

UK science budget stays frozen

No more money for research, but a boost for spending on facilities and buildings.

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The UK budget for science will remain in the deep freeze, the chancellor of the exchequer George Osborne revealed today. But with cuts being made to nearly all sectors except health and schools, some researchers are relieved that [science has emerged relatively unscathed](#).

"Last year the chancellor came to the Royal Society and gave a speech that put science and innovation at the heart of long-term sustainable economic growth," says Paul Nurse, president of the Royal Society, Britain's national academy of science. "He was asked to provide the money to back that up and today he has done that."

The comprehensive spending review unveiled today sets the budgets of all government departments for the 2015–16 financial year and leaves science funding at £4.6 billion (US\$7 billion) — the same level that it has been at since 2010. But spending on science infrastructure such as facilities and buildings will increase from this year's £0.6 billion to £1.1 billion, and the government promises that this figure will grow in line with inflation until 2020–21. The details of how the infrastructure budget will be distributed will be announced tomorrow.

But Sarah Main, director of the Campaign for Science and Engineering, a London-based lobby group, cautions that the settlement means that inflation will erode the science budget by 6% in real terms. "With a frozen budget, it is not clear how all the new infrastructures are going to be staffed and maintained," she says.

The United Kingdom is one of the world's top five countries for science, according to a [2011 government report](#) . "At present, our economic competitors are outspending us in science but are not outperforming us," says Nurse, who argues that the budget should be seen as a foundation for a long-term strategy of increased investment. "If we want to stay ahead and build on our competitive advantage, we need to not only match the investment of other countries but to surpass it."

The budget also provides an additional £185 million for the Technology Strategy Board, which funds business-led research projects, and £160 million per year to match funding for scientific infrastructure provided by the private sector.

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Updates

Updated: The Chancellor announced on 27 June a further £150 million for "health research infrastructure, including facilities for our world-leading work on dementia". No details are yet available.