

## **MRC RESEARCH BOARDS - BOARD CHAIR ROLE**

### Key aspects of the role

- Ensure effective delivery of MRC strategy across the board remit and that board funding decisions reflect strategic priorities.
- Chair board and triage meetings, ensuring decisions on proposals for funding are objective and defensible, and that all members' views are considered in decision making.
- Work with the board and Head Office staff, ensuring that the MRC strategy relevant to the board remit is aligned to the evolving landscape and maximises opportunities for the UK research community.
- A member of MRC's Strategy Board and Major Investments Board.
- Ensure board members play an active part in strategy setting.
- Monitor performance of board members, addressing concerns with the board Head of Theme where appropriate, and ensure active engagement of board representatives with overview groups.
- Advise MRC staff on the planning of board budgets
- Scientific oversight of MRC units, centres and other key strategic investments within the board remit (see below).
- Chair annual meetings with MRC unit directors (see below).
- Represent the MRC externally and engage with MRC stakeholders including high level committees, workshops or international events relevant to the board remit. Board chairs may also be required to speak for MRC in the media or in political fora, working with the MRC Head Office staff.

### **Role of board chairs with respect to MRC units and unit directors**

Board chairs ensure unit directors are accountable for the scientific direction and progress of their units and that these contribute to delivery of MRC strategy between Reviews.

In the first year of appointment, board chairs visit each of the units within the board remit, with the Head of Theme, to discuss with the director and senior scientific staff progress towards goals in research, translation and training and any major changes or developments in scientific programmes.

After the initial visit, board chairs meet with each director at the annual directors meeting, aiming to maintain a collaborative and effective relationship, to review progress, to explore emerging issues and to provide an opportunity for cross fertilisation and development of new ideas. Board chairs may choose to visit the unit every other year - meeting elsewhere by agreement in the intervening years. If board chairs have concerns about scientific delivery or managerial issues, these should be discussed with the Head of Theme, Chief Scientific Officer or MRC Executive Chair.

Board chairs also contribute in other areas for example chairing review subcommittees and participating in new director searches.

### **Role of board chairs in respect to MRC centres**

The arrangements are like those for units but usually lighter touch, with the level of oversight dependent on the amount of MRC investment in the centre.

The board and its members individually have a duty to carry out these functions to the best of their ability and according to the Code of Practice for Members of Council and the Seven Principles of Public Life. Board chairs

have a particular responsibility to uphold and monitor this. MRC provides induction training and other guidance to ensure that research board members fully understand their terms of appointment, duties and responsibilities.

### **Terms of appointment**

- Board chairs report directly to the MRC Executive Chair and have a 1:1 meeting with them at least once a year.
- Boards chairs have a deputy to whom some of their duties may be delegated, with the agreement of the Head of Theme or MRC Executive Chair.
- Appointment is for an initial fixed period of two years, working two days per week for the MRC as per the signed agreement with the employer, with the option to extend by agreement of all parties by a maximum of a further two years.
- The chair's employer will be reimbursed with 40% (2 days per week) of the board chair's salary to cover time spent on MRC duties.
- Travel and subsistence and child-care costs for attendance at meetings can be reclaimed in accordance with the [UKRI Travel and Subsistence Policy](#)
- Board chairs will be asked to declare annually any personal, professional or commercial interests, which will be published on the MRC website.