



MEMORANDUM TO THE PARTY LEADERS IN THE 2005 GENERAL ELECTION CAMPAIGN

1) Ensuring a world-class workforce

The nation's scientific health is suffering because not enough young people see science and engineering as attractive career options. Science in schools is suffering because there are not enough specialist teachers, and those who are expected to fill the gap say they lack confidence in teaching biology, chemistry and physics. Universities are grossly underfunded for the jobs they are expected to do; their public grant and income from tightly-regulated fees do not cover the real costs.

What will your party do to make it easier for the science and engineering community to attract young people into science, to bring more of the brightest science graduates into the teaching profession, and to ensure that the UK's universities can remain world-leading scientific institutions?

2) Ensuring a world-class research base

The nation's science and engineering research base is one of its greatest assets, and British researchers outperform their international counterparts in many fields. But research funding comes with more and strings attached, so that people with genuinely novel and brilliant ideas are finding it increasingly difficult to attract funding. For example, in physics, the success rate for grant applications has fallen by 40% in the past few years.

What will your party do to ensure that the UK's world-class research base retains the freedom it needs to generate genuinely new and exciting ideas, which can feed tomorrow's economy and meet the challenges of the coming years?

3) Ensuring a strong knowledge-based economy

Most industries invest less heavily in research and development in the UK than in other countries, and this threatens to weaken the future of the economy. Even those companies that do invest here sometimes find the UK a difficult place to do business. On the day the General Election was announced, new figures showed that the pharmaceutical industry had dramatically cut its capital investment in the UK.

What will your party do to create the conditions in which companies from a wide spectrum of industries see the UK as the one of the best places in the world to invest in science and engineering?