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UK maintains excellence on global scientific stage

PRESS RELEASE FROM NATURE PUBLISHING GROUP

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The UK remains a major power in the scientific world, coming second only to the United States in a ranking of the Global Top 100 countries for scientific research in 2012. Published today, the first Nature Publishing Index (NPI) Global supplement ranks countries and institutions according to their output of primary research articles in the 18 Nature research journals in 2012, and includes data from 2008-2011 for comparison.

“The UK has always punched above its weight in science, producing high-quality academic research despite a small population and less research funding (as a share of the economy) than other major research countries,” say the supplement editors.

The UK is home to around 235,000 researchers and high ranking institutions, with 51 of the top 500 institutions in 2012 – up from 43 in 2008. Collectively, UK institutions contributed 677 papers to Nature research journals in 2012.

The University of Cambridge and the University of Oxford lead the UK institutions, in eighth and 14th places worldwide, while University College London (UCL) and the Medical Research Council (MRC)'s institutes feature in the top 50 global institutions.

The UK was particularly strong in the life sciences and earth and environmental sciences, ranking behind only the US on the global list for both. In earth and environmental sciences the UK finds its strongest representation with 14 institutions in the global top 100 for that field. These include well known non-university centres such as the Met Office Hadley Centre, the British Antarctic Survey and the National Oceanography Centre.

In chemistry and physics, the UK ranks third and fourth respectively and is “indisputably in the elite echelons in physical science research” say the editors.

Ireland also performed well in the NPI, named as one of the top five “countries to watch” by the supplement editors, and moving up the country ranking from 30th in 2008 to 20th in 2012. Despite Ireland's austerity measures, spending on research and science budgets has stayed largely intact.

The Global Nature Publishing Index 2012 supplement is available online at nature.asia/publishing-index-global and is published as a supplement to *Nature* today. The ranking is a snapshot based on papers published in 2012, with 2008-2011 data also included to show trends.

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