University Response:
Text in Grey is the RCUK Call for Evidence text.

GCRF: Call for Evidence

1. Respondent Information

1. Please enter your name: * Professor Ian Walmsley
2. Please enter your position: * Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
3. Please enter your organisation: * The University of Oxford
4. What type of organisation is this? *
   - University/HEI
   - Independent Research Organisation
   - Government
   - Private sector
   - Non-profit
   - Other (please specify):
5. Please enter a contact email address: * ian.walmsley@admin.ox.ac.uk  cc. kirsty.grainger@admin.ox.ac.uk

6. Please enter your disciplinary area(s) of expertise. Please only select the disciplinary area or areas which most accurately reflect your expertise. If your area(s) of work are not disciplinary in nature please select ‘Other’ and provide additional comments. *

   Agri-environmental science
   Animal science
   Archaeology
   Area studies
   Astronomy - observation
   Astronomy - theory
   Atmospheric physics and chemistry
   Atomic and molecular physics
   Bioengineering
   Biomolecules and biochemistry
   Catalysis and surfaces
   Cell biology
   Chemical reaction dynamics and mechanisms
   Chemical measurement
   Chemical synthesis
   Civil engineering and built environment
   Classics
   Climate and climate change
   Complexity science
   Cultural and museum studies
   Dance
   Demography
   Design
   Development studies
   Drama and theatre studies
   Ecology, biodiversity and systematics
   Economics
   Education
   Electrical engineering
   Energy
   Environmental engineering
   Environmental planning
   Facility Development
   Food science and nutrition
   Genetics and development
   Geosciences
   History
   Human Geography
   Information and communication technologies
   Instrumentation, sensors and detectors
   Languages and Literature
   Law and legal studies
   Library and information studies
   Linguistics
   Management and business studies
   Manufacturing
   Marine environments
   Materials processing
   Materials sciences
   Mathematical sciences
   Mechanical engineering
   Media
   Medical and health interface
   Microbial sciences
   Music
   Nuclear physics
   Omic sciences and technologies
   Optics, photonics and lasers
   Particle astrophysics
   Particle physics - experiment
   Particle physics - theory
   Philosophy
   Planetary science
   Plant and crop science
   Plasma physics
   Political science and international studies
   Pollution, waste and resources
   Process engineering
   Psychology
   Science and Technology Studies
   Social anthropology
   Social policy
   Social work
   Sociology
   Solar and terrestrial physics
   Superconductivity, magnetism and quantum fluids
   Systems engineering
   Terrestrial and freshwater environments
   Theology, divinity and religion
   Tools, technologies and methods
   Visual arts
   Other (please specify):  All
7. Focus Groups will be held to further refine and synthesise the outcomes of RCUK’s stakeholder engagement activities. Please indicate whether you would like to be considered for participation in these focus groups. *
  - Yes
  - No

2. Maximising the added-value of the GCRF

The following high level, interdisciplinary development challenges have been identified by RCUK Strategic Executive as potentially tractable through GCRF research:
  - Health
  - Clean energy
  - Sustainable agriculture
  - Conflict & humanitarian action
  - Foundations of inclusive growth
  - Others may include: ‘resilient systems’ and ‘mass migration and refugee crises’

NB: By ‘high level’ we mean strategic challenge areas which might feasibly be the focus of an interdisciplinary research programme.

8. Thinking about the broader development landscape, in which of these high level interdisciplinary challenge areas might GCRF research add most value? Please select one or more: *
  - Health
  - Clean energy
  - Sustainable agriculture
  - Conflict & humanitarian action
  - Foundations of inclusive growth
  - Resilient systems
  - Mass migration & refugee crises
  - None of these

Please provide evidence:

We welcome the interdisciplinary potential of the Challenge Areas already identified. We recognise the advantages of having a breadth to each Challenge Area to allow different parts of the UK research community to respond, and to collaborate together, to meet the development aims of each Challenge Area. We would encourage the further development of the breadth of each Challenge Areas to prevent narrow, single-discipline (research area), interpretations of the Challenge Areas.

For research to ‘add most value’ it will be essential, and it is expected, that all Challenge Areas will be framed in terms of the development aims/needs/challenges it sets out to meet, and that these will be articulated clearly up-front, to ensure that applicants understand and can demonstrate how their research provides the understanding to meet the development aims. To optimise the impact of the research it is critical to ensure that the research challenges sit within a broader notion or concept of longer-term sustainable development.
With regard to which research Challenge Areas is likely to add most value in the sustainable development space; all of the Challenge Areas identified have the potential to add value. We would not highlight any as having more potential than the others to add value; although recognise that for practical reasons e.g. higher research costs, some areas may require greater investment than others.

Given the scale of the funding, there are advantages in expanding themes to help facilitate a broader interdisciplinary thinking and working. Specifically:

- Sustainable agriculture should be expanded to include Water;
- Conflict & humanitarian action should be expanded to include Disaster Response.
- Foundations of inclusive growth. Should include Infrastructure, and Cultural Heritage.

There are gaps, where the UK research community has considerable strengths and could bring research understanding to development challenges. In particular:

- **Climate change and its impacts**: integrating policy, education, for effective climate change-related understanding, planning and management.
- **Natural resource use**: spanning economic development, communities, policy, technologies, and environmental understanding, for effective management of natural resources (raw materials). If water is not added to the current Sustainable agriculture Challenge Areas then it should be included here.

9. Conversely, are any of these high level interdisciplinary challenge areas on which RCUK should not focus their attention? *

- Health
- Clean energy
- Sustainable agriculture
- Conflict & humanitarian action
- Foundations of inclusive growth
- Resilient systems
- Mass migration & refugee crises
- N/A

Please provide evidence:

3. GCRF and the broader development landscape

The following questions will explore how the GCRF may relate to and complement activities and initiatives (UK and international) which will address the UN’s Global Goals for sustainable development.

10. If you know of any relevant initiatives (e.g. networks, programmes, projects, calls for funding) at the national or international level which specifically aim to address or are directly related to one or more of the UN Global Goals, please list the relevant Goal(s) and provide the following details:

- Title & URL
- Type of initiative
- Summary of aims
- Current partners
- Current investment - cash and/or in-kind (if known)
- Duration of initiative
11. Should RCUK consider including any of the UN Global Goals as challenge areas? Please select those that apply:*  
- Affordable & clean energy  
- Clean water & sanitation  
- Climate action  
- Life below water  
- Decent work & economic growth  
- Gender equality  
- Good health & well-being  
- Industry, innovation & infrastructure  
- Life on land  
- No poverty  
- Partnerships for the Goals  
- Peace, justice & strong institutions  
- Quality education  
- Reduced inequalities  
- Responsible consumption & production  
- Sustainable cities & communities  
- Zero hunger  

Please provide evidence: N/A see response to question 8.

12. Are there any other development challenges that are tractable by research which RCUK should consider including in GCRF? Please provide evidence:

See answer to question 8 (relevant text repeated below).

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- Foundations of inclusive growth. Should include Infrastructure, and Cultural Heritage.

There are gaps, where the UK research community has considerable strengths and could bring research understanding to development challenges. In particular:
- Climate change and its impacts: integrating policy, education, for effective climate change-related understanding, planning and management.  
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4. Practicalities of GCRF delivery
The Research Councils have a long history of engaging in research and capacity building activities in the UK and overseas. This section will focus on the practicalities of delivering the GCRF.

13. Thinking about your answer(s) to the previous questions, how can RCUK ensure that the research funded through the GCRF is successful in growing capability within the UK research base? Please provide evidence:

- Funding streams accessible by researchers at all levels and career stages will be an important part of growing capability within the UK research base.

For many researchers this funding will be their first interactions with development challenges and new interdisciplinary research relationships will be crucial to the success of the fund. Therefore initial pilot and network funding will also be required to ensure proof of concept, support new partnerships, and risky or innovative research.

14. Thinking about your answer(s) to the previous questions, how can RCUK ensure that the research funded through the GCRF is successful in growing capability overseas? Please provide evidence:

- Funding that supports mobility to/from developing countries.

- Encouragement of the co-creation of knowledge, and research partnerships with LMIC institutions. Many UK HEIs have long-tradition of close working with overseas institutions. It is therefore simplest to build on these existing structures than seek to reinvent.

15. How can RCUK ensure that all GCRF projects are ODA compliant? Please provide evidence:

- Providing training, guidance and support for researchers as they develop ideas and proposals for GCRF calls. In particular, University research support staff would benefit from access to training and example-based communications on ODA compliance.

- A dedicated post/helpline at RCUK would be a definite plus.

- Encouraging the use of collaborative/learning approaches and the co-production of ideas, research questions and research rather than conventional technical responses and projects that do not always reflect the priorities of LMICs.

- Centrally convened events that bring together the UK research community, international aid professionals and senior stakeholders from LMICs.

- Consistency between funders in the interpretation of ODA requirements.

- Sufficient funding for the additional administrative costs which HEIs will have in supporting research that works in an international context.
16. How can RCUK ensure that all GCRF projects are well placed to have significant impact in developing countries? Please provide evidence:

- Ensuring that funding is used to support the interpretative and historical depth, the underlying structures and overarching processes of development, and that this understanding is embedded and used to develop funding calls.

- Engaging LMIC partners, the co-creation of ideas (and knowledge), framing research from a development perspective.