

An Overview of Demand Management

Peer Review Integrator,
Engineering and Physical Sciences
Research Council





Please note that the following slides of the original document have been removed as they are not within the scope of your request:

- Slides 2 to 17, and 25***
- Sections of slides 18,19, and 21 to 24***

Current Position / Future Plans: AHRC

- Working with ROs/ ARMA to self-manage demand and quality of proposals.
- Revised 'by invitation only' resubmissions policy introduced
- Enhanced use being made of "expressions of interest" / outline stages and enhanced sift and 'triage' mechanisms for entry to full proposals for some strategic calls.
- Use of more targeted calls, research development workshops, and/or 'longer and larger awards' in some strategic areas (e.g. Knowledge Exchange hubs).

Current Position / Future Plans: BBSRC

- Advising Research Organisation with low success rates and working with them to raise awareness of the peer review process & to encourage increased rigour in their own internal processes.
- Continuation of existing measures e.g. in relation to eligibility, resubmissions etc.

Current Position / Future Plans: EPSRC

- Demand is managed via the resubmissions and the repeatedly unsuccessful applicants (RUA) policies - introduced in April 2010 - the latter are “constrained” to submitting only one application for a 12 month period.
- RUA are those who have:
 1. Three or more applications within a two year period ranked in the bottom half of a funding prioritisation list of rejected prior to panel (office of review reject) AND
 2. An overall personal success rate of less than 25% during the same period

Current Position / Future Plans: ESRC

- Currently, seeking to reduce volume through Research Organisation self-management/ regulation route.
- Current DM measures focus on invited resubmissions only, upstream sifting, use of outlines on large volume schemes.

Current Position / Future Plans: MRC

- Dialogue on delivery plan and to promote a culture of self-management in relation to demand and quality control of proposals.
- Sanctions e.g. quotas not invoked at this time

Current Position / Future Plans: NERC

- Builds on existing measures (limiting applications per call and resubmissions, sifting and encouraging self regulation by Research Organisations (ROs).
- Working in partnership with ROs, asking them to self-regulate their submissions and concentrate effort on competitive proposals. Organisations where uncompetitive proposals are concentrated will receive additional assistance from NERC.
- Autumn 2012, NERC will engage in a strategic dialogue with research organisations on demand management practices, including setting targets for changes in submission behaviours.

Current Position / Future Plans: STFC

- One application per department per grant panel scientific area every 3 years, implemented for exploitation of existing projects and experiments.

The EPSRC Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants (RUA) Policy



History

Same context and drivers as outlined previously. EPSRC introduced two policies to help resolve the issue:

- ***Resubmissions: Prior to April 2009 EPSRC's policy was to allow an unfunded application to be resubmitted after 6 months from the decision date. However, the majority of these resubmissions were not successful and their ranking position did not change. EPSRC now require applicants to substantially change applications before applying again thus making the best use of the peer review process.***
- ***Repeatedly Unsuccessful Applicants (RUA)***

Aims

- ***A reduced burden of effort spent on assessing poor quality applications by the peer review community and consequential increase in the amount of time and effort available to peer reviewers to spend on the consideration of high quality proposals.***
- ***An increase in the efficiency of the current peer review process by a reduction in submission of uncompetitive applications.***
- ***Increased scope to focus on pro-active communication concerning investments rather than reactive communication.***
- ***Better quality research, through fewer more considered proposals.***

Timeline

- Announced in April 2009 - concerns from the community.
- January 2010 emails to all Research Organisations and people likely to be within the policy from it's inception.
- Implemented in April 2010 – covered a 24 month period from April 2008.
- Re-calculated on a monthly basis going forward.

The criteria for meeting the RUA policy are:

1. Applicants (listed as principal investigator (PI) who have three or more applications within a two year period ranked in the bottom half of a funding prioritisation list of rejected prior to panel (office of review reject), AND
2. An overall personal success rate of less than 25% during the same period.

RUA Policy exclusions

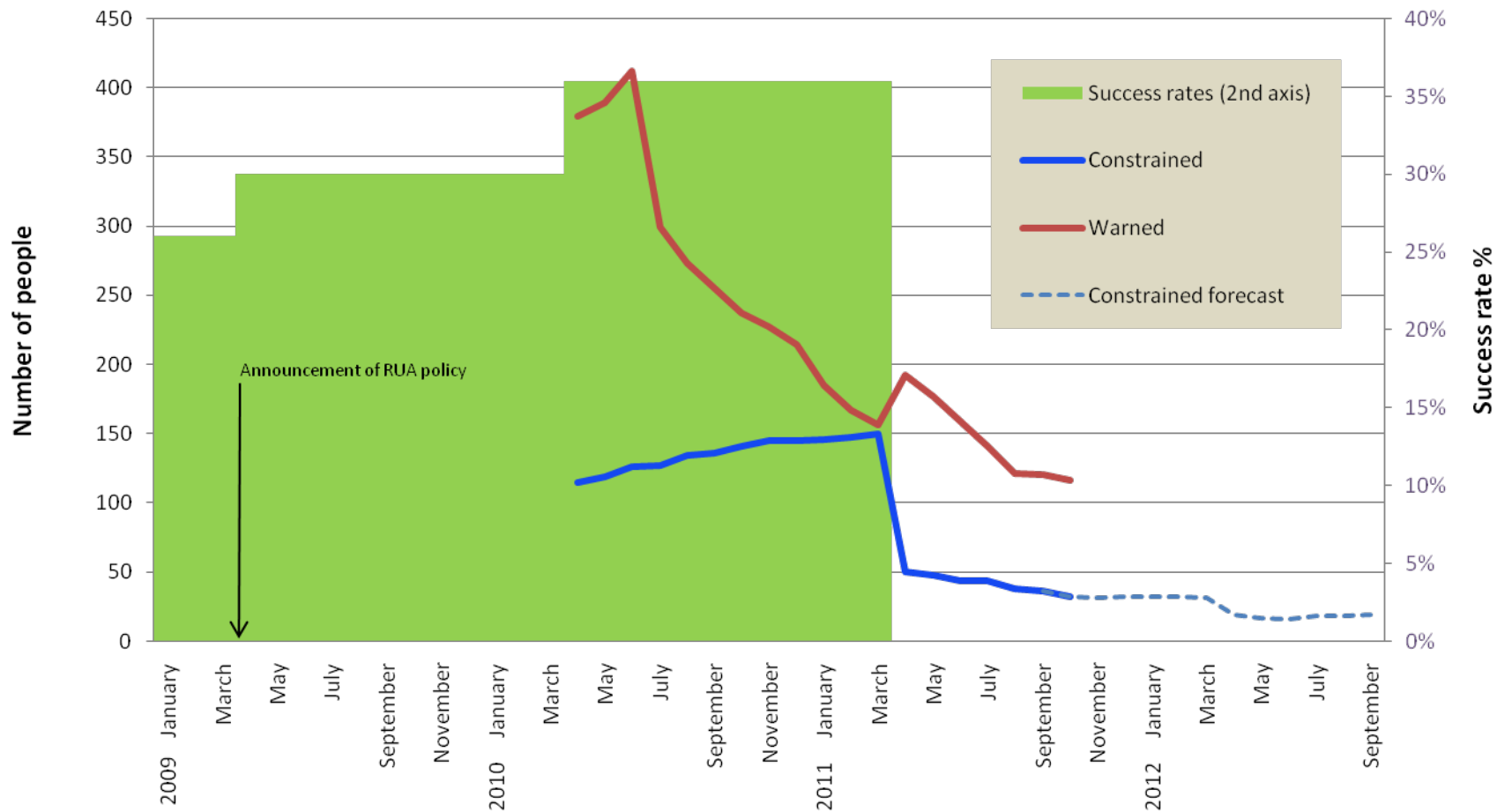
Applications that are not included in the calculation are:

- ***Applications submitted as a Co-Investigator (Col).***
- ***All activities where peer review is led by another funding agency.***
- ***Training grants.***
- ***Outline applications.***
- ***Institutional Awards (Science & Innovation / Bridging the Gaps).***
- ***Applications considered on prioritisation lists that are made up of less than ten applications.***

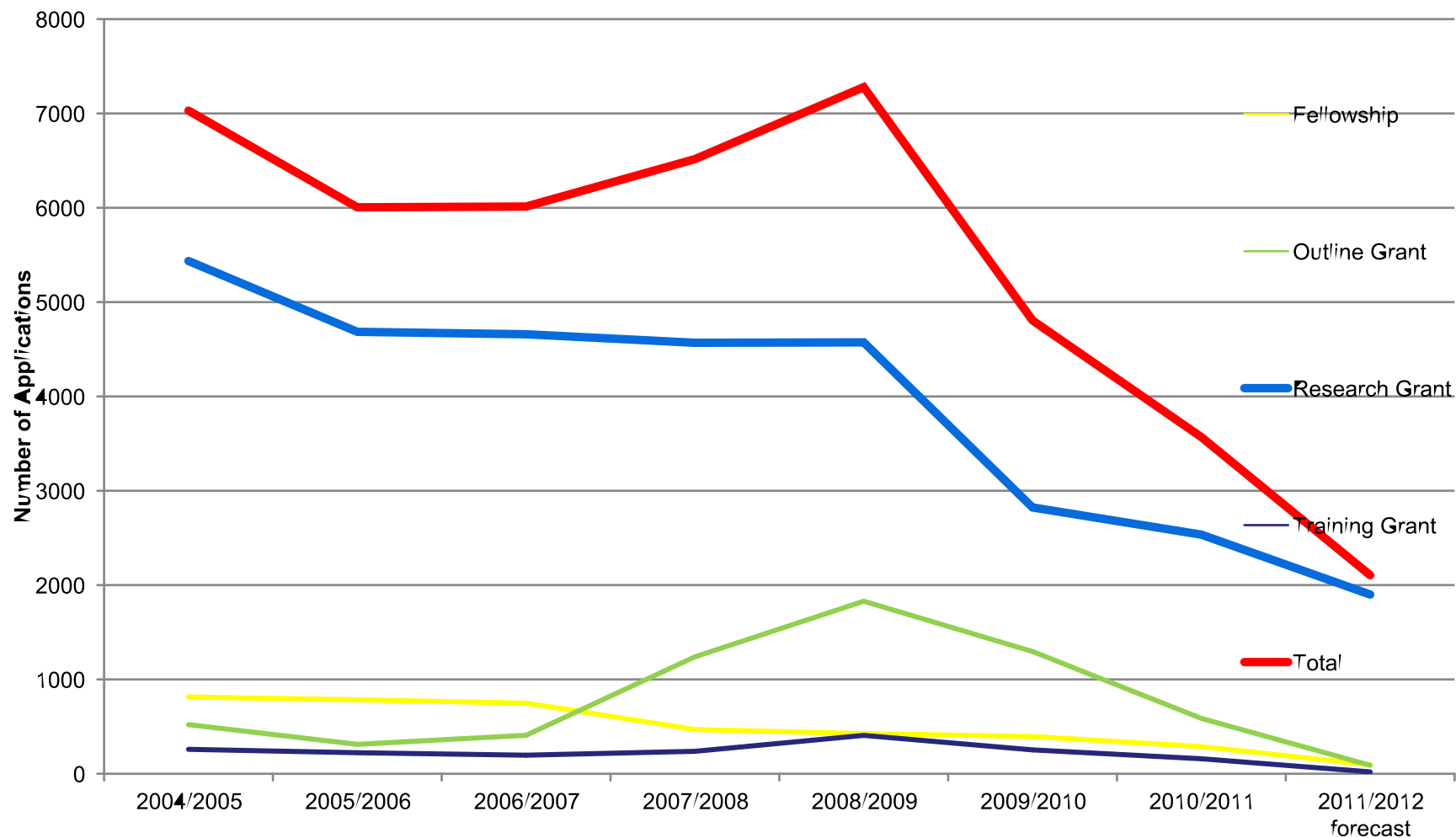
RUA Policy exclusions (Continued)

- Managed calls with a formal sift stage.
- Applications that are invited for resubmission.
- Office Rejects that were rejected as they were out of EPSRC remit.
- Withdrawn applications where they are withdrawn prior to peer review.

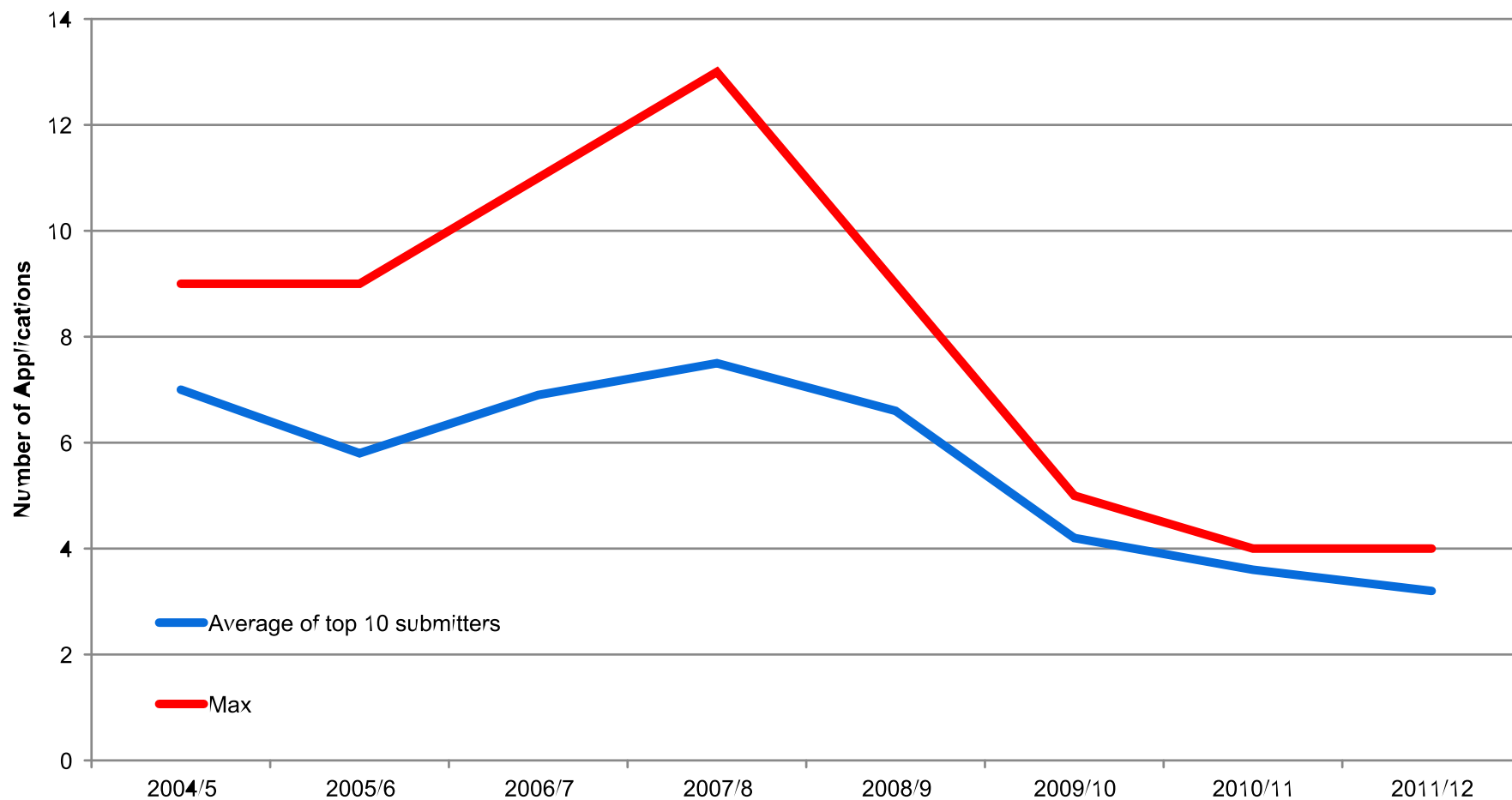
RUA Policy – data and forecast



DM Policy – Applications Received



Submission rates per person



RUA Policy – monthly process

Each month we email people falling into the following categories:

- *‘Warned’ – people who are one unsuccessful application way from being constrained.*
- *‘Constrained’ – people who newly meet the criteria as an RUA.*
- *‘No Longer Warned’ – people who have been warned but who’s history has changed (either because of a successful application or because of an older application no longer falling within the 2 year period).*
- *‘No Longer Constrained’ – people who have been restricted for 12 months and have had their status recalculated.*
- *We also email the ‘Named Contacts’ of all organisations who have applicants on either the ‘warned’ or ‘constrained lists and where a change has occurred from the previous list. These emails are sent to contacts who have been nominated by the organisation.*

RUA Policy - Appeals

Applicants can contact the relevant EPSRC Portfolio Manager in the first instance.

If they are not happy with the response then they should escalate their appeal via the Lead (Head) of the Programme.

If they wish to take the issue further, they must raise it with their university pro-vice chancellor who may take it further with EPSRC.

RUA : Initial Review

Desirable outcomes of the policy.

1. More mentoring within peer groups.
2. It has raised awareness of the quality and quantity of submissions within universities.
3. Good support from universities – examples given were bidding workshops, mock panels, internal peer review, support in application preparation. Both PIs and ROs held this view.
4. Has supported universities with the management of colleagues who were resistant with regard to their internal peer review and submission management processes.
5. Removed the pressure of universities admin expecting a high volume of submissions from their colleagues.

RUA : Initial Review (Continued)

Undesirable outcomes of the policy.

- 1. A feeling that the policy is unfair as there is a perceived amount of 'luck' in the process. This view affected 'successful' applicants that would not be expected to be caught by the policy. It isn't only people becoming 'warned' and 'constrained' who are changing their behaviour.*
- 2. Playing the numbers game – only submitting applications within dates so that they cannot be caught by 3 in 24 months.*
- 3. ROs reported that the terminology used in the policy (constrained, warned) was negative and affected staff moral and the brand of EPSRC.*
- 4. People were less willing to be involved in collaborations.*
- 5. ROs felt that we may have reduced the burden of peer review on EPSRC but we had in fact increased that of the organisations who were implementing more resource heavy procedures themselves. This was also seen as negative as the individual orgs did not have access to the wider range of expertise in the community – therefore the internal peer review of less mainstream ideas lacked expert input.*
- 6. In changing their submission behaviour, some applicants state that they will apply to other for funding agencies rather than EPSRC. Also that they will not submit more adventurous applications but will 'stay safe'.*

RUA : Initial Review (Quotes)

Positive.

- ***“There is no doubt that the policy has helped the University to move in the direction that it was already travelling in ensuring the quality of applications leaving the institution. “***
- ***“... the external demand management process has been helpful in obtaining compliance from colleagues who were hitherto reluctant to have internal comments made on "their" research.”***
- ***“During the last year we have noted a change in attitude from many of our departments (EPSRC related and non-EPSRC). Where previously formalising internal review prior to submission was sometimes perceived by academic departments as overly bureaucratic and unnecessary, most can now see benefits and some have made significant moves towards this. In part this is due to the raising of awareness and highlighting of good practice within the University amongst departmental research committee chairs, but policy changes at EPSRC and planned by ESRC and others have contributed to the changing perception.”***

RUA : Initial Review (Quotes)

Negative.

- ***“We have noticed that our research community as a whole is more hesitant to apply to the EPSRC since the introduction of the policy. This includes our top researchers who have higher than average success rates. “***
- ***“The terms alone, ‘constrained’ and ‘warned’, sit uneasily in a university context in which innovation, creativity, and the free exchange and evaluation of ideas is paramount. The resulting calls and conversations with one’s academic colleagues are not easy, especially when some of our leading researchers, including some Chairs and Heads of Department, as well as Fellows of the Royal Society, are among those listed.”***
- ***“We note that the reduction in numbers submitted has reduced the burden on peer review, but it should be recognised that at least some of that burden has transferred to academic and administrative staff within institutions as the need to review and pre-select applications has intensified.”***

RUA : Initial Review (Continued)

Actions

- ***Out of Remit Applications that are office rejected because they are out of EPSRC remit would be excluded from the policy.***
- ***Managed calls with a formal sift stage. Applications that had been through a formal sift stage and invited to a second stage should be included in the applicants personal success rate but not counted as 'bottom' half of the rank list.***
- ***Rank list numbers. Only rank lists with 10 or more applications will be included in the policy (although they will still count towards an applicants personal success rate). The initial cut off was 6 or more.***
- ***The monthly email process. In response to feedback from Research Offices, the monthly reports will only be emailed to an organisation when there has been a change to the lists. These changes will be highlighted on the reports. All organisations will receive a list at 6 monthly intervals April and October even if no change has taken place.***

RUA : The Future

- This policy is having the desired impact...the number of proposals is declining.yet to reach a new baseline level !
- The number of people affected by the policy (constrained and warned) is also on a downward trajectory.
- The main issue is to ensure that the above policy does not have an adverse impact on the achievement of our strategic goals such as shaping capability and utilising all the financial resources available.
- Given the above, a decision might be required within the next year or so as to whether to continue with this policy in it current form.
- Any policy decisions would also need to take into account the policies of the other Research Councils in this area.

RUA Policy – links

Additional information:

- EPSRC Website:

<https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/apprev/resubpol/Pages/default.aspx>