

## Responding to a government consultation or parliamentary inquiry...

A consultation or inquiry is a call for information and informed opinion on a specific topic. Learned societies, and other stakeholders, respond to a call when it is in their area of interest. Their response will present evidence, and make recommendations, drawn from the experience and expertise of their community.

### RSB response process:

- 1  Announce intention to respond to relevant consultation/inquiry
- 2  Contact RSB members and Member Organisations to seek contributions to a response
- 3  Write a draft response and circulate to RSB member community for comment
- 4  Make required changes to amend the draft. Agree final wording with our [Council](#), [CEO](#) and [Education and Science Policy Committee](#)
- 5  Submit the agreed response to the relevant consulting body and [publish on RSB webpages](#)

### Example response:

House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee inquiry into Life Sciences and the Industrial Strategy (July 2017) → RSB submitted a [response](#) → RSB chief executive was called to [provide oral evidence](#) at the Committee hearing and submit follow-up evidence

The Committee published [its report](#) 'Life Sciences Industrial Strategy: Who's driving the bus?' (April 2018) highlighting the importance of a long term strategy to protect discovery (fundamental) science and recommending Government review training opportunities for scientists and clinicians, echoing [points made by the RSB](#)

The report's first recommendation reflected RSB's call for Government to consider the full breadth of the biosciences in any life sciences strategy

Government published its [response](#) to the Committee's report acknowledging these points but without describing how they would be implemented

*Read more about the RSB's activity and impact on this inquiry in our [case study](#)*

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## **Brexit: Plant and Animal Biosecurity (2018)**

The future for the UK's biosecurity planning and infrastructure once outside the EU



### **1. RSB advice to Committee (extract):**

“Biosecurity breaches at local or national scale can have profoundly negative effects on the economy and society as a whole”, “effective monitoring, surveillance and detection of patterns of disease occurrence is required [...] to address biosecurity threats arising from both human activity and natural phenomena.”

“Responsive and well-resourced capacity to deliver biosecurity requirements at UK borders will be needed”, “following Brexit, the recruitment of staff with specialist skills to the UK workforce could become more difficult...”

### **2. Committee recommendations to Government:**

“Plant and animal diseases, and invasive non-native species, are a constant threat to the UK's ecology and economy. Ensuring effective biosecurity measures are in place is therefore of great and lasting importance.”

“Without adequate plant and animal health inspectors at the border, it will not be possible to maintain the UK's biosecurity. We recommend that the Government review the skills required to maintain biosecurity, and publish it's findings and it's plans for addressing any gaps, as a matter of urgency.”

### **3. Government's decision:**

“[The Government] is committed to maintaining high standards of biosecurity in the UK. We treat this as a strategic priority...”

“Defra is working closely with the Home Office to ensure that there is a long term strategy for biosecurity workforces as part of the future immigration policy.”

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## The 25-Year Environment Plan (2018)

The UK's plan for the future health of the environment



### 1. RSB advice to Committee (extract):

“...there is a lack of concrete targets and milestones to allow the effective monitoring of progress towards [the 25 Year Environment Plan's] aims.”

“Natural capital management in the built and urban environment should be a high priority with a large portion of the population living, investing in and being influenced by urban settings.”

### 2. Committee recommendations to Government:

“...the Government should bring forward specific, measurable and achievable targets across the 25 Year [Environment] Plan's aims.”

“Urban environments are equally important [as rural] and do not receive the same attention in the Plan”, “The Government should set out [...] how it intends to take forward more effective funding of urban environmental enhancement...”

### 3. Government's decision:

“We have committed to report on policy targets and on environmental outcomes overall, and Parliament will have a role in scrutinizing Government's performance against its commitments.”

“...we commit to define what ‘good’ green infrastructure is in order to create a level playing field for investors and to help focus attention on areas where provision is insufficient.”

The *then Secretary of State* when giving oral evidence said: “one of the things that we need to do is to think about the effective funding of environmental enhancement in urban areas.”

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## The Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (SACs) [2010]

The relationship between SACs and Government



### 1. RSB advice to Government (extract):

“Government should publicly explain the rationale behind their decision making if they choose not to take the advice of a SAC and/or reflect scientific evidence.”

“SACs should have access to training and media advice from independent science press officers outside of Government in order to communicate their position effectively.”

### 2. Government’s decision:

“The Government observes that this [link between SAC advice and departmental policy decision making] will, rightly, remain an issue that requires continuous management through good working relationships and clear, open, formal processes.”

“The Government agrees that engagement is an important aspect of the work of SACs and that good media skills are necessary for effective presentation and transparent operation of SAC activity and advice. The Code will continue to reflect this important issue.”

Read the Government’s [code of practice for SACs](#), published in 2011

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## Strengthening Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and Improving Career Progression for Teachers (2018)

Supporting the teaching workforce and maintaining high standards across formal education are two of the RSB's top priorities for biology education.

### 1. RSB recommendation:

Supportive of a two year induction

Completion of Initial Teacher Training shouldn't be considered the end of training or development

Any framework and Continuing Professional Development must be personalised to the teacher's needs

Effective mentoring should be regular, supportive and discipline specific

Extending the period before QTS should not impact pay

A strengthened QTS is a positive step but Government will need to commit to the required time, effort and funding

### 2. Department's decision:

The induction period will be extended for new teachers to two years

We want there to be professional support available, as there would be in any other top profession

An expert group will be convened to improve awareness of the standard for teachers' professional development in schools

We will review what additional mentor training needs to be developed within the system

Post Initial Teacher Training salaries will still be on the qualified teacher pay scale

We are committed to continuing to work with the profession to make these proposals work

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## Science Technology Engineering and Maths (STEM) Education and Training Strategy (2017)



The RSB responded as part of its wider work, engaging with the devolved nations on STEM education and training.

### 1. RSB recommendation:

Gender balance challenges are not uniformly applicable to all STEM areas

The invaluable work undertaken by Scottish Schools Education Research Centre should be recognised in the strategy

High quality initial teacher training is a key component of the strategy

Creativity is vital to STEM and should be referenced

Experimentation and practical work should be recognised in the strategy

Greater clarity needed on the value of an additional STEM ambassador network

### 2. Government's decision:

We will work with schools to help them recognise and address unconscious bias and gender stereotyping

We will continue to support and fund the Scottish Schools Education Research Centre (SSERC)

A self-evaluation framework will allow universities to evaluate their Initial Teacher Education programme

STEM education and training helps students to acquire creativity and innovation skills

Excellent spaces for STEM learning will be included in new builds and developed through school refurbishment projects

The Scottish STEM ambassador system will complement the existing programme, engaging with sectors that require more support

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## The Teaching Excellence Framework



The RSB has engaged with the DfE on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) at both university (2016) and subject-level (2018).

### 1. RSB recommendation:

Contextual information will be hugely important

The descriptors for TEF level need to explain each level clearly

The outputs need to be at a discipline level to help inform student choice

The levels of administrative burden should be minimised

Universities would benefit from a longer duration for subject-level TEF

There are concerns around both proposed models

Subject-level TEF is not the place for grade inflation metrics

There is no meaningful measure that reflects good or poor teaching intensity

### 2. Department's decision:

Contextual information will support the TEF assessments

We have amended the rating names to 'Bronze', 'Silver' and 'Gold'

We will be piloting a subject-level TEF in Year Four

15 pages is a reasonable starting point for Year Two

We will maintain this approach and have a longer duration under subject-level TEF

Successful features of each model will be piloted to create a revised model

The grade inflation metric will apply only at provider-level

Teaching intensity would be better addressed outside of the TEF

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