

Date: Thu, 18 Dec 2014 09:23:19 +0000
From: William Astle <xxx.cam.ac.uk>
To: <w.j.stirling@imperial.ac.uk>, <alice.gast@imperial.ac.uk>
CC: <d.kelleher@imperial.ac.uk>, <d.colquhoun@ucl.ac.uk>

Dear Prof Stirling,

It is unsurprising that Imperial has high rankings in the REF, not least because at least in parts of the medical faculty there is at least an informal policy of forcing out "unREFable" staff. You seem not to be aware of this since below you attribute Imperial's high rankings to an "exceptional research environment." Forcing out staff who fail to meet arbitrary metrics is not a sign of an excellent environment, but a sign of a poor one.

I emailed you, when the story of the the death of Stefan Grimm was reported in the THES, to point out that during my 7 years working at IC (apologies, I said 9 years the email, which was an error) I was aware of at least 2 members of staff in my department who had to leave. I am almost certain they were forced to leave on the grounds of being "unREFable". You failed to reply to that email so I email once again to bring this fact to your attention.

Putting university staff in fear of losing their jobs leads to an atmosphere of obsequiousness and obedience to authority that prevents academics from fulfilling their institutional role. In a free society it is essential academics have the autonomy to determine their line of work, to question institutional and state authority and to do risky research. Once again I emphasise - in my experience the atmosphere in the faculty of medicine at IC is not conducive to this.

best

Will