



# Science and Technology Committee

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From Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Chair

George Freeman MP  
Minister for Science, Research, and Innovation  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
(By e-mail)

22 June 2022

Dear Minister,

## **Science and Technology Committee: diversity and inclusion in STEM**

Thank you for taking the time to appear at the final session of the Committee's inquiry into diversity and inclusion in STEM. Your evidence will be helpful as we turn our attention to our final Report on this important topic. During the session we discussed two matters that the Committee would be grateful for some further information on.

### **1. Funding for mathematical sciences**

In January 2020, the Prime Minister [announced](#) a “new, fast-track visa scheme to attract the world's top scientists, researchers and mathematicians”, together with a new £300 million investment in mathematical sciences research over the next five years. The accompanying press release said:

With around £60 million funding available per year, the investment will double funding for new PhDs, as well as boost the number of maths fellowships and research projects.

I note that according to a [parliamentary answer from Lord Callanan](#), £104m had been allocated as of 19 January 2022, and that further information would follow in light of the Spending Review:

Following the Government's announcement in January 2020 to invest additional funding into Mathematical Sciences, UKRI has awarded around £104 million of additional funding to the discipline, over and above EPSRC's core Mathematical Sciences Theme budget. The additional funding has covered institutes, small and large research grants, fellowships, doctoral studentships and postdoctoral awards. On the 27 October 2021, the Government announced the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review. BEIS and UKRI will now set out how we meet the commitment to invest additional funding into Mathematical sciences in forthcoming years, as part of the allocations process.

During her appearance at the fourth session of the Committee's inquiry on 18 May 2022, Professor Ulrike Tillmann, President of the London Mathematical Society, said that the sector was still awaiting information about further funding ([Q353](#)). During the evidence session, Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser said:

We did not receive £300 million specifically labelled 'mathematical sciences, despite the announcement...there is £124 million already allocated very specifically to

mathematical sciences...we are unable to justify the rest of the £300 million in the really dedicated, ringfenced pot that was originally, I think, conceived...what we are really hoping to do, then, is think very hard about how we can support the mathematical sciences community in the much wider portfolio of activities...it is not easy to identify the full £300 million pot that was announced.

During the evidence session, you said:

I want to make sure that we honour that commitment somehow, and if we can't, I will obviously update the House...when I'm clear with Dame Ottoline on what we are, what she and UKRI are planning to do across mathematics, and what the allocations are, then I think I'll come back to the House with an update.

The Committee was concerned by the evidence we heard, which suggested that the Government and UKRI appear to potentially be deprioritising funding for mathematical science, which is a vital part of our research ecosystem. We would therefore be grateful for an update on the disbursement of the remaining £196 million, and whether it remains ringfenced as set out in the Prime Minister's 2020 announcement, or if the commitments made have changed in any way.

## 2. Horizon Europe

The Committee is grateful for the update that you provided regarding the potential move to 'Plan B' and your openness on the likely timings. As the new academic year approaches, as you explained, it will be important that certainty is provided for UK researchers and institutions. We look forward to further information prior to the summer recess, as you indicated would be provided during your evidence. In addition to this forthcoming update, we would be grateful if you could also provide further information relating to your consultation with stakeholders from the research ecosystem. Specifically:

- Has consultation to date been to seek inputs to the plans your department is developing or to examine a draft 'Plan B proposal? Will you be publishing information gained from your consultation?
- Which stakeholders have you consulted with, either formally or informally, so far? Which stakeholders do you intend to consult in the future?
- Will you be publishing a formal consultation and impact assessment for the move to 'Plan B', with a window for stakeholders to provide their views? When can we expect this to appear?

I would be grateful for your response to this letter no later than Wednesday 6 July. I am copying this letter to Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser at UK Research and Innovation. As is usual practice I will be placing a copy, together with your reply, into the public domain.

With best wishes,



**Rt Hon Greg Clark MP, Chair**