

Minister for Higher/Further Education, Youth  
Employment & Training  
Ministear airson Foghlam Àrd-ìre agus Foghlam  
Adhartach, Cosnadh Òigridh agus Trèanadh  
Jamie Hepburn BPA/MSP



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Mary Senior  
MSenior@UCU.ORG.UK

Our Reference: 202100221960  
Your Reference: UKRI ODA Funding

27 July 2021

Dear Mary,

Thank you for your letter of 8 July 2021 regarding the recent decision by the UK Government to make cuts to the Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding for UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) projects.

I share your concerns over the decision taken by UK Government which could significantly weaken the research sector in Scotland including its international connections which underpin its excellence and impact.

As you may be aware, my predecessor Richard Lochhead MSP, wrote to Amanda Solloway MP, Minister for Science, Research and Innovation on 24 March 2021 regarding these spending cuts and other issues affecting the university research base in Scotland.

I am disappointed that the Minister did not reconsider these decisions which will have a damaging impact on institutions in Scotland and across the UK, and represents an unfortunate backwards step in nations working together to solve global challenges, in health, climate change and many other areas.

We made clear to UK Government that these cuts in public spending on science and research do not match their rhetoric for the UK to be a science superpower, nor go with the grain of its promise to increase R&D spending to 2.4% of GDP by 2027. Our view is that such cuts are counterintuitive in a pandemic where we owe science so much.

The decision to cut GCRF funds also utterly undermines the world-leading work of Scottish universities. Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Accredited  
Until 2020



collaborating through research with ODA countries. This decision comes on top of the disruption already experienced by the sector due to Brexit, Covid, and immigration issues.

Such cuts have particularly negative optics in the same year Scotland welcomes many low income countries affected by climate change for COP26.

We understand these cuts are impacting research activity now which is why we have allowed the allocation of £20 million in additional Covid support to Scottish universities in 2020/21, from the Scottish Government, to be used to address the consequences of the reduction in ODA funding from the UK Government. But this has only somewhat softened the immediate blow.

The Scottish Government will continue to challenge the UK Government on their decisions and we are monitoring via the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) the impact of these cuts in Scotland.

As you rightly point out, the SFC's recently published review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability did make reference to the value of research and a collaborative approach to tackle some of society's biggest challenges. We share your disappointment that the recent funding decisions taken by the UK Government undermine this work.

I would like to reassure you that we will continue to work with SFC and other partners to support the research community during this challenging time. We will also continue to engage with the UK Government and make the case that protecting our research base and tackling global challenges cannot be done in isolation.

I note that you have also shared your concerns with the Scotland Office Minister Iain Stewart MP, and would be keen to learn of any further developments.

Thank you for taking the time to outline your concerns, and I look forward to continuing the dialogue with UCU and the wider trade union movement on our shared priorities.

Yours sincerely



**JAMIE HEPBURN**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1 3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Accredited  
Until 2020

