

Presidential Inquiry - Call for Evidence

Inquiry into the State of Chemical Engineering Research in the United Kingdom

1. Introduction

The Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) is undertaking an inquiry into the **state, direction and sustainability of chemical engineering research in the United Kingdom (UK)**.

Chemical engineering research underpins a wide range of sectors critical to the UK's economic prosperity, environmental objectives and societal wellbeing, including but not limited to energy, manufacturing, materials, health, food, water, and the transition to net zero. Ensuring that the UK maintains a strong, resilient, and internationally competitive research base is of fundamental strategic importance.

The inquiry is being conducted by the IChemE, chaired by President **Raffaella Ocone**, to invite and consider evidence from across academia, industry, government, and the wider research ecosystem.

The inquiry will seek to identify not only current strengths and challenges but also gaps and the strategic choices that will shape the future of chemical engineering research in the UK.

2. Purpose of the Inquiry

The purpose of this inquiry is to:

- Assess the current health and diversity of chemical engineering research in the UK
- Examine how well research activity aligns with national industrial, environmental and societal priorities, including the UK Government's Industrial Strategy and priority growth sectors
- Consider the effectiveness of current funding structures, incentives, and career pathways
- Explore the relationship between academia, industry, and government in shaping research direction
- Identify strengths, challenges, risks, and opportunities for the future.

The inquiry will report in various ways, including a report setting out key findings and recommendations aimed at supporting a resilient, impactful and internationally competitive chemical engineering research ecosystem.

3. Who Should Submit Evidence

IChemE welcomes written evidence from:

- Academic researchers at all career stages
- Industrial researchers and R&D leaders

- Research funders and policy professionals
- Professional Engineering Institutions, Learned Societies, and other professional bodies
- Employers, innovators, and end users of chemical engineering research
- Individuals with relevant experience or insight.

Submissions may be made **in an individual or organisational capacity**.

4. Scope and Questions

Respondents are invited to submit evidence addressing **any or all of the questions below**.
You do not need to answer all questions.

The state of the field

1. How would you characterise the current health of chemical engineering research in the UK?
2. What are the UK's strongest areas of chemical engineering research today?
3. Are there currently significant regional strengths or gaps in UK chemical engineering research capability, infrastructure or skills?

Direction and relevance

4. How well aligned is current chemical engineering research with national priorities (for example net zero, industrial strategy, resilience, health or sustainability)?
5. Where are the most significant gaps or emerging needs in chemical engineering research?
6. Are there important areas that may not currently align with national priorities but remain essential for future capability?
7. How effectively is chemical engineering research connected with other disciplines and contributing to priority UK growth sectors?

People, funding, and careers

8. What challenges face early- and mid-career researchers in chemical engineering?
9. How well do current funding, assessment and incentive structures support long-term research capability?
10. What skills will be most important for the next generation of chemical engineering researchers, and how well is the current system preparing them?

System and competitiveness

11. How effective are current links between academia, industry and government in shaping research priorities and outcomes?
12. What risks does the UK face if current trends in chemical engineering research continue?
13. How are international collaborations and partnerships affecting UK chemical engineering research, and how might geopolitical or funding changes influence these relationships in future?
14. What role does industry currently play in shaping, funding, or leading chemical engineering research in the UK?
15. How effective are current pathways for translating chemical engineering research into innovation, commercialisation, and industrial impact?

Looking Ahead

16. What, in your view, are the most important strategic opportunities for UK chemical engineering research over the next 10–15 years?
17. What one or two policy, funding, or structural changes would most strengthen the UK's long-term capability in chemical engineering research?
18. What single change would most improve the UK chemical engineering research ecosystem?

5. Submission Guidance

- Submissions should be written in plain (jargon-free) English
- There is no minimum or maximum length, but contributors are encouraged to be concise
- Evidence may be submitted in narrative form or structured by question
- Contributors are encouraged to include examples, data, or case studies where relevant.

Submissions will be considered by IChemE's assessors. Contributors may be invited to participate in oral evidence sessions, roundtable discussions, or other fora.

6. How to Submit

Written evidence should be submitted by **11:59 pm Friday 1 May 2026** to:

policy@icheme.org

At the start of your submission, please include:

- Your name
- Organisation (if applicable)
- Whether you are submitting in an individual or organisational capacity
- Whether you wish for your submissions to be treated as confidential.

IChemE recognises that contributors may have limited time. **Short, focused submissions are welcome**, and partial responses addressing only one or two questions are entirely acceptable.

7. Publication and Use of Evidence

Unless otherwise requested, submissions may be:

- Quoted or referenced in the inquiry report
- Published on IChemE's website and other IChemE communication channels.

If you wish all or part of your submission to be treated as confidential, please make this clear when submitting.

8. Further Information

Questions about the inquiry or the submission process may be directed to policy@icheme.org.

Please note IChemE's privacy policy: <https://www.icheme.org/legal/>