

12 March 2018

Sir Mark Walport
Chief executive
UK Research and Innovation Implementation Team
BEIS
1 Victoria Street
LONDON
SW1H 0ET

Dear Sir Mark

In light of the ongoing strike action by members of the University and College Union at 65 institutions, I am writing to express concerns about your lack of flexibility regarding this year's research funding deadlines.

As you are hopefully aware, thousands of academic and academic-related staff are currently engaged in unprecedented levels of industrial action up and down the UK. Strike action is planned for all five days this week (12-16 March).

UKRI risks causing significant damage to the UK research process if it does not urgently agree to some flexibility. A number of key deadlines for research funding purposes are due by mid-March.

For example, the Researchfish reporting deadline is 4pm on Thursday 15 March and many universities have earlier internal deadlines for reporting on this. A number of major research funding bodies also have application deadlines in and around the strike period.

When appointed last year you said UKRI would "provide a more strategic and agile approach to future challenges" and "work closely with all of the communities for whom it is vital that UK research and innovation continues to be an outstanding success".

I hope you recognise that is exactly what is needed at this time and you will follow the lead of the likes of the Alzheimer's Society and extend the deadlines. As well as the obvious problem of this week's action, many staff will be under pressure from universities to prioritise teaching when they return to work.

In light of these extraordinary circumstances, we call on you to agree an extension to the current deadlines for both existing research funding reporting mechanisms and future grant applications.

Yours sincerely



Sally Hunt
General Secretary