

What next for Higher Education funding?

Researchers from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) were called to give evidence to the Independent Review of Higher Education Funding last month. Lorraine Dearden and Alissa Goodman presented the findings from their analysis of different models of funding the Higher Education system, which was funded by the Foundation.

Currently, the taxpayer contributes 23 pence of every

£1 loaned by the government to students in loans for maintenance and fees. The IFS analysis shows this subsidy could be reduced to 10 pence per £1 if the interest rate was increased to 2.2%. Raising the interest rate to 3.45% on student loans would eliminate the taxpayer subsidy.

Allowing universities to charge higher fees would cost the taxpayer *more* money because the average loan subsidy would increase. An increasing number of graduates would also reach the 25 year

threshold at which student debts are written off without having paid off the full value of their loan.

Other factors, such as changing the repayment rate, increasing the number of years after which debt is written off and increasing the threshold at which people start repaying would also reduce the public cost.

However the researchers advised that the government must take into account possible consequences of increased contributions, including a decline in the number of people applying to university. www.ifs.org.uk



Welcome to the Nuffield Foundation Newsletter

Further details on all the stories marked with this icon [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org) can be found on our website, www.nuffieldfoundation.org

The newsletter is published three times a year. For additional copies, or to be removed from the mailing list, please contact fbright@nuffieldfoundation.org

Inside

2

New Chair appointed
Parliamentary reform
New laws on DNA retention

3

Marriage does not improve child outcomes
Accurate information needed in refugee cases
Evidence for accountability

4

UK Young Scientist of the year
Social Science Small Grants
Sustainable Futures pilot

in brief

Weighty arguments

New Chair appointed

We are pleased to announce that Professor David Rhind has been appointed as the new Chair of the Foundation.

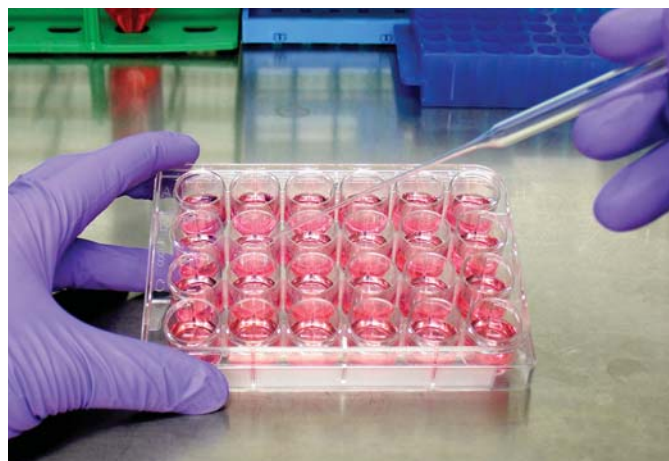
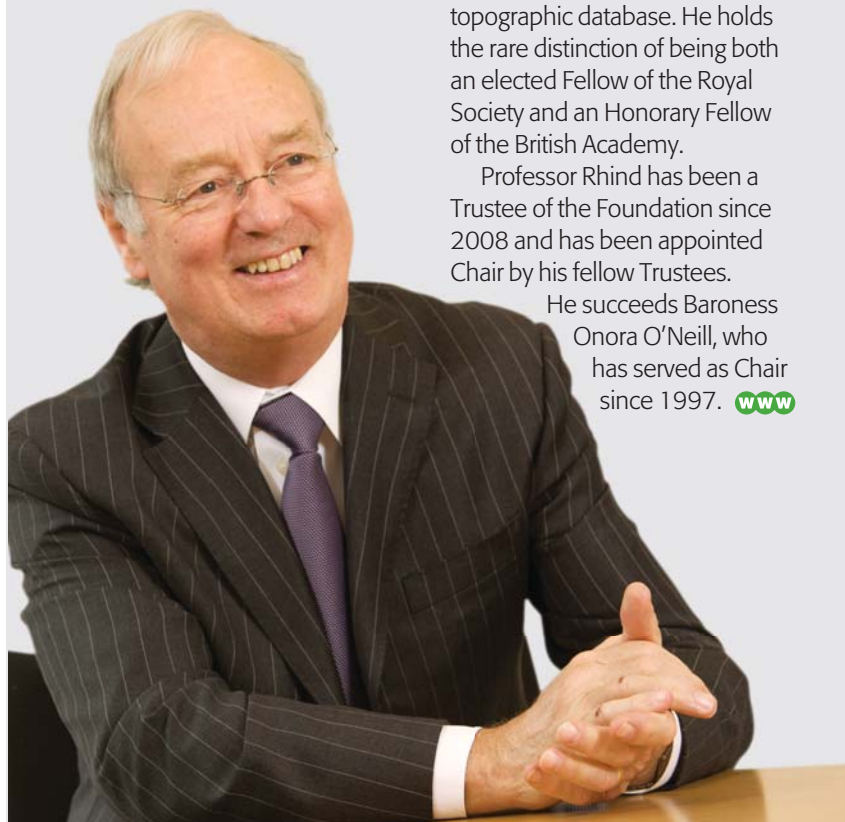
Professor Rhind is a renowned geographer and social scientist, though he was originally trained as an earth scientist. He is currently Chair of the government's Advisory

Panel on Public Sector Information and Chair of Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust Board. He is also a board member of the UK Statistics Authority.

Until 1998, Professor Rhind was Director General of the Ordnance Survey and oversaw the creation of the world's first national digital topographic database. He holds the rare distinction of being both an elected Fellow of the Royal Society and an Honorary Fellow of the British Academy.

Professor Rhind has been a Trustee of the Foundation since 2008 and has been appointed Chair by his fellow Trustees.

He succeeds Baroness Onora O'Neill, who has served as Chair since 1997. [www](#)



New laws on DNA retention

The coalition Government has committed to introducing new legislation to restrict the scope of the DNA database and to give added protection to innocent people whose samples have been stored. In practice this would mean adopting the protections of the Scottish model for the DNA database.

This change was recommended in the Nuffield Council on Bioethics' 2007 report *The Forensic use of bioinformation: ethical issues*. Under the Scottish system, other than in exceptional cases, DNA profiles and biological samples from a person are kept permanently on record only if they have been convicted of a recordable offence.

Also funded by the Foundation, a team from Leeds University led by Dr Carole McCartney, has identified four principles for the preparation of new legislation into the use of forensic bioinformation by the justice system, including establishing an independent governance body to oversee and regulate the use of forensic bioinformation. [www](#)

Parliamentary reform

More power will be given to backbench MPs as a result of the House of Commons vote to create an elected Backbench Business Committee with responsibility for scheduling debates in the chamber for one day per week.

The vote came after MPs were provided with a briefing paper written by Dr Meg Russell at the Constitution Unit at UCL and funded by the Nuffield Foundation. The last Parliament had committed to the reform, but had not passed the required legislation in time.

The new committee will allow more opportunities for backbenchers to raise issues of concern to themselves and their constituents which are overlooked for debate by the Government and Opposition frontbench.

Establishing a Backbench Business Committee was a recommendation first made by Dr Russell in earlier research funded by the Foundation. It was subsequently taken up by the Wright Committee, formed in response to the expenses crisis in 2009. [www](#)



Marriage does not improve children's outcomes

Parental marital status is not the primary cause of differences in children's cognitive development between those born to married and cohabiting couples, according to new research undertaken by the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) and funded by the Foundation.

Other factors such as parental age, education and income are the key determinants in child development – not marital status. These factors are significant in whether people *choose* to marry or to cohabit, which is why it can

appear that children born to married parents achieve better outcomes, but the evidence shows that once these differences in parental characteristics are accounted for, parents' marital status appears to have little or no impact on children's cognitive development.

Similarly, the researchers found that the gap in social and emotional development between children born to cohabiting parents and those born to married parents is reduced by more than half, once differences in parental education and socio-economic status are accounted for. [www](#)



Accurate information needed in refugee cases

The Immigration Advisory Service (IAS) has called for greater clarity in the relationship between the UK Border Agency Country of Origin Information Service (COIS) and the Home Office.

In its report on the impact of independent monitoring of the COIS, the IAS recommends the COIS should report on its relationship with operational and research arms of the Home Office and the implications these relationships have for the production of Country of Origin (COI) reports.

Country of origin information is a key component in determining the risks faced



by asylum seekers and the decision to grant refugee status. Good quality information is therefore fundamental to ensure fairness. An Independent Advisory Group on Country Information (IAGCI) has

been established in order to monitor country of origin information (COI), and the IAS report recommends that this new body should review its methods and its selection process for appointment of experts. [www](#)

Evidence for accountability

A significant number of organisations in the UK are charged with the audit, inspection and scrutiny of government.

The judgements they make have an impact on the public services we use. But what do we know about how these organisations collect and use evidence to come to those judgements?

A team of researchers led by Professor Sandra Nutley and funded by the Nuffield Foundation used detailed case studies to examine how audit, inspection and scrutiny organisations use evidence. The team identified **eight principles** for effective use of evidence in this context.

The principles are explained in the briefing paper, *Evidence for accountability*. [www](#)



UK Young Scientist of the Year



Our Science Bursary students scooped many prizes at this year's annual Big Bang Fair in Manchester, including UK Young Scientist of the Year. Thomas Hearing, from the Thomas Hardy school in Dorchester, won the National Science & Engineering Competition for his project to monitor the erosion of Monmouth Beach and its Ammonite Pavement. Thomas' project was undertaken whilst on a Nuffield Foundation Science Bursary placement with Dorset County Council.

We also sponsored two prizes at the fair – the Nuffield Foundation Stockholm International Youth Science Seminar Prize and the Nuffield Foundation and Clothworkers' Foundation Best Maths Prize. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)



Our new cross-curricular Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) topic, Sustainable Futures is currently being piloted in 17 schools across the UK. The topic focuses on sustainability and challenges pupils to consider some of the key environmental issues which impact on their lives.

Schools are provided with teacher and technician guides, pupil sheets, presentations, video clips and animations. In addition, we are supplying a cross-curricular CPD tool kit that will enable schools to design their own projects. The materials will be revised following the conclusion of the pilot ready for a national launch later in the year. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

Social Science Grants Scheme re-launched

We have re-launched our Social Science Small Grants Scheme. Trustees will award grants of up to £15,000 for research projects in line with the Foundation's areas of interest. Applications will be considered until the end of 2010. Full guidance and further information is available from our website.

The grants are part of our commitment to building research capacity in the social sciences. Following completion of a review by Trustees, the Small Grants Scheme will be succeeded by a new funding stream, details of which will be announced in autumn 2010. [www](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)

Weighty arguments



Inez de Beaufort, Professor of Health Care Ethics at the Erasmus Medical Centre in Rotterdam, gave the Nuffield Council on Bioethics 2010 lecture on ethics, obesity and public health to a packed audience at the Royal Society in April. The lecture is available to watch on the Council's website, www.nuffieldbioethics.org www

Help for vulnerable workers

The first of two new guides for vulnerable workers has been published. *Facing Disciplinary Action: A guide for employees and their representatives* was funded by the Foundation and is available to download from www.londonlawcentre.org.uk www



William Morris, Lord Nuffield
1877-1963

The Nuffield Foundation is a charitable trust endowed by William Morris, Lord Nuffield, the founder of Morris Motors. Our aim is to improve social well-being in the widest sense. We fund research and innovation in education and social policy, primarily in the UK but also in Europe and Africa. We also work to build capacity in education and science and social science research.

Full information on all our current activities and details of how to apply for grants can be found at www.nuffieldfoundation.org

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