



## Principles for UK Research Institutes

May 2018

The UK has a strong history of excellence in science and research, and a wide variety of kinds of research endeavours have contributed to this. Research institutes have played a valuable role, with their different models and functions increasing the diversity of the research landscape. In recent years a number of institutes have been established as a result of collaborations between multiple funders and universities, to advance the UK's capacity in particular areas of research. The creation of UKRI presents an opportunity to consider what key principles, based on previous experience, can support the establishment of future institutes.<sup>1</sup>

Keeping in mind the need for variety in models and functions of institutes, there are a number of key principles to take into account when creating new institutes. The below principles aim to ensure investments in institutes translate into impactful benefits for society and the research community, as well as for the UK's international standing and economy.

- **Value:** Research institutes should generate more than the sum of their parts. They are most effective when their prime rationale is to provide nationally unique facilities, rather than to bring people together physically. Their model should support their particular purpose, in the context of the broader landscape of research, and of institutes, across the UK.
- **Sustainability:** It is important to consider how to ensure the long-term viability of institutes, both financially and with regards to the value they provide. They should be developed in such a way that enables their repurposing if they no longer fulfil their original aims.
- **Inclusivity:** Where institutes are collaborations between multiple universities, they should be nationally unique facilities open to all on merit. They should capture the best research activities and researchers, not just a subset from selected universities.
- **Excellence:** Research institutes should seek to provide an approach that drives excellence in research, advancing the purpose of the institute. They can do this in particular through their potential for collaboration and interdisciplinary working.
- **Transparency:** The reason for the establishment of research institutes, and the way in which they are set up, should be transparent, to allow monitoring if appropriate.
- **Skills:** A training link with universities should seek to ensure that researchers at institutes have sufficient career support and opportunities for teaching. This not only supports the career development of existing staff, but also boosts the pipeline of talent at institutes.
- **Collaboration:** Institutes should explicitly stimulate collaboration across the research base, including through the provision of unique facilities. Mechanisms should exist to facilitate collaboration in pursuit of the institute's mission, both within an institute and with partner institutions, industry and other sectors.
- **Operations:** HR, payroll, IT, library and other functions should be based on effective systems in use at existing institutes, to ensure they run efficiently and to minimise organisational complexity.
- **Diversity:** The variety of research institutes across the UK, from national facilities to research council institutes, is valuable to maintain the diversity of the research landscape and sustainability of UK research.

---

<sup>1</sup> In February 2018 Russell Group members met to discuss and share their experiences of establishing research institutes, to identify key principles.