

MRC Unit transfer to University Units – key MRC policy principles

The MRC and the University must support an agreed long-term vision, negotiate in good faith and with openness, and will share risks.

The partnership will be founded on creating added-value and new opportunities for enhancing the science and better value for money. This could include synergies, efficiencies, aligning strategies, increased interactions, improved access to infrastructure and facilities, and increasing flexibility particularly with regard to career development opportunities.

The partnership will be enshrined in a binding Agreement. Once an Agreement is in place, the partners will commit to co-operate in an open and flexible approach as possible in the spirit in which the Agreement was negotiated

The MRC and the HEI expect that there will be a net increase in income – from University Funding Council streams, grants etc. – as a result of the transfer.

Science

There will be a tightly woven critical mass of principal investigators with a cohesive range of long-term broadly based research programmes. Normally there should be a threshold level of programmes (4-5) led by well established investigators.

Some appointed staff will need long-term commitments. Universities will be expected to make open-ended appointments and view the award as more than just a grant with an end-date.

The Director

The Director will be employed by the University and should hold significant status, authority and responsibility within the institution.

The University structures will provide the Director with the latitude and authority to act to: direct programmes, move resource, and make appointments within the Unit at appropriate levels required to deliver the Unit's quinquennial programme. It is expected that the partnership will allow Directors to act with agility in directing their strategy which may involve moving programme leaders in and out of the Unit at the right times to best deliver the strategy

New Directors will be selected and appointed jointly by the MRC and the University through a specially convened MRC Panel. (For new University Units proposed by a University, they may choose to propose a new Unit and its Director together as part of the plan.) If the MRC and the University cannot agree on a Director, the Unit will be closed / will not be formed.

Reviews

The MRC will lead and apply the same QOR mechanisms as used for MRC Units: the review will address the totality of scientific performance of all the science under the Director (whether MRC-funded or funded from other sources eg. external grants, HEI), the future plans, added value, and strategy. The added value of University links, and future University strategy, are likely to be given more attention (from both sides) in future reviews.

MRC funding for the core research programmes will be set as part of the review and would normally be for five years at a time.

The MRC's ability to close programmes following QORs will not be impaired. If a programme fails at QOR in terms of its quality and/or strategic need, the MRC will

not support it and expects that the programme will not continue as part of the Unit.

Governance of the Unit

There will be an Oversight Group which would include representation of the University, the MRC and the Unit. This group will oversee the Strategic Partnership between the MRC and the University addressing any operational issues; and planning ahead. Additional meetings may be scheduled as required.

Staff transfer and liabilities

The MRC will indemnify the University for contractual redundancy payments for the first six years of the agreement following the date of transfer which have resulted either out of a QQR, or where the plans of the new director lead directly to redundancies, where these relate to the core MRC staff. (Core MRC staff is defined as those staff whose salaries are currently directly supported by the QQR allocation and were TUPEd across from MRC employment, retaining MRC redundancy terms and conditions).

After the six-year point following transfer, the University will become solely responsible for any redundancy compensation, including those of previous MRC employees.

The MRC will not be liable for any redundancy compensation payment for staff who originally transferred from the MRC but who subsequently has taken up a new University contract with associated redundancy /pension terms and conditions.

Finance

The transfer of existing Unit activities should be cost-neutral for MRC and the University. The MRC will not pay more for the same level of activity; and the same amount of science must be achievable within the funding envelope transferred (ie. the direct/indirect cost ratio must not worsen). Funds transferred to the University will be the direct science costs, direct services supporting the science as well as Unit's direct administration costs and estates costs as agreed. The MRC will not normally provide additional support to other University central services.

The MRC expects that the University will pass to the Unit the full value of research grants won by the Unit above and beyond the core grant. The partners will agree the allocation of additional net income (remaining after the costs of delivering the science have been covered fully with transparent charging of any additional support costs arising as a consequence of the additional science) to be transferred to the Unit under the control of the Director.

The Unit will receive an agreed share of HEI Funding Council derived income that relates to its core MRC-funded headcount plus minor volume indicators. This is additional income that the HEI would not receive without the Unit, and should therefore be used to strengthen the Unit.

Communications

The Unit will retain "MRC xxxxxx Unit" as its title; with wider branding (eg. letterheads) showing the University partnership. All promotional work relating to the work of the Unit (eg. press releases, exhibitions, events, etc.) will be drafted in consultation with, and approved by, the MRC Corporate Affairs Group and the equivalent group within the University.

Exploitation and Translation

Intellectual Property arising in the University Unit (Foreground IP) will be owned by the University. The MRC and the HEI should plan for the opportunities for translation and exploitation of the science to be increased by the transfer. In line with the strategic aims of the MRC, it is paramount that the MRC is satisfied that the translational, commercialisation and IP management arrangements and performance are effective.

MRCT's objective will be to work with the University technology transfer office to maximise translation.

Estates and Assets

The expectation is that any land, building and equipment owned by the MRC will be transferred to the University. The University will continue to provide the Unit with appropriate accommodation in order for the Unit to fulfil its scientific aims. Any proposed significant changes regarding space allocation, or potential relocation, must be discussed with the MRC, the University and Director before any decisions are taken.

All services provided should be clearly linked to the science and will be provided transparently under the University's standard model. The University will provide a level of service that allows the Unit to deliver its strategy successfully.

Exiting/Sunsetting

Neither party will exit the partnership precipitously.

The parties would agree a mutually acceptable exit-plan. The MRC will fund salaries and running costs for up to a 52-week notice period following Management Board issuing a letter explaining the MRC's intention to withdraw. The HEI will normally be expected to accept as grants ongoing programmes which MRC wishes to continue to support; these would revert to normal terms and conditions, and normal funding models from their next renewal point (or from the QQR-date if the closure decision is part of the QQR).

Implementing the Transfer

The MRC expects that the University will engage fully in a structured process for negotiation and implementation. The appropriate individuals with experience and expertise to engage will be identified early on, and the decision-making process within the University (and the MRC) will be made clear.