RCUK-DFID CONCORDAT
SUMMARY

Introduction

The RCUK portfolio of research for development is growing, building on the success of our partnerships with DFID and taking advantage of the increased emphasis on and commitment to overseas engagement by the UK Government. Earlier this year RCUK and DFID signed a Concordat which will further strengthen the strategic engagement of these two major UK funding organisations.

RCUK and DFID have developed productive relationships in recent years resulting in a series of joint calls under a number of programmes which are delivering substantial research outcomes.

Existing RCUK-DFID co-funded programmes include:

- Ecosystems Services and Poverty Alleviation (ESPA)
- ESRC/DFID Joint fund for Poverty Alleviation Phases 2 and 3
- Combating Infectious Diseases of Livestock for International Development (CIDLID)
- Sustainable Agriculture for International Development (SARID)
- Sustainable Crop Production Research for International Development (SCPRID)
- DFID ESRC Growth Research Programme
- African Groundwater: UpGro
- Sustainable Energy Solutions in Developing Countries
- Zoonoses and Emerging Livestock Systems (ZELS)

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. With the growth of collaborative working in Research for Development, it was timely to develop a framework for harmonisation and joint working. The shared learning around recent experiences captured in the Concordat ensures that existing and new initiatives can be designed and delivered smoothly and efficiently; it also ensures that opportunities are maximised for cross-cutting work between initiatives and cross/inter-governmental working.

The Concordat represents a RCUK-wide agreement and is signed by all seven Research Councils, and the Department for International Development as a whole.
The Concordat

Key considerations for collaborative working:

- The 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.
- It 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.
- It is not intended to be comprehensive and 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.

Core principles

The Concordat ensures joint commitment to:

- The effective design of research calls or programmes to address the ambitions of all relevant stakeholders - funders, research suppliers and research users
- The identification and support of projects of high scientific merit and development relevance through competitive peer review
- Identifiable pathways for the delivery of impact with development relevance as a core outcome
- Strengthening the capacity of developing country researchers as an integral part of the research programmes,
- Increasing the opportunity for developed country scientists to strengthen their capacity to deliver research to address the international development agenda
- The fostering of innovative approaches, including the importance of multidisciplinary working when tackling complex research questions
- Consistent and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

Working practices

The Concordat sets out a guiding framework for every aspect of joint calls, including: call design and call launch, communication strategies, application and peer review processes, funding decisions, reporting and evaluation, data sharing and open access. Through this systematic approach, DFID and RCUK commit to working together to provide the best chances of delivering valuable outcomes for all parties.

RCUK and DFID will engage in regular communications which are ambitious and forward thinking in nature, through 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. An important part of the ongoing dialogue will be to gain understanding of the constraints on the various funders and their conflicting priorities and to work to resolve differences.