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It is not clear at what point institutional level quotas would be reviewed. Without regular reviews, RCUK risks complacency in institutions with a large quota and stifling research in others.

3. Controlling resubmissions.

Inviting resubmissions is a promising idea but would require active steps taken by the Research Councils to provide helpful feedback. These resubmissions would, quite reasonably, expect a high rate of success and, therefore, the invitations would have to be very selective.

It seems to be assumed that resubmitting is a bad thing. However, with a low success rate, many good proposals fail and it is certainly less time consuming to adapt a narrowly failed proposal than to create a new one. Asking referees to decide whether a proposal is 'too similar' to a previous proposal increases the burden.

4. Greater use of outline proposals.

This idea has merit since it preserves the concept of peer review and is fair to all groups, large or small, irrespective of which institution they are associated with.

It may, by introducing an extra stage, increase the time from the initial proposal to funding for a successful application. It may increase the number of proposals. Does this system already exist within Research Councils to screen out proposals which have little chance of success?

5. Assessing economic impact.

This is neither feasible nor desirable in the mathematical sciences. It is very difficult to predict which areas of current mathematical research will have the greatest economic impact. Any economic benefits are often so much further down the line that it is highly doubtful that reviewers can comment sensibly on this. For example, would a reviewer, in 1917, ron diffi cr y