



Reviewer's Incentive Scheme

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World-leading research requires excellent peer review

- Good reviewing (refereeing) is vital;
- EPSRC operates a peer review system that is fair, flexible, open, easy to understand, and efficient to operate;
- External reviewers are at the heart of the EPSRC peer review system:





EPSRC Peer Review College



- The EPSRC college contains over 4100 members
- Wide range of disciplines and backgrounds
- 15% of members are UK non-academics
- 11% of members are from outside the UK and are both academic and non-academic
- Members are appointed for 4 years
- All members are offered training





EPSRC Peer Review College

	College	Grant Investigators
Female	12%	11%
Non-White	9%	10%
Age: Under 40	19%	35%
40-50	41%	35%
50-60	29%	21%
60+	11%	9%



Why do reviewers do it?

- **Sense of community/duty**
- **Altruism/it's how science works**
- **Quality control**
- **Knowing what's going on**
- **Power and influence**

But not

- **Money**



Problems with reviewing

For the Research Council

- Quality
- Timeliness
- Reviewers do not fully understand the peer review process

For the Reviewer

- Lack of time/Too many other things to do
- Lack of recognition
- Reviewers do not understand how EPSRC uses reviews



Solution?

For the Research Council

- Faster, better reviewing
- Raise prestige
- Train reviewers

For the Reviewer

- More time
- More recognition
- Get training



Payments for Reviewing – “Peer Miles”

- Introduced in 2001 to raise prestige of reviewing and improve response rate
- Two points for a usable review returned on time
- One point for a usable review returned late
- No points if unusable or too late to be used in peer review process

Payments for Reviewing – Value

- EPSRC distributes £750k to Departments for use for approved purposes – conferences, students support etc
- At year end points gained by department added up
- Each point worth about £35 in 2006/7, so £70 (¥14,762) for a timely and usable review



Payments for Reviewing

Benefits

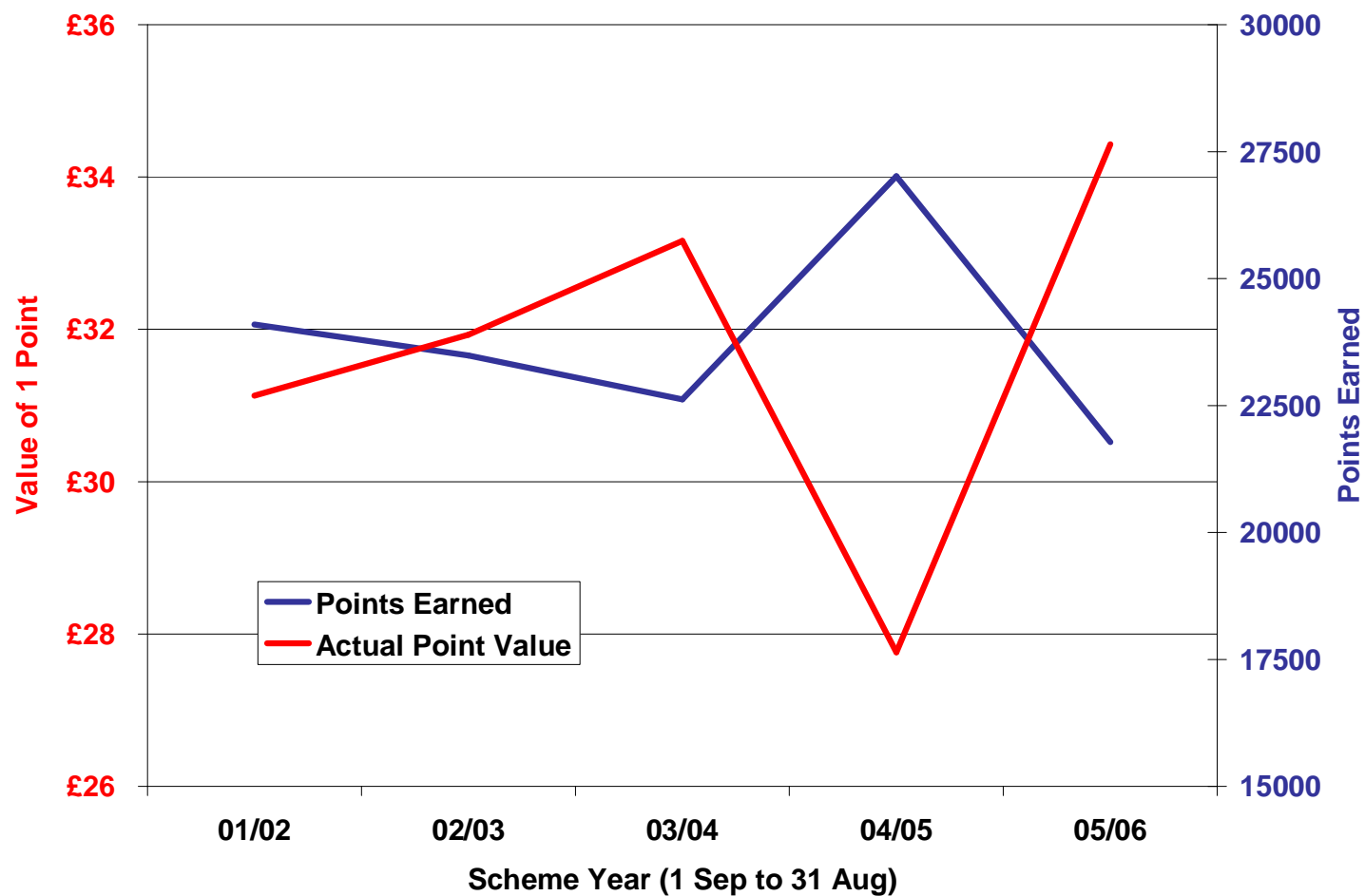
- Gesture of appreciation - recognition for reviewing - in *department* and by *individual*, but not a major motivator
- Payments go to approved purposes - no direct payments to individuals (and thus no taxation)
- Administration simple - with light touch, audit process
- 95% of heads of departments and 90% of reviewers favoured the scheme (of those responding to a survey in 2003)

Reported Uses of Payments

- Visits to conferences
- Publication costs
- Staff or student development
- Teaching seminars – (such as travel expenses)
- Travel budgets
- Expenses for invited speakers
- Equipment for PhD students, small pieces of lab equipment, software, computer equipment

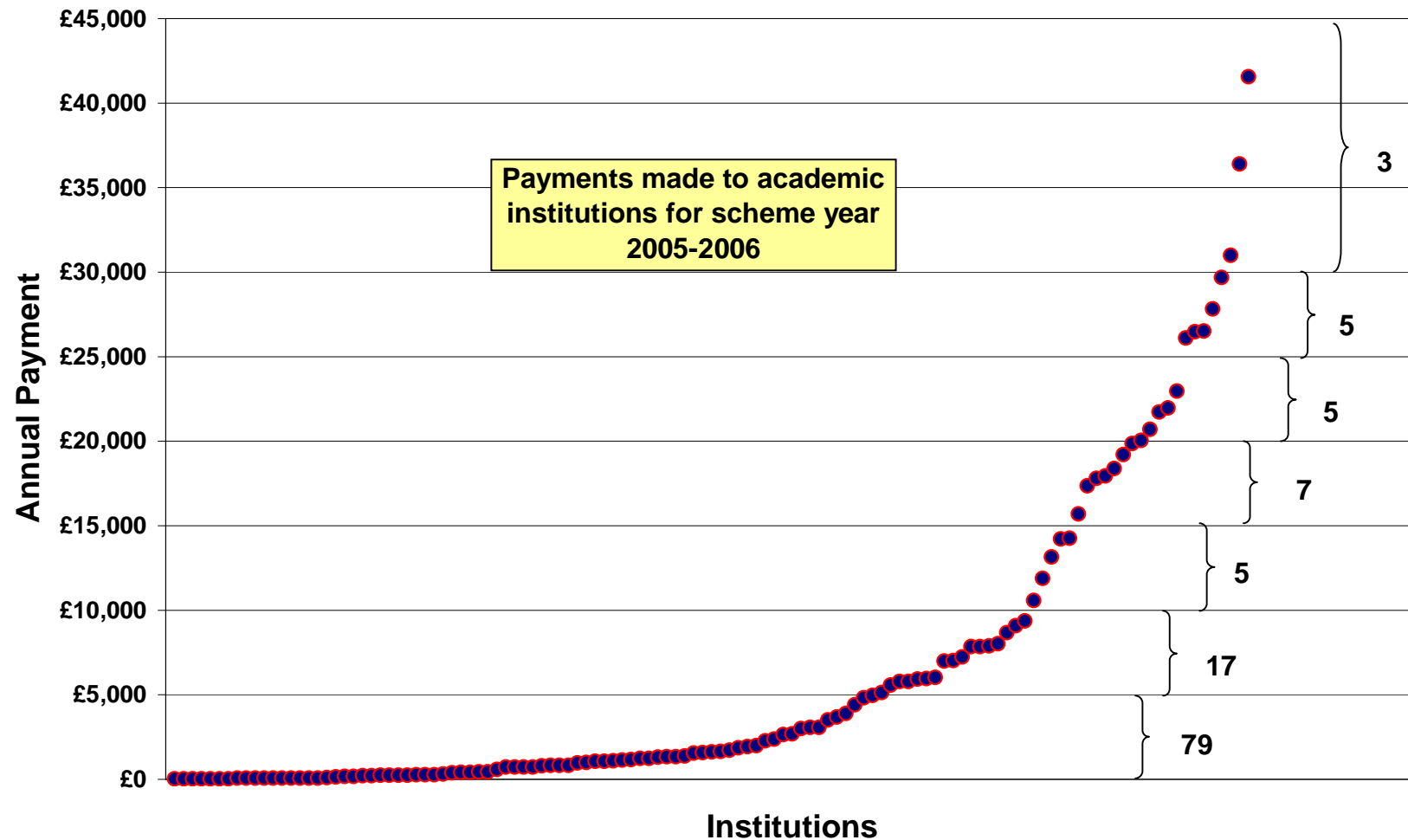


Value of a "Peer Mile"



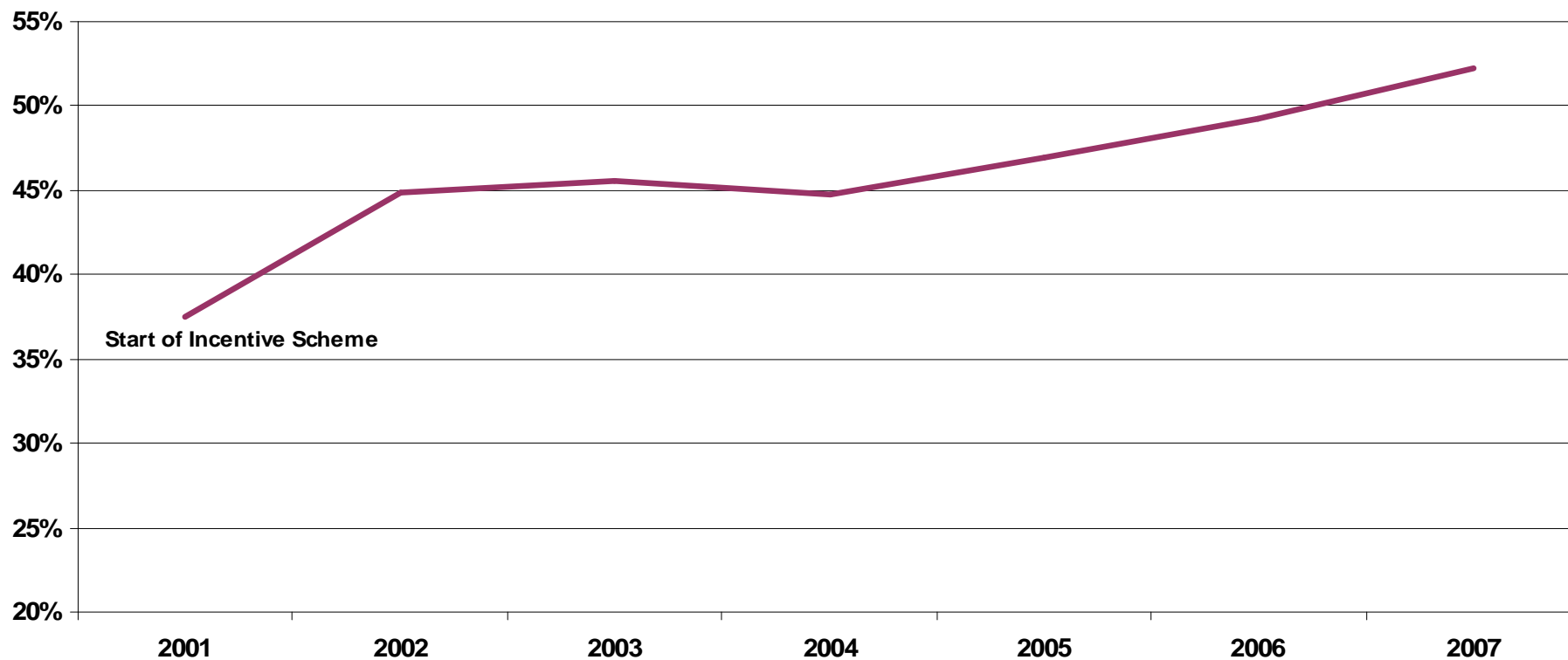


Payments made to academic institutions for scheme year 2005-2006



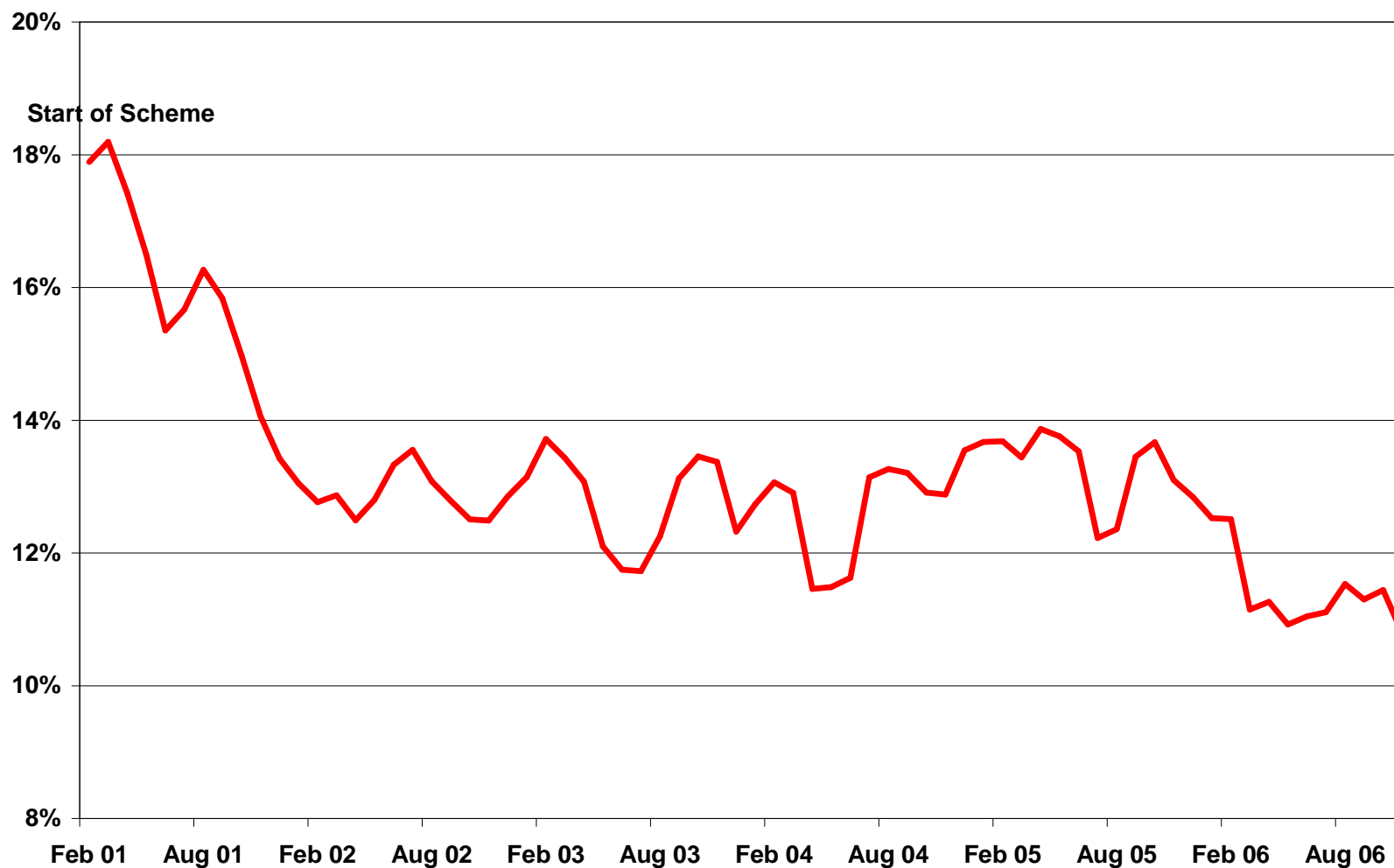


Reviews (Grants) Usable & Received On Time





Referees Not Responding - 3 Month Rolling Averages





Issues for the future

- Payment to other types of reviewers (industrial and overseas)? How?
- Value of Fund – should it be increased?
- Introduce a quality factor?
- Provide closer direct feedback of results to reviewers and Heads of departments



Expanding Scheme beyond UK Academics

- Increased emphasise on User (Industry) involvement in peer review.
- Engagement with overseas reviewers to give international perspective on research quality.

Increasing Industry Involvement In Peer Review

- **EPSRC must respond to the Warry report:**
“Increasing the Economic Impact of the Research Councils” , one way is increasing User (Industry) involvement in peer review.
- **Major impetus. Challenged to make a “step change”, through:**
 - **Leadership**
 - **Influence (particularly, through incentives); and**
 - **Engagement.**

Obstacles to Expansion of Cash Incentives

- Scheme offers additional research funding, not a personal payment and is tax exempt.
- Payment for reviews will incur tax liability for EPSRC (VAT) and for recipients (income tax). This would undermine the cost effectiveness of the scheme.
- All panel members receive a personal fee of £170 per day, but very expensive to pay individuals rather than institution.



Obstacles to User Engagement

- Many Users work on a chargeable hours basis, can't account for time spent on Peer Review in a business context.
- Panel fees low compared to consultancy, reviewing unpaid.
- Perception of no pay-back for users, no reciprocity from the process as there is for the academics.
- Users might not understand Research Councils so no incentive to assist us.
- A perception that EPSRC doesn't act on or take notice of the advice provided by Users



Alternatives to Cash Incentives

Emphasise benefits of engagement in Peer view

- Opportunities to network
- Panel Fees
- Moral Pressure (assisting your community)
- Providing an insight in to academic research
- Industry influence into selecting research proposals

Alternative Ways to Engage Users

- Restructure College to better represent users
- Recruit users via Strategic Partnerships, also recognise at corporate rather than individual level
- Explain better who we are and why we are important
- Actively engage with users (for example, the recent by setting up of a Better Exploitation SAT)
- Differentiate types of users; strategic planners for future, solving current problem, commercialisation.



Thank You

Comments to David mahoney, EPSRC

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