



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Conditions of western support for Ukraine

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RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

Sir, Simon Nixon ([“Universities’ challenge is to retain their status as leaders in research”](#), Feb 9) is right to highlight the phenomenal success of Britain’s higher education system and the danger of complacency. Indeed, the UK’s world-class universities are a source of innovation, competitive advantage and British soft power. But it is not only Britain’s great institutions of higher education that are rolling back the frontiers of scientific knowledge. Independent research institutions such as the London Institute for Mathematical Sciences have a crucial role to play alongside universities. Other great scientific nations such as the US, Germany and France are bolstered by elite independent research centres, including the Institute for Advanced Study, Max Planck Institutes and IHES. Yet the UK’s own tradition of independent scientific research organisations is woefully lacking. The development of research centres like the London Institute offer world-class researchers the freedom to focus on their work full-time, unlike at universities where they must divide their time between research, teaching and administration. The freedom afforded to researchers by these independent bodies can propel British scientific discovery at an accelerated rate, and often a fraction of the costs.

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