

Scientists react to Scottish 'no' vote



Jeff J Mitchell/Getty

Supporters of Scotland's 'no' campaign celebrate as the referendum results are announced.

Scotland's scientists, like its entire population, are probably now recovering from a night of celebration or commiseration after a historic referendum saw the country vote to remain part of the United Kingdom.

A majority of 55% chose to say 'no' to independence in yesterday's vote, which saw an unprecedented turn-out of some 85%.

In the run up to the election, academics in the 'yes' and 'no' camps both [outlined how independence might shape Scotland](#). Many scientific heavy-weights came out in support of the status quo, under which Scotland gets proportionately more research cash from the UK funding pot than it would based on population.

Nobel prizewinning geneticist Paul Nurse, president of the Royal Society, said in a statement today that the referendum result is good for the future of Scottish and UK science. "Together we have a strong research base that is the envy of the world in terms of quality and efficiency," he said. "We can now carry on in putting that to good use, not just for the UK but for everyone."

Pete Downes, a biochemist and vice-chancellor of the University of Dundee, says the vote means that Scottish universities will still be able to apply for UK-wide funding from the research councils, charities and government — a situation that would not have been guaranteed if the country had voted for independence.

Margaret Frame, a cancer biologist at the University of Edinburgh, says that she is thrilled with the result. "This ensures that biomedical and clinical research — and Scotland's great achievements in delivering on this in the past — will continue unchecked," she says. Earlier this month, Frame was among 65 scientists who signed a letter expressing concern about the future of biomedical research in an independent Scotland.



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Scottish first minister Alex Salmond says that promises to devolve more powers to Scotland should be honoured quickly.

also to England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

But changes may still be in store for science in Scotland, as the run up to the referendum saw all three main UK political parties promise more devolved powers for the country in the event of a 'no' vote. This could mean that the Scottish parliament will gain the right to vote on issues of tax, spending and welfare. Speaking last night after it was clear that the 'yes' campaign had lost the vote, Scotland's first minister, Alex Salmond, highlighted the 1.6 million votes that had been cast for independence and said that Scotland would expect the promises to be honoured quickly.

Speaking from Downing Street this morning, UK Prime Minister David Cameron said that he was “delighted” with the result. He added that promises on increased devolved powers would be honoured in full, and should be extended not just to Scotland, but