

**From the President**  
**Professor Sir Robert Lechler**  
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5 November 2019

Professor Alan Manning  
Chair of the Migration Advisory Committee  
2nd Floor, Peel Building  
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2 Marsham Sreet  
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Dear Professor Manning,

I am writing to you as President of the Academy of Medical Sciences in response to the current Migration Advisory Committee commission on "Salary threshold and points-based system (PBS)", to outline our concerns around the impact that a salary threshold could have for medical science and research.<sup>1</sup>

The Academy of Medical Sciences promotes advances in medical science, and works to ensure that these are translated into healthcare benefits for society. Our elected Fellowship includes the UK's foremost medical science experts drawn from academia and industry. We do not directly employ Fellows or researchers, nor do we collect data on salaries. Nevertheless, we work to ensure that UK remains a world-leading place to conduct biomedical and clinical research. In order to do this it is vital that the UK has an immigration system that is suitable to attract and retain the research and innovation talent that we require.

If the UK is to meet the government's target of investing 2.4% of GDP in R&D, a dramatic increase in the number of people working in research and innovation roles will be needed.<sup>2</sup> In order to achieve this, an immigration system that accommodates research and innovation roles will be essential. We are working with the UK Government as they develop proposals for a fast-track immigration route for talented researchers and specialists in science, engineering and technology, we believe that this must be accessible to researcher and innovators from all disciplines.<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, as freedom of movement is scheduled to end, it is vital that the UK's broader immigration system for skilled workers is suitable for those employed in research and innovation roles. In this context, it is our belief that salary is a poor indicator for skill, and that any salary threshold preventing those who are integral to the research sector from coming to the UK would be extremely counterproductive.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/salary-threshold-and-points-based-system-pbs-commission-call-for-evidence>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/reaching-24-securing-the-research-talent-of-tomorrow>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pm-sets-out-vision-to-cement-uk-as-a-science-superpower>

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Many important roles within the research and innovation workforce come with salaries below the current salary threshold of £30,000 (or the 25th percentile of wages in that profession, whichever is higher). Examples include research technicians who have specialist skills to operate equipment and maintain ongoing experiments, manage the care and welfare of animals used for research purposes, and part-time staff whose take-home salary is lower than a full-time equivalent. For example, all employees at the internationally renowned Wellcome Sanger Institute who are employed in RQ5 3-5 technical specialist roles earn less than £30,000 per year. Please see our attached explainer outlining further detail on how a £30,000 salary threshold would negatively impact on research and innovation.

Further to this, a number of roles occupied by staff from the EEA will face immediate shortages if overseas nationals can no longer fill them. This was recognised in the MAC Shortage Occupation List review in May, which identified science and technology technicians as a group of occupations where shortages may be emerging.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the UK must take steps to develop home-grown talent who can occupy these roles, this will take time. In some professions, shortages could arise acutely. For example, in the case of technicians the existing workforce is ageing, with a high proportion of senior professionals due to retire in the next decade.<sup>5</sup> As a result we are concerned that linking a salary threshold exemption to the current Shortage Occupation List would not be sufficiently dynamic or specific to adequately reflect all the roles that are needed to conduct research and innovation.

Finally, with regard to regional disparities in salaries, we are aware of data on the salaries commanded by animal technologists in different regions around the UK. These data indicate that salary varies across regions with an increase in starting, median and upper salary in London/Home counties and South East compared to the Midlands and the North.<sup>6</sup> This further demonstrates that salary is a poor indicator of skill. It is vital that any future immigration system does not impose restrictions that will negatively impact on the ability of institutions in some regions to recruit skilled individuals to research and innovation roles.

I hope you will find this useful, and we will be happy to discuss anything outlined above in further detail if helpful.

Yours sincerely



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<sup>4</sup>[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/806331/28\\_05\\_2019\\_Full\\_Review\\_SOL\\_Final\\_Report\\_1159.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/806331/28_05_2019_Full_Review_SOL_Final_Report_1159.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> 10. P Lewis and H Gospel (2013), 'Technicians under the microscope: a study of the skills and training of university laboratory and engineering workshop technicians', Gatsby Foundation

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.agendalifesciences.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/2019-In-Vivo-Salary-Survey.pdf>

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