Today for the first time, the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is to recognise its global centres of excellence with official ESRC Research Institute status. The move acknowledges those centres which have demonstrated sustained strategic value to the Council, as well as to the broader social science research landscape, with long-term, five-year funding.

The new ESRC Institute status is part of a package of changes in funding policy for ESRC centres and marks a change in the way that the Council will fund a small number of strategically important centres that have been persistently successful in open competition.

Launching as the first ESRC Research Institutes will be the Centre for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy (CPP) and the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP).

Both of these centres – CPP, which is based at the Institute for Fiscal Studies, and CEP, which is at the London School of Economics and Political Science – have demonstrated significant impact over the long term on public debates around policy in their areas, particularly in economic and fiscal policy. They are also key centres of excellence for training researchers, building expertise and skills within the UK research community in these areas, to compete at an international level.

To qualify to apply for the status a centre will have successfully applied for ‘ESRC centres’ funding a minimum of three times (meaning a minimum of 15 years ESRC funding).

Successful application for Institute status will provide long-term funding (with review every five years) for the new Institute to pursue independent research into ongoing, complex research and societal challenges, as well as to respond promptly in cases of national need.

Professor Jennifer Rubin, Chief Executive and Executive Chair Designate of the ESRC, said: “Both CPP and CEP have demonstrated research of international quality. Their research has not only had a considerable effect within their fields, but also a tangible impact and influence on policy and peoples’ lives in the UK, which has been achieved over a considerable period of time.

“We are delighted to announce our first ESRC Research Institutes which form a crucial element of the changes in our funding of ESRC centres. We are looking forward to seeing both Institutes work closely with the ESRC to continue to provide broad leadership within the social sciences, including the development and dissemination of new research whilst strengthening the research base through capacity building both within and beyond the UK.”

Professor Sir Mark Walport, UK Research and Innovation Chief Executive, said: “These two ESRC Institutes represent landmark investments in the national research landscape. They will continue to play a vital influence in maintaining the UK’s international standing at the cutting edge of economic research, and in influencing thinking on economic and fiscal policy nationally, and globally. We are delighted that they have been recognised for their achievements to-date and look forward to their future relationship with UK Research and Innovation in helping shape the future of economic research and policy.”

Professor Stephen Machin, Director of CEP, said: “My colleagues and I at the Centre for Economic Performance are delighted to be awarded ESRC Institute status. This is testament to the achievements since the Centre was first set up in 1990 and its significant impact on a wide range of policy over the years. We very much look forward to working with the ESRC to continue to respond to social and economic changes and seek answers to key contemporary economic questions, as well as developing new, ambitious research areas.”

Professor Sir Richard Blundell, Director ESRC Centre for the Microeconomic Analysis of Public Policy at IFS, said: "We are delighted with the recognition the ESRC has given to us with the award of Research Institute status. Over the last 25 years and more the ESRC has been key to the success of IFS. Centre funding has allowed us to bring rigorous evidence-based research to the analysis of public policy. It has provided a unique environment for building new generations of economists who have gone on to take leading roles both in public policy, the media and academia. It has allowed IFS to respond swiftly, authoritatively and independently to the
changing public policy debate. In recognising the international excellence of our work, Institute status also provides us with stability for the future development of our ambitious research programme. We intend to ensure that we maintain our global leadership and enhance our public policy influence.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

- Institutes will be funded through a rolling five-year award review process (quinquennial) at a level consistent with standard ESRC research centre funding thresholds (currently between £2m- £10m over a five year period).

- The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the UK government. For more information visit www.ukri.org.

- The ESRC is the UK’s largest funder of research on the social and economic questions facing us today. It supports the development and training of the UK’s future social scientists and also funds major studies that provide the infrastructure for research. ESRC-funded research informs policymakers and practitioners and helps make businesses, voluntary bodies and other organisations more effective. The ESRC also works collaboratively with six other UK research councils and Innovate UK to fund cross-disciplinary research and innovation addressing major societal challenges. The ESRC is an independent organisation, established by Royal Charter in 1965, and funded mainly by the Government.

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