

## RESPONSIVE MODE ACTION PLAN 2010.

### 1.0 Introduction:

The aim of an Action Plan for Responsive Mode (RM) is to provide a clear vision for this funding stream, to better evaluate its performance and to identify and prioritise activities that will ensure that it continues to play a vibrant role in the delivery of NERC's strategy. The first Responsive Mode Action Plan (RMAP) was published in March 2009. The activities identified in that Action Plan arose from a recognition that the *raison d'être* of RM needed to be better articulated and its performance monitored; it also included several outstanding activities arising from previous projects, reviews and government expectations.

This, our second RMAP, briefly outlines progress that has been made against last year's activities and outlines a number of new activities. Unlike the 2009 plan, it also incorporates actions arising from the evaluation of the Peer Review College and explicitly includes Fellowships and the delivery of RM studentship schemes.

### 2.0 Responsive Mode Budgetary Allocations

The total RM budgetary allocation (currently including most training) for 2009/10 was £92.7m, including £1.3m for capital grants. Excluding this gives a near-cash budgetary allocation of £91.4m out of a total of £352m across all near-cash funding streams (i.e. 26%). RM Capital grants are funded from a different Science Budget allocation.

Table 1: Planning table for RM investments: 2008/09 – 2013/14

Scheme £M's	Actual	Forecast	Budget			
<b>Grants</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>	<b>2010/11</b>	<b>2011/12</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Consortium	10.5	8.9	11.5	8.8	8.2	7.6
Standard	36.7	43.3	47.0	53.1	52.9	52.9
Small	2.3	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5	2.5
New Investigator	1.2	1.2	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.0
AFI <sup>1</sup>	2.4	2.3	3.4	2.3	2.3	2.3
Capital grants	2.5	1.3	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.6
Fellowships	6.4	9.3	9.6	9.6	9.8	10.0
<b>Training</b>						
Studentships	20.4	20.0	20.0	19.7	20.0	20.4
Masters	4.0	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>86.4</b>	<b>92.7</b>	<b>100.7</b>	<b>102.4</b>	<b>102.2</b>	<b>102.2</b>

Around 75% of the RM budget is specifically allocated to grants. This allocation is divided across six schemes – consortium, standard, small, new investigator, the Antarctic Funding Initiative (AFI) and fellowships. Funds for a seventh scheme – the Urgency scheme – are found from within the standard grants line. The remaining 25% is allocated to training and covers PhD, masters and short courses.

The current breakdown between schemes is provided in Table 1, which shows actual spend in 2008/09, forecast figures for 2009/10, and budget figures thereafter. The budget shows an increase

<sup>1</sup> The AFI budget remaining unallocated following decisions on the 2009/10 round will be incorporated within into other grant lines as per action 2010-1

up to 2010/11 after which it stabilises at its post full economic costing (fEC) implementation level. Note that studentships do not receive full economic costing, but do receive an annual increase in the student stipend rate. This table also includes funding for Solar Terrestrial Physics following a transfer of responsibility from STFC.

The last significant amendment to the balance of funding between grant schemes was following the 2004 Spending Review, when a specific uplift was given to the Consortium Grant scheme. Balance of funding was not considered as part of the NERC blue-skies review in 2006. The balance has since evolved through minor adjustments between schemes by decision of the Executive with the aim of maintaining average success rates between approximately 20 and 25%, this being considered an acceptable range (the RCUK Cost of Peer Review report is consistent with this view).

In future years the Responsive Mode budget will be maintained at a constant proportion of the total NERC budget, as per the recently agreed Council Trajectory; this is currently 27%. As a result, the future available budget (excluding the STP element) has fallen from the 2009 RMAP.

### 3.0 Completed actions from RMAP 2009

Nine of the 15 actions from last year's RMAP will be completed by the end of FY 09/10. These are summarised in Table 1 and described in more detail in Annex 1.

Table 2. Completed actions from RMAP 2009

Action 2009	Description
1	Develop a clear set of criteria for agreeing the allocations between funding schemes
2	Clarify the definition of RM and better publicise the range and purpose of the schemes
3	Better publicise the cross-council procedures for dealing with grant proposals at remit boundaries, and make it clear to applicants when their awards are to be co-funded
8	Identify an effective means of identifying technology proposals to enable success to be measured
9	For a limited period, convene a "virtual" technology expert group to provide expert comment/advice on technology proposals to enable the necessary level of discussion by moderating panels
10	Engage in talks with EPSRC to ensure consistency of approach when defining the technology-related remit boundary with NERC and ensure co-funding when appropriate
11	Continue implementation of KE plans from 2008 and implement impact plans from 2009
12	Continue working with other Research Councils on the Communications and Relationships project
14	Identify a number of key indicators for RM schemes and provide an annually collated set of these indicators, ensuring a harmonised approach across councils where appropriate

### 4.0 Ongoing or amended actions from RMAP 2009

Actions that were revised and / or ongoing are summarised in Table 2, along with a brief statement of their status.

Table 3: Ongoing or amended actions from RMAP 2009

<b>Action 2009</b>	<b>Description</b>
4a - ongoing	<p><i>Provide better guidance to college and referees about how to deal with adventurous, technology-led and multi- and inter-disciplinary applications.</i></p> <p>This action is intricately linked with the review of assessment criteria. Revision of guidance will be carried out towards the end of that exercise (Action 7).</p>
4b - amended	<p><i>For a limited period, all college reviews on technology, adventurous and multi- and interdisciplinary applications to be read in advance of the sift to check for biases.</i></p> <p>Multidisciplinary and/or technology-led proposals from December 2008 round were identified and their progress through the assessment process tracked. Success rates appear to be lower than the overall average, but a longer time series is needed, and time allowed for the revised RM definition to impact on behaviour, before further action is warranted. Both multidisciplinary and technology-led proposals continue to be identified and tracked. Identification of ‘adventurous’ proposals has proven to be more difficult, given that it is a subjective classification. A suitable mechanism has not been identified and further work on identifying adventurous proposals will be considered within the action to review the assessment criteria (Action 7).</p>
5 - amended	<p><i>Define clear metrics for identifying and reporting on adventurous, and multi- and interdisciplinary research and use these to track progress.</i></p> <p>This action is currently being managed through other activities on the RMAP. Further work will be integrated with the on-going action to revise the assessment criteria (Action 7).</p>
6 - ongoing	<p><i>Review the small grants scheme to see whether it properly fulfils the objective of supporting adventurous, proof-of-concept research.</i></p> <p>The scheme is being reviewed, using the 2009 round of proposals as a case study. Recommendations will be available in Spring 2010, with any changes being implemented throughout the coming year to be in place for the 2010 closing date.</p>
7 - ongoing	<p><i>Review and revise NERC’s assessment criteria, ensuring that they remain effective within the NC &amp; RP funding streams.</i></p> <p>A focus group was convened to consider our current assessment criteria, particularly addressing the need to cover all funding streams and types of work that are non-hypothesis driven, technology-led and/or ‘adventurous’. Further consultation on the proposed revised criteria, in terms of their usability and any changes that are required to the sift algorithm, will involve college members. Final implementation is likely to coincide with implementation of the new shared back office system.</p>
13 - deferred	<p><i>Provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants about position in the ranking list.</i></p> <p>Intended as a mechanism to help manage demand, it now seems prudent to wait until the revised assessment criteria have been agreed before proceeding with this action. It will be combined with a new action (2010-2) that considers demand management more comprehensively (See Section 5).</p>
15 - ongoing	<p><i>Evaluate the quality, impacts and outcomes of RM’s science and science-related outputs to maintain excellence.</i></p> <p>A Project Board has been set up to oversee the first evaluation activity. This will focus on the standard grants scheme, as it is the biggest scheme, both in terms of expenditure and number of awards. The two main objectives are to evaluate the extent to which RM research delivers excellent science and science related outputs through assessing the quality of research and outputs in a random selection of RM standard grants, and to assess how RM research has influenced NERC’s strategy. The report will be completed by summer 2010. Preliminary findings will feed into RMAP 2011.</p>

## 5.0 New Actions for 2010

In addition to the six actions carried forward from last year, RMAP 2010 includes two new actions relevant to fellowships and training—areas that were not previously included. For pragmatic reasons, it also incorporates five actions that emerged from the 2008 Peer Review College evaluation that remain incomplete. Finally, there are four new actions that focus on optimising responsive mode funding schemes, their function, use and means of delivery.

### 5.1 Responsive Mode Schemes

**New Action (2010-1): Remove the AFI ring-fence and distribute support for RM Antarctic research across the funding stream.**

*The issue:*

The Antarctic Funding Initiative (AFI) has been running successfully as a ring-fenced scheme within Responsive Mode since 1998. But, the ring-fence is increasingly proving to be restrictive, limiting the number of highly ranked proposals that can be funded and potentially driving down success rates. Indeed, funds were realigned across RM schemes in 2009 in order to ensure sufficient funding for the most highly graded proposals. The current AFI mechanism also does not fit well within the philosophy of funding streams. Taking these two factors together, it has been agreed to remove the AFI ring fence and incorporate this area of research fully within the mainstream RM funding schemes, with Antarctic RM proposals competing on an equal footing with non-Antarctic RM proposals.

*What we will do:*

The current AFI funding round, whose closing date was 29 October 2009 and whose awards are due to be announced in April 2010, will be completed as in previous years. The new arrangements will be in place for the summer standard grant closing date (for the 2012/13 fieldwork season). Implementation of the decision to remove the AFI ring fence will require consideration of the following:

- the mechanism for implementing and managing the change;
- how it will impact on the Collaborative Gearing Scheme (CGS), the Ethics Review Committee and the BAS Antarctic Act Permit;
- how to involve BAS in the logistical feasibility of all applications;
- the need to identify complimentary projects submitted; and
- how proposals in the future should be costed in order that there is no bias in the peer review process.

Preliminary discussions have already taken place with BAS and a high level communication has been posted on the NERC website. Once the detail of this action has been agreed, the benefits of these changes will be communicated widely to both the AFI and NERC research communities.

**New Action 2010-2: Review NERC's demand management policies.**

*The issue:*

The number of proposals submitted to NERC's RM schemes in 2009 was the highest recorded, receiving just over 330 to the July standards and 315 to the December standards rounds; this compares to 429 proposals in the whole of 1999. Other Councils are also concerned about increases in demand. The budget for standard grants has seen some significant increases over the past couple of spending review periods as a result of support for fEC, inflationary increases and an injection of

funds to maintain success rates. However, the current strategic plan has a flat budget for RM into the future and there is a risk that success rates will become unacceptably low. Indeed, the success rate for the December 2008 and July 2009 standard grant rounds were 17% and 18% respectively.

As success rates decline, the level of inefficiency in the system increases for applicants and referees, as well as for NERC Swindon Office. The RCUK Efficiency and Effectiveness of Peer Review Project (2006)<sup>2</sup> estimated that the cost of peer review activities across the whole community (for RC funding) amounted to £196m per annum and noted that success rates below 20% are undesirable. NERC has already implemented a number of recommendations from that Project, such as sifting proposals, reducing the burden on final reports and publishing success rates on the website in order to manage expectations.

*What we will do:*

A expert working group will be convened to debate NERC's demand management mechanisms, including its policy on resubmissions and caps on applications. This group will also be asked to consider the feasibility of implementing some or all of the recently introduced and emerging policies of other Councils and funders, including a 'cooling off period' for those who are repeatedly unsuccessful (EPSRC) and funding by track record (Royal Society). This new action will take forward deferred Action 13 from RMAP 2009.

***New Action 2010-3: Consider the balance of funding between schemes and review the need for, and level of, financial limits***

*The issue:*

RMAP2009 considered how the allocations to funding rounds could be managed in a more structured way than previously. However, this very much focussed on providing flexibility at the margins to respond to expenditure profiles and to avoid major perturbations on success rates; this activity did not consider the strategic objectives of RM. The balance of funding between the various schemes has been more or less constant for many years, and strategic needs of the organisation have changed. It is now time to consider whether these relative allocations (as shown in table 1) are indeed in line with our strategic needs, or whether it would be more appropriate to reduce the allocation in one or more areas to the benefit of other areas.

Any consideration of the balance of funding should also consider the existing financial limits on individual awards that NERC applies on its New Investigator, Small, Urgency and Consortium grant schemes (see Table 4). Few other Councils apply limits to their funding schemes, and NERC is unique in imposing such limit on the Directly Incurred costs only (as opposed to Total costs). The move to a Shared Services Centre (SSC) for grants in 2010 gives an opportunity to consider greater harmonisation and consistency of policy across the Councils where there is no specific reason for a different approach.

The financial limits applied to NERC's schemes were defined when councils moved to full economic costing of grants in 2005 and have remained unchanged. Since then, there have been not only inflationary increases to the cost of research, but NERC has also required that the costs associated with knowledge exchange and economic impact be included within the Directly Incurred limits set, thus restricting the amount of science that is possible within these schemes.

*What we have done:*

A study of all our financial limits and a modelling exercise of the impacts of changing the limits have been undertaken and a decision has been taken to amend this policy, applying limits to *Total* costs in future. In making this change, the revised limits have been set at a level that is comparable to the

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Research Councils UK Efficiency and Effectiveness of Peer Review Project, October 2006.  
<http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/cmsweb/downloads/rcuk/documents/rcukpreport.pdf>

Total costs (on average) for grants awarded under the previous system. Note that the financial limits set for the Consortium grant scheme were already based on total costs, so there are no changes to the limits of this scheme in this regard. A small increment intended to cover the cost of impact plans has been added to each scheme. These increases are considered to be an interim measure until the outcome of this new RMAP Action is delivered.

Table 4. NERC responsive mode scheme limits

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Limits 2005 - 2009</b>	<b>Interim Limits 2009 - 2010</b>
Small	£25K on directly incurred costs	£65K on total costs
Urgency	£25K on directly incurred costs	£65K on total costs
New Investigator	£40K on directly incurred costs	£100K on total costs
Consortium	£3.5m on total costs	£3.7m on total costs

*What we will do:*

This action will be grounded against the revised definition of RM (Action 2009-2, <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/research/responsive/>) as well as drawing on the output of Action 2009-15 (the evaluation of RM) in order to consider whether some schemes could be deemed to have a higher priority and/or importance than in the pursuit of achieving our stated aspirations for RM. We will also build on Action 2009-6 (review of small grants scheme) in order to consider the need for, and the level of, scheme limits more broadly. An expert group will be convened in the later part of 2010 to assess the risks and benefits changing the current balance of funding and of raising scheme limits (or removing them altogether). For example, the removal of funding limits may reduce the ‘volume’ of research (number of grants) that can be supported within current allocations, but the scope of the research may increase. These impacts must be weighed against the purpose of the each scheme and judged within the overall funding envelope for RM.

**New Action 2010-4: Develop a process to enable RM as a means of informing strategy**

*The issue:*

Responsive research is not constrained by strategic science priorities and therefore provides a valuable arena for scientists to explore new, emerging ideas that will help with tomorrow’s challenges and that could form the foundation of the next generation of strategic priorities and stakeholder needs. NERC’s science strategy development is built on a number of inputs, such as data analysis, consultation exercises and input through the Theme Leaders. Information from RM is provided through *ad hoc* mapping exercises and individual dialogue with panel members. Currently there is no systematic way of linking the exciting research from RM into strategic development, and this should be addressed in order to optimise the value derived from this funding stream.

*What we will do:*

Implementation of the pool of college chairs provides an opportunity to address this issue. As a group, these individuals will be asked to identify areas of RM research with a strong potential to significantly influence future strategy development, such as new, emerging or transformative ideas and proposals that have the potential to put the UK at a competitive advantage.

The RM evaluation (action 2009-15) will consider how RM research has influenced the development of strategy historically. Lessons will be identified from this exercise and will inform future processes.

## **5.2 Peer Review College**

The recent evaluation of the Peer Review College, which reported at the end of 2008<sup>3</sup>, identified five high-level, overarching recommendations, each with a number of detailed recommendations resulting in 27 distinct actions. The implementation of these recommendations has been taking place throughout FY09/10. However, the College is, in essence, a tool for ensuring a robust and respected peer review of RM schemes, so it is right and proper that ongoing work associated with it should now be incorporated into the RMAP.

The main focus of the recommendations was to raise the confidence of the community in the process and abilities of the College. The most significant action was to implement a pool of College Chairs<sup>4</sup>, which is now complete, with 16 members in place. Measures to further raise the profile and status of the College, through a communications' strategy and guidance documentation, have also been implemented and are now embedded within the normal processes for managing the College. Additionally, the quality of reviews from College members is now being checked as a matter of course, and any that provide insufficient detail are returned for further input.

There were concerns raised regarding the transparency of both the assessment of proposals and the recruitment process for college members. The focus of this has been to provide more information on the NERC website and to provide better guidance to those applying to be College members. The changes to the web site will be fully complete by the end of FY 09/10.

Overall, seventeen of the recommended actions have been completed and one is already covered within the RMAP (review the assessment criteria). Recommendation 2.7, to gather assessment scores from panel members prior to the meeting, will be considered once the new grants IT system is in place and therefore is currently deferred. Two recommendations are not included here – the option of holding meetings outside of Swindon is a low priority, and the implications of changing the honoraria goes beyond RM and is not appropriate for this document. The eight remaining recommendations have been recombined into the five actions listed below.

### ***Action 2010-5: Reduce the emphasis on self-nomination to the College.***

*The issue:* The College benefits from a wide range of experiences, and self-nomination is a useful tool in identifying individuals to serve as Members. However, the proportion of more senior and highly respected members of the research community sitting on the College has not been as high as is considered optimal both in terms of expertise, but also in terms of maintaining the status of the College within the community.

*What we will do:* The call for nominations to the 2010/11 College has included the opportunity for individuals and organisations to recommend key members of the research community for membership. Using this information, advice from the pool of college chairs and the knowledge of NERC staff, direct invitations will be used to a greater extent than previously in adding new members for the 2010/11 College.

### ***Action 2010-6: Increase consistency and 'corporate memory' between panel meetings and improve the selection process for panel members.***

*The issue:* A number of changes to panel meetings were put in place throughout 2009 to improved consistency and effectiveness. Panel members are given stronger encouragement to read a wider range of proposals than previously, which increases the number of individuals involved in the discussion of each proposal. Where appropriate, NERC will now seek comments from members of

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/assessment/peerreview/review.asp>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/assessment/peerreview/chairs.asp>

another panel where the remits of two panels overlap, and members are now consistently acting as moderators rather than additional reviewers. However, more work is required to ensure a high degree of collective memory, whilst varying the membership to allow flexibility and to avoid nepotism.

*What we will do:* The new pool of college chairs will be asked to consider the outputs of a focus group, which met in July 2009, and offer advice on the best approach for taking this forward.

***Action 2010-7: Consider the need for an annual meeting for College members.***

*The issue:* An annual meeting of the college could provide networking opportunities for members, a forum for exchange of ideas and best practice and input to funding assessment policy decisions and broader NERC issues. Each of these elements has the potential to enhance the status of the College and its membership. However, this must be balanced by the resource and cost required to set these meetings up and to attend, as well as the willingness of members to take part.

*What we will do:* A decision as to whether to instigate such a meeting will be made in 2010 by the Office, based on a financial considerations and a poll of college members.

***Action 2010-8: Provide better feedback and guidance to College members about performance.***

*The issue:* College members already receive an annual report showing their performance against the average. Over the past year, feedback has been provided to individuals on an *ad hoc* basis. Benefits could ensue from implementing this on a more structured basis, for example providing feedback following each funding round—but clearly this has resource and cost implications.

*What we will do:* This action is about weighing up the costs and benefits of providing more frequent feedback to College members on their performance.

***Action 2010-9: Ensure more parity of workload between College members.***

*The issue:* This recommendation was in response to the fact that some members are used only sparingly whilst others can seem to be ‘overloaded’. It would be impossible to ensure a completely even workload, as this has to be in response to availability and the spread of proposals that are received. However, this action is about considering ways of facilitating a more equitable distribution of workload across College members.

*What we will do:* An internal workshop will be held of NERC staff to consider options for better managing the workload of College members.

### **5.3 Fellowships:**

The previous RMAP did not directly cover fellowships or training awards, because these schemes were being considered as part of the emerging People Strategy.

It remains the case that the Research Fellows we support are acquiring greater levels of skills; however, we now consider that support for Fellowships is not primarily a training function. Instead it can be compared with the significant amount of training and development we provide to our employed research staff and that should be provided by Research Organisations to the staff funded through research grants. Although Fellowships are personal awards, and their contribution to an individual’s career is in no doubt, their primary function is in the delivery of a research project. Therefore, Fellowships will be included in this and future RMAPs.

**New Action 2010-10: Identify a number of key indicators for Fellowship schemes.**

*The issue:*

Other than the data collected for the annual report, there has been little systematic collection of data to show how fellowship schemes are performing and to guide where work is required to improve the delivery of this type of research support. In FY09/10, NERC identified and published key indicators for RM research grant schemes and these can be found on the NERC website.

*What we will do:*

Key Fellowship data will be identified and collected in a manner similar to that for RM research grants and will be used to measure certain aspects of performance. This information will be used to develop a more specific action for RMAP 2011.

## **5.4 Training Awards**

Unlike Fellowships, studentships are quite clearly a training mechanism and, as such, oversight falls within the Training Strategy. However, as a large number of studentships awards can be considered to be responsive (in as much as the research project is not driven by NERC's strategic themes) the precise delivery mechanism falls within the aegis of the RMAP.

### **New Action 2010-11: Review the process and mechanism behind the student algorithm**

*The issue:*

The majority of RM PhD studentships are allocated via an algorithm, which was designed to allocate studentships to research active departments without the need for an application and assessment process. The algorithm uses historical data as a proxy to identify research active departments (i.e. the more funding received over the previous three years, the greater number of awards given). The equation used is published on the website<sup>5</sup>, thus allowing departments to anticipate the number of awards they will receive and plan their resourcing more effectively. However, it is timely to review the actual calculation and precise mechanism for delivering these studentship awards, because:

- the change to a new funding structure across NERC means that the precise nature of what is included in the calculations should be reviewed,
- the transfer to a new IT system for managing research funding provides an opportunity to consider whether there is a more efficient way to calculate the allocations,
- the training strategy review requires a more holistic approach to the allocation of training funds, and
- any changes in the number of awards to be allocated through the algorithm (as a result of the revised training strategy) is likely to require a revised scaling value

*What we will do:*

We will undertake a review of the detailed operation of the algorithm with the following objectives:

- establishing whether there are better ways of allocating responsive awards;
- examining the detailed operation of the algorithm;
- examining whether the level and standards of a research organisation's doctoral training should be a factor within the algorithm;
- examining concerns about the impact of using the algorithm on organisations without a strong track record of NERC funding.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.nerc.ac.uk/funding/available/postgrad/schemes/algorithm.asp>

The outcomes of this review would be used to inform the allocation of responsive awards starting in academic year 2011/12.

*RMAP Actions – Summary for end of FY 09/10*

<i>No.</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Priority rating<sup>6</sup></i>
2009-1	Complete	Develop a clear set of criteria for agreeing the allocations between funding schemes	Low
2009-2	Complete	Clarify the definition of RM and better publicise the range and purpose of its schemes. To include reference to technology-led proposals.	High
2009-3	Complete	Better publicise the cross-council procedure for dealing with grant proposals at remit boundaries, and to make it clear to applicants when their awards are to be co-funded.	Medium
2009-4a	Ongoing	Provide better guidance to college and referees about how to deal with adventurous, technology-led and multi- and interdisciplinary proposals.	Medium
2009-4b	Amended	Technology, adventurous and multi-and interdisciplinary applications to be identified and their progress through the assessment process to be monitored for bias.	Medium
2009-5	Amended	Define clear metrics for identifying and reporting on adventurous, and multi- and interdisciplinary research and use these to track progress.	Medium
2009-6	Ongoing	Review the small grants scheme to see whether it properly fulfils the objective of supporting adventurous, proof-of-concept research.	Low
2009-7	Ongoing	Review and revise NERC's assessment criteria, ensuring a good level of engagement with NC & RP. To include reference to adventurous, multi- and interdisciplinary research and technology- led proposals and KE.	High
2009-8	Complete	Identify an effective means of identifying technology proposals to enable success to be measured	High

<sup>6</sup> Prioritisation has been guided by SISB advice, and the need to balance the needs of TAP actions, NERC Delivery Plan, SSC delivery and external drivers.

<i>No.</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Priority rating<sup>6</sup></i>
2009-9	Complete	For a limited period, convene a 'virtual' technology expert group to provide expert comment/advice on technology proposals to enable the necessary level of discussion by moderating panels	Medium
2009-10	Complete	Engage in talks with EPSRC to ensure consistency of approach when defining the technology-related remit boundary with NERC, and to ensure co-funding when appropriate.	Medium
2009-11	Complete	Continue implementation of KE plans in 2008. Implement Impact Plans in 2009.	High
2009-12	Complete	Continue working with other Research Councils on the Communications and Relationships Project.	Medium
2009-13	Deferred	Provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants about position in the ranking list.	Low
2009-14	Complete	Identify a number of key indicators for RM schemes and provide an annually collated set of these indicators, ensuring a harmonised approach across councils where appropriate.	Medium
2009-15	Ongoing	Evaluate the quality, impacts and outcomes of RM's science and science-related outputs to maintain excellence	High
2010-1	New	Remove the AFI ring-fence and distribute support for Antarctic research across the funding stream	High
2010-2	New	Review NERC's demand management policies	High
2010-3	New	Consider the balance of funding between schemes and review the need for, and level of, financial limits	High
2010-4	New	Develop a process to enable RM as a means of informing strategy	High
2010-5	Incorpor-ated from the College Evaluation	Reduce the emphasis on self-nomination to the College	Medium
2010-6	Incorpor-ated from the College Evaluation	Increase consistency and 'corporate memory' between panel meetings and improve the selection process for panel members	Medium
2010-7	Incorpor-ated from the College Evaluation	Consider the need for an annual meeting for College members	Low

<i>No.</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Action</i>	<i>Priority rating<sup>6</sup></i>
2010-8	Incorpor-ated from the College Evaluation	Provide better feedback and guidance to College members about performance	High
2010-9	Incorpor-ated from the College Evaluation	Ensure more parity of workload between College members	Low
2010-10	New	Identify a number of key indicators for Fellowship schemes	High
2010-11	New	Review the process and mechanisms behind the student algorithm	High