

**RSC response to Peter Knight's article in The Independent
05 August 2004**

If chemistry in the universities were to disappear in the way that Peter Knight urges then he personally would notice the consequences quickly and ruefully, along with the rest of the United Kingdom.

Chemistry is essential for the future health and wealth of the UK, being central to the welfare of its people, to its industry and to its environment. Think of medicines, think of new energy sources, think of materials, think of transport, think of food and drink. Think about losing chemistry and then reflect on the consequences long and hard - because without chemists all those aspects of life, and many others, will be affected severely.

We are pleased that our well-argued case has been heard and accepted by the key decision makers in Government in recent weeks. It demonstrates the key role that the RSC plays in advising on future critical UK scientific decisions.

Chemistry is more popular with students than it was 20 years ago and recent trends show student numbers rising. The number of small and medium sized companies utilising chemistry that draw upon local academic support, and on which the future of the UK's industrial base depends, is growing rapidly.

Rising student interest in the subject and industry's demand for it both point to the need for retaining a regional presence for the subject. You can't teach science in a university without significant chemistry expertise given the subject's central role: can you have a strong university without science?

The RSC thinks not.

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