governmental working. A. This requires adequate resources and planning from the outset.

Key considerations for collaborative working

3. This document provides high level guidance to assist in the development of joint funding mechanisms. It sets out core principles that provide a framework to minimise complexity and ensure cross-organisation understanding and learning. This framework is presented as an enabling environment that can strengthen the partnerships between the Research Councils and DFID making these more effective, and focused on delivering and demonstrating both impact and value for money. However, it is not comprehensive and as a result should not introduce rigid structures that prohibit the flexibility which may be needed to address new and different challenges or new funding models and partnerships as they emerge.

4. Core principles ensure commitment to;

I. the effective design of research calls or programmes such that they address the ambitions of all stakeholders including the funding organisations providing the resource, the research community that they support and the users that will benefit from the research

II. the identification and support of projects of high scientific merit and development relevance through competitive peer review

III. identifiable pathways for the delivery of impact with development relevance as a core outcome

IV. strengthening the capacity of developing country researchers as an integral part of the research programme

1 The term ‘Research for Development’ in this document refers to the joint ambition of RCUK and DFID to deliver excellent, innovative, cutting edge research which advances knowledge and has the potential to inform policy and deliver clear development impact.

2 MRC has a long standing relationship and concordat with DFID supporting its work in developing countries, including two MRC units in sub-Saharan Africa. This will be unaffected by any new agreement as it pertains to specific commitments. However, MRC may also be interested in working through a new concordat which broadly governs jointly funded research managed through collaborative calls.
V. increasing the opportunity for developed country scientists to strengthen their capacity to deliver research to address the international development agenda

VI. the fostering of innovative approaches, including the importance of multi-disciplinary working when tackling complex research questions

VII. consistent and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

Working practices are considered and addressed as follows;

**Strategy**

5. RCUK aims to set out its priorities for international working clearly on a regular basis such that the visibility of initiatives is raised and potential for impact is realised. Priority setting operates through internal governance at individual and cross Council level. It is able to bring in the views of all Councils and their communities as well as other stakeholders, including academics from the Global South where appropriate.

6. Research commissioned by the DFID Research and Evidence (RED) contributes to the DFID Business Plan and is implemented through the RED Operational Plan. There is a continuous process of priority-setting for research, influenced by DFID policy, Ministerial priorities, demands for research evidence from developing country stakeholders and a broad range of consultations.

7. RCUK and DFID will engage in regular communications which are ambitious and forward thinking in nature. This will include annual meetings between RCUK Executive Group and the Director of Research in DFID and six monthly meetings of RCUK and DFID strategic and programme leads. There should be an opportunity for regular stock-taking and future planning, setting the research challenges in a global context (e.g. in the light of meetings such as Rio+20 and other priorities and actions coming from global groups including G8, OECD, Belmont Forum, Global Research Council etc.). An important part of the on-going dialogue will be to gain understanding of the constraints on the various funders and their conflicting priorities and to work to resolve differences.

**Design and preparation**

8. Calls should be prepared with the fullest possible involvement of relevant partners and stakeholders from the outset so that the call design can result in the best chance of delivering valuable outcomes for all parties. Some key issues for consideration include;

   i. potential to deliver excellent internationally competitive research
   ii. relationship to ongoing or new programmes
   iii. clear understanding of strategy and ambitions of all partners,

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3 Both RCUK and DFID fund capacity-building activities through a range of mechanisms. However, we expect at a minimum that all applications for joint RCUK-DFID funding identify capacity-building activities as part of, and not separate to, the stated research approach. The message given to applicants should be that successful proposals will demonstrate a strong understanding of and engagement with the local research context and ensure the research programme does not overlook or undermine local research capacity.
iv. global context, global state of the evidence, and drivers for call and fit to other activities (national and international)

v. capacity building of developing country researchers. Capacity-building elements should be set out in relation to the core intellectual agenda of the research proposal and not treated separately.

vi. impact of research. RCUK and DFID expect that the researchers they fund under any joint scheme will have identified the potential impacts of their research on policy and practice at the early application stage, and will actively consider how these can be maximised and developed.

vii. due consideration to gender related issues and other diversity issues as part of the research programme

viii. clear understanding of resource requirements and commitment of budget from all funders

ix. value for money: including clear justification of all resources requested, a judgement of the cost effectiveness of the proposed research project as a whole and understanding of the likely impact of the research proposed.

x. monitoring and evaluation

xi. use of best practice to manage the commissioning process in a rigorous, timely and efficient manner

**Call launch and communication**

9. Targeting of the call will be important, balancing wide promotion for maximum exposure with the need to encourage focused and competitive high quality applications and manage demand. New networks and communities of practice as well as the use of new social media opportunities should be explored to ensure the maximum reach of call information. In line with a desire to ensure that opportunities for leadership are provided to partners from developing countries, consideration should be given to support processes required to do this, either at the time of promotion or in a separated dedicated exercise. These will need dedicated resources at programme level. Partners should;

  i. develop a comprehensive awareness of potential stakeholders and existing networks to ensure effective language and targeting

  ii. formalise routes to stakeholder engagement to develop known and trusted mechanisms

  iii. take proactive steps to ensure open and inclusive access at proposal stage to partners from the global south

  iv. use all cross-Council and DFID learning on potential barriers to access and address these in the call and application process design

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4 DFID’s definition of Value for Money (VfM) is about maximising the impact of each pound spent to improve poor people’s lives.
v. ensure cross-Council tools are fit for purpose, maximising the flexibility available within the J-eS system

vi. review UK and developing country participation rates after each call and consider how to address any identified barriers to access.

Call process:

Guidance

10. Design and implementation of a call will be largely dependent on the ambition of the programme and the nature of the community targeted. However, objectives should be agreed between partner funding organisations at the outset and articulated clearly in any advance notice of a call. The researcher community should be given clear, unambiguous and consistent guidance from the outset to help to prepare their bids in an open and transparent environment.

11. RCUK will ensure that guidance for application is easily accessible, up to date and relevant to the specific call. Every possible support will be given to applicants regardless of where they are applying from, using experience and learning around existing barriers to access. Programme secretariat staff will be made aware of these potential barriers and will have developed appropriate support. Additional structures of support may also be developed and resourced.

12. Eligibility requirements for all calls will adhere to the following principles:

- calls will be open to applicants from the UK and overseas;
- principal investigators and co-investigators may be based in either UK or non-UK organisations with demonstrable research capacity;
- projects with developing country leads and developing country partners will be strongly encouraged.

13. Details of the requirements for individual calls will be agreed between DFID and the participating Research Councils whilst adhering to these three principles. All research should be directed towards understanding problems relevant to poor people in Low Income Countries or as currently defined by DFID. Two examples of how this focus has been articulated are below:

The ESPA/ESRC/DFID Poverty language is a “Scheme where research may also be conducted in middle-income countries (MICs), when it can be clearly demonstrated that the research will generate new knowledge of global relevance that has the potential to benefit the lives of poor people in Low Income Countries. Applicants will be required to demonstrate how research undertaken in Middle-Income Countries has the potential to reduce poverty in one or more Low-Income Countries and what will be done during the lifetime of the funded project to ensure that this happens.” (2012)

“DFID’s commitment to the goal of ending extreme poverty has led it to focus its funding on 27 countries (http://www.dfid.gov.uk/News/Latest-news/2011/The-future-of-UK-aid/) primarily, but not exclusively, in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Thus, while research for ZELS can be conducted in other regions, evidence must be provided to show its ultimate relevance to DFID focus countries”. (2012)
Joint Electronic System

14. Where calls are implemented through the RCUK Joint Electronic System (J-eS), RCUK will aim for consistency of operation such that all collaborative initiatives can have the same level of access to tailored attributes of the process, and that there is opportunity for best operational practice to be disseminated and implemented as appropriate. There will be clear guidelines for external partners in using the system to ensure that applications are completed to the required standard and to minimise the risk of applications being rejected due to inadequate knowledge of the system requirements.

Application and peer review

15. The application process should have the flexibility to include tools to encourage and manage demand, to help prepare the community to respond, and to properly consider fit to call from the perspective of all funding partners. To this end the process design may include multiple stages running sequentially or in parallel.

16. Applications to a joint call should be screened by panels with relevant experience to cover fit to remit and call ambition, including issues of scientific quality, multi-disciplinarity, geographic balance and development relevance and impact.

17. The success of the joint selection process hinges on the quality and relevance of peer review and panel members. In line with paragraph 17, all funding partners should undertake to provide the requested number of names of reviewers and panel members to be approached across the required range and spread of disciplines and experience, in a timely fashion, such that the expertise of the reviews covers the breadth of the remit and ambitions of the call, including appropriate geographic coverage.

Funding decision

18. Panel members will provide recommendations for funding to the funding bodies (RCUK, DFID and possible third parties) using the criteria for the call as defined by the call notice and guidance. There will then be a funding decision made by representatives of the funding organisations based on these recommendations, by mutual agreement of the quality/funding threshold. Only projects of high scientific quality with potential for both academic and development impact will be funded. Depending on the breadth of the strategic ambitions for the call, in a mixed portfolio it may be possible to select between a number of grouped highly ranked proposals to achieve a valuable balance across the call remit, rather than funding in strict rank order.

Feedback to applicants

19. It is beneficial for applicants to receive feedback on their proposals and all reasonable efforts will be made to give clear and informative brief comments from the peer review process to all applicants who request it. In a two stage process more detailed feedback may be given to successful applicants after the outline stage in order to help them develop their full proposals.
Where there are clear common feedback points for a call it may be desirable - to provide a summary of key feedback points or consolidated comment in the notification letter which informs applicants of the outcome of their application.

**Project Reporting and Evaluation**

20. Annual reporting templates on outcomes should be designed to meet the needs of all funding partners. Following the first year of implementation, a set date for annual reporting for all grants within the programme should be established to ensure standardised and consistent reporting timeframes. The report will consist of annual financial reports including to meet the requirements of DFID’s Results Frameworks (the specific Research and Evidence Division Framework and the DFID-wide Framework), reports on science and development impact outcomes during and beyond the lifetime of the project, and an end of project report by the lead PI.

21. RCUK should make maximum use of information reported into the Research Outcomes System (ROS) or ResearchFish, sharing this information with DFID as requested; any additional information required from either organisation must be specified in the guidance to applicants from the beginning of the programme, and should not be duplicative or overly burdensome.

22. To further strengthen co-operation and to understand the impact of the RCUK DFID collaboration, an external evaluation of each joint RCUK-DFID initiative should also be agreed at the outset of the programme. The type of data required to inform this evaluation should be defined and formally agreed so that funders and principal investigators are aware of the potential for this requirement and that suitable reference material/metrics can be generated for the reporting process. The planning and resourcing of this should be built in at the early design stage and a proportionate budget secured for evaluation work.

23. RCUK will not provide information on actual administrative spend for schemes at any level of granularity. Research Councils are accountable to government and bound by Treasury rules. However, the lead Research Council will provide financial information to DFID on a regular basis as required by the Memorandum of Understanding.

**Impact, uptake and communication**

24. RCUK sponsored researchers are required to provide a ‘Pathways to Impact’ statement detailing the contribution that their research can make to the economy and society and the pathways towards realising this. The ‘Impact summary’ describes;

- **i.** Who might benefit from this research
- **ii.** How they might benefit from the research
- **iii.** What projects will do during the lifetime of the project to deliver against their pathway to impact.

25. There will be additional guidance to applicants to help them to tailor their pathway to impact to research for development as outlined above, and this will be considered in the call development
process. The RCUK [website](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx) already contains some information on the types of impact expected from RCUK sponsored research, and will be updated to reflect the needs of all funding partners.

26. All RCUK and DFID funded schemes should prioritise planning and resourcing for research uptake from the beginning of any new programme. This includes guidance to funded projects on research uptake but also programme level structures to ensure research uptake over time. Each call specification should make clear the expectation around the minimum percentage of the research project budget that should be dedicated to research uptake activities.

27. Researchers are encouraged to be innovative in the kinds of user engagement, communications and research uptake activities they plan to undertake during and beyond the period of research funding.

28. RCUK and DFID will work together at a programme level to develop research impact monitoring and uptake strategies. This should include use of all existing systems such as ResearchFish, ROS, RC and DFID external websites, R4D and links to DFID evidence sites as well as programme level, more specialist research uptake routes and social media.

29. RCUK and DFID should work towards the demonstration of effective case studies, conceptualisation, capture and communication of development impact, at the same time demonstrating the value for money of jointly funded research and its outcomes.

**Data sharing between funding bodies**

30. In the light of the mixed sources of funding of RCUK DFID grants and the associated accountability requirements, any documents held by RCUK which relate to the grant will be made available, if required, to DFID and its auditors. That requirement includes documents which might contain personal data supplied to RCUK about both the grant’s Principal and Co-Investigators and staff employed to work on the grant, each of whom should be made aware of the existence of this provision by the research organisation. All documents provided by RCUK may, as necessary, be saved, copied and stored by DFID in its own document management systems, including electronic systems.

31. For the purposes of Freedom of Information requests, the data are owned by RCUK. DFID may not release data on behalf of RCUK. Any FOI request received by DFID must be redirected to RCUK but DFID should be made aware of how and what information is shared according to any requests.

**Open access to publications and data**

32. RCUK and DFID both have published policies on open access to publications and data ([http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Research-and-evidence/DFID-Open-Access-Policy/](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/What-we-do/Research-and-evidence/DFID-Open-Access-Policy/) [http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/Pages/outputs.aspx)). In developing a call clear guidance will be given to applicants on how to address the open access requirements of these policies. However, taking into account the requirements of these policies the following principles apply to grants co-funded by DFID and RCUK:
• All journal articles to be published via gold or green open access after a maximum of 6 months (12 months if in Arts, Humanities or Social Science disciplines)
• Funding will be available for all associated legitimate and proportionate costs. The route to funding will depend on the institutional affiliation (i.e. by RCUK block grant at eligible institutions, or within the grant award if not. Applicants should seek advice at the application stage as to whether publication costs should be requested)
• Mandatory open access will apply to journal articles, peer review conference proceedings and reviews. However, given the combined funding sources applicants are requested to consider open access routes for all outputs.
• Applicants must provide a data access and management statement in their application, describing their approach to data management and sharing.
• the final version of peer reviewed articles must be published under the Creative Commons Attribution licence (CC-BY) for Gold open access publications, and a CC-BY-NC or similar when the open access route via a repository is chosen.
• Publications acknowledging MRC funding must be deposited in Europe PMC within a maximum of 6 months after publication.
• Open Access activities from grants will be monitored annually

33. DFID and RCUK will make every effort to ensure that these requirements can be met and should endeavour to accommodate wherever possible any non-standard conditions that arise as a result of the shared ownership of the joint research programmes. In the event that there are limitations on support for open access publication, this should be stated clearly in guidance accompanying the call text. Both agencies should review their open access policies at regular intervals in order to understand whether modification is needed to take into account the specific characteristics of RCUK DFID programmes.