



27 February 2006

CaSE PR 06/03

Scientific community stresses the need for investment in people

As a group of Dundee's postdoctoral researchers join the Campaign for Science & Engineering, a report published today by CaSE highlights the need to invest in scientific personnel if the Government is to deliver its economic ambitions.

"We brought together representatives of many of the organisations that support our work and asked them about their priorities for the Government's next policy review," said Dr Peter Cotgreave, Director of CaSE, "and we have published a summary of their main thoughts. Among the main concerns were issues about the pipeline of scientific and engineering personnel needed by Britain's companies, universities and other laboratories. For many, these issues have overtaken research funding as the most important policy concerns."


Reflecting this emphasis on scientific personnel, the Postdoc Association of the University of Dundee joined CaSE today. "By deciding to be the first UK Postdoc Association to become members of CaSE, we are giving our full support to their valued activities - at the same time as hoping to raise the profile of postdocs, who form an under-represented, yet extremely important, sector of UK science" says Dr. Paul Andrews, co-chair of the Association.

"We believe the emphasis should now switch to restructuring the career path for postdoctoral researchers - partly by professionalising postdocs, partly by providing more tenure-track academic positions. The Government acknowledged the problem after the publication of the Roberts Report in 2002 but little concrete change for the better is evident to my members at the coal face".

"For the past few years, the Government has made significant efforts to increase the level of support for science in the UK," said Peter Cotgreave, "but unless they can sustain a flow of educated and trained scientists and engineers, it will not be able to achieve its admirable aim of making the UK the best place in the world for science.

"CaSE's members are very worried about science education – there is a crisis in the shortage of mathematics and physics teachers and university science courses are seriously underfunded even with the new regime of tuition fees. In addition, as the Postdoc Association emphasises, career structures in the UK's universities and public sector laboratories are not yet designed to ensure that the best researchers are encouraged into science."

CaSE's Opinion Forum document can be downloaded at
<http://www.sciencecampaign.org.uk/documents/2006/CaSE0605.pdf>

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|  | <p>The School of Life Sciences Post-Doc Association. Established in February 2005, the association represents over 200 postdoctoral researchers in the School of Life Sciences at the University of Dundee. It's aims are both specific and wide ranging; to assist in the career development of postdocs and enhance their generic skills, as well as to be a voice for postdocs at local and national levels. Find out more at http://www.dundee.ac.uk/lifesciences/postdoc</p> |
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For further information, contact Peter Cotgreave on 07958 570591.