

TUS NEWSLETTER

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University Units

Since 2008, when Council approved a new funding model of the “University Unit”, two MRC Units - Human Immunology, and Molecular Haematology (part of the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine) have taken up this funding option and are now owned, and unit staff employed, by Oxford University. Advanced arrangements are in place for the transfer of the Human Genetics Unit to Edinburgh University.

The MRC has recently announced, via the *MRC Delivery Plan 2011/12 to 2014/15*, that it is now a strategic objective to reform its intramural programme (MRC units) by moving more existing units into university ownership. In the delivery plan (4.4 Strategy for Delivery) and in a recent meeting between Sir John Savill and the MRC Trade Unions (NTUS), the MRC have provided arguments for the benefit of moving in this direction for the delivery of science. The NTUS while accepting some of the potential benefits have expressed concern with respect to the implications of the widespread adoption of the funding model. Consultation with senior MRC managers on these matters is ongoing.

These concerns centre on:

- The implications of change on the remaining intramural programme.
- The status of the MRC funded University Units scientist positions – will they be as attractive as core funded university posts?
- Staff representation during review processes where the MRC is not the employer.
- The impact on support services and administrative posts.
- Implications for the MRC pension fund.

In creating University Units, staff and unit ownership are transferred to the host university subject to the Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment)



Regulations 2006 (TUPE). These regulations are designed to protect the rights of employees and ensure the same terms and conditions of employment are maintained with the new employer. Funding of University Units will be in 5year cycles akin to the current review processes.

Following the recent announcement, the move to becoming University Units is now being considered in a number of MRC units. Staff consultation is an important part of the decision making process, providing an element of staff ownership of the outcome. In both Oxford and Edinburgh, effective representation via the Local Trade Union Side was used to promote this consultation. The NTUS offers its support and advice to unit staff starting or about to undergo such consultations, prior to a potential move to University Unit Status.

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On behalf of the MRC Trade Unions (BMA, FDA, PCS, UCU, Unite)

