

# TUS NEWSLETTER

February 2012

Consultation and negotiation between the NTUS and management on issues that are of interest to all MRC staff are underpinned by a monthly Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee meeting. Last year within this forum the NTUS had talks with Sir John Savill, corporate MRC directors and other senior managers on issues that included pay, redundancy provision, university units and The Francis Crick Institute. For a review of this work in 2011 see the supplement below.

## **Pay**

As part of the implementation of the new MRC pay and grading structure, units and institutes are currently assessing staff for accelerated promotion from the A to the B sections of their pay band. Local management in units and institutes should have set up ways by which line managers can consult with their peers on the suitability of employees for promotion. The way this is done may differ across the MRC but the LTUS should be consulted before this is communicated to staff.

Employees who are mapped into the A section of their pay band should discuss with their line manager during the Performance and Development review as to their suitability to advance to the B section. Where an employee is currently ineligible for promotion, or it is felt by a line manager that they are not yet ready, employees should discuss with their line manager suitable development activities that will allow them to be promoted in future.

The NTUS will have access to data detailing the A to B promotions throughout the MRC and will be monitoring them to assess if the process is working and that the promotions are being applied fairly and equally across the MRC's institutes and units.

The NTUS will, in the near future, be entering into discussions with corporate management aimed at improving the career structures and career development processes within the MRC.

The NTUS will be continuing to consult with the MRC to ensure that the best case is made to Government with respect to the annual pay award due in April.

## **Research Council Harmonisation**

Research Councils UK (RCUK) is a strategic partnership of the seven UK Research Councils charged with integrating Council activities to enhance their overall economic impact and efficiency. It is under the banner of operational efficiency and effectiveness that the RCUK Shared Service Centre was established to provide



integrated services and administrative support in human resources, finance, procurement, IT and grants processing.

As part of a further integration of these services, the MRC have started discussions with the NTUS on proposals for the harmonisation of Research Council contractual HR policies and terms and condition of employment. Those relating to pay and redundancy are specifically excluded. These discussions are at a very early stage and we are currently initiating talks with our trade union colleagues in the other research councils.

### **Local Consultations**

The MRC recognise the best way to engage staff in meaningful consultations is through a Local Trade Union Side (LTUS) and the MRC actively encourage staff to join a trade union. The role of a LTUS is to provide a collective staff view on issues that affect staff at unit level. It is only by having a collective arrangement such as an LTUS that the full value of trade union membership can be realised. The law makes provision for employees to be informed and consulted on decisions that are likely to lead to substantial changes in their contracts or work organisation. This is provided for within the MRC corporate policies. An effective LTUS, able to present well founded arguments, can play a real role in informing and

influencing management decisions. With the MRC's policy of transferring intramural units to the university unit funding model, a unit LTUS has an important role in both the process of consultation and in disseminating to staff the implications of a transfer of employer under TUPE regulations.

When a unit is subject to review (QQR, New Director's Review, Management Initiated Reviews, Strategic Reviews and *ad hoc* Reviews) the LTUS should be consulted and is also required to scrutinise the process. If decisions are made to discontinue units, research groups or facilities, the LTUS have a role to play in consultations aimed at minimizing the number of redundancies. Other issues that are relevant to a LTUS include the local interpretation of HR policies, local working conditions, monitoring performance related pay awards and the use of local retention and recruitment awards.

The trade unions' collective agreement with the MRC and associated policies provides the means and the framework by which an LTUS can be formed. The NTUS is able to provide both help and advice to members in setting up a LTUS. If you require any information or assistance please contact Louise Craig, NTUS Project Officer at [louise.craig@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:louise.craig@headoffice.mrc.ac.uk).

### ***MRC Gambia Workers' Union***

In December last year, following invitations from the MRC African units, I visited the The MRC/UVRI Research Unit on AIDS in Uganda and the MRC Gambia Unit. It was a great opportunity to meet the staff in these units and learn about the excellent research that they do.

One highlight of my visits to Africa was a meeting with the leadership of the MRC Workers' Union in The Gambia. The union has 600 members and represents the interest of a 1000 MRC staff employed on local terms. We discussed the issues that were of interest to employees in both the Gambia and UK and decided to set up informal links.



### ***Meeting with the MRC Workers' Union in The Gambia***

From left to Right: Abdoulie Jallow (Office Administrator), Ismaela Abubakar (2<sup>nd</sup> Vice Chairman), Terry McDonald (UK NTUS) Patrick Owiafe (Adviser), Mamaram Drammeh (Chief Shop Steward) and. Lamin Bojang (Secretary General)

### **Terry McDonald**

on behalf of the MRC trade unions (BMA, FDA, PCS, UCU, Unite)

## TUS NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

### Review of the 2011 MRC Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee

- The work of the JNCC was facilitated by a monthly TUS/management meeting. These meetings replaced the more traditional machinery on a trial basis. The minutes for each of these meeting were agreed and distributed to management and TUS.

Meetings were well attended and included contributions from the following:

#### **Management Side:**

Sir John Savill  
John Jeans  
Ted Smith  
Amanda Amor  
Leah Copp  
Declan Mulkeen  
Jim Clerkin  
Wendy Ewart  
Bruce Minty  
Linda Holliday  
Pauline Mullin  
Sally-Louise Smith  
Mel Nunn  
Tony Peatfield  
Rebecca Leigh  
Ian Viney  
Rosemary Buckingham  
Mike Stephens

#### **National Trade Union Side:**

Terry McDonald (Unite)  
Kelvin Cain (UCU)  
David Poor  
Louise Craig  
Eileen Clark (Unite)  
Oliver de Peyer (UCU)  
Nick Sahlqvist (FDA)  
Nick Radiven (PCS)  
Adrian Ford (Unite)  
Barbara Beckles (UCU)  
Paul Bridge (UCU)  
Chris Berry (Unite)  
Barrie Brown (Unite)  
Jack Papasavva (PCS)  
Patrick Boardman (BMA)  
Nick Sahlqvist (FDA)  
Rebekah Jukes Jones  
Liz McMinn

- Agreement was reached by the majority of the trade unions on changes to the Redundancy Compensation Scheme supported by a ballot of TU members. Work is ongoing with regards to the review of the Redundancy and Redeployment policy in accordance with this agreement.
- Proposals were developed for a new Pay and Grading structure; a product of extensive collaboration between management and TUS. In addition to the work completed within the monthly meetings, supplementary working meetings were held to develop the proposals further. Following TUS and management road shows the proposals were supported by a ballot of TU members. Management are currently working on mapping staff to the new pay bands and rolling out the A/B promotion processes at unit level. The JNCC will now start work on a career development initiative and update associated policies including Probation and PDR.
- The Human Genetics Unit transferred to Edinburgh University in October as a university unit (UU). The NTUS provided support to the local representatives during the consultation process. The progress and conduct of consultation was reported to the JNCC and this allowed an understanding of the process and best practice to be consolidated. This will prove valuable to both management and TUS in supporting staff consultation and the decision making process as consideration is made for further MRC units to become UU.



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- The TUS presented a paper on UU to management relating to both trade union representation and staff consultation during the QQR process. This led to an amendment that addresses these issues being incorporated into the *University Units: Policies and Principles for transferring MRC Units to University Units* document.
- There have been several discussions relating The Francis Crick Institute and these are ongoing.
- Policies have been reviewed and agreed throughout the year, these include:
  - Consultation During Reviews (agreed)
  - Retirement (agreed)
  - MAMSP (agreed)
  - Code of Conduct (agreed)
  - Health Promotion (agreed)
  - Superannuation (revoked)
  - Removal Expenses under First Appointment (revoked)
  - Sickness Absence (under review)
  - Learning & Development and Right to Request Time Off (under review)
  - Overseas Allowances (under review)
  - Annual Leave (under review)
  - Redundancy and Redeployment (under review)
  - Recruitment and Selection (under review)
  - Probation (under review)
- An initiative to harmonise HR policies across Research Councils was introduced by management to the TUS.
- Workshops are being set up to focus on Health & Safety and Equality & Diversity. These will be separate forums that complement and make recommendations to the JNCC.
- In addition to the issues mentioned above the committee discussed a wide range of other issues of general interest to the MRC staff. Discussions are documented in the minutes.
  - Corporate MRC strategy
  - MRC investments in overseas units
  - MRC research strategy
  - Intramural reviews
  - University units
  - Internal/external communications
  - Shared Service Centre
  - Health & Safety
  - E-Val
  - Pensions
  - Corporate finance including budgeting and the impact of the CSR

## TUS NEWSLETTER SUPPLEMENT

- JEGS
- Equality and Diversity
- Overseas Allowances
- IS/SIS and RPS staff
- TUPE transfers

### **Terry McDonald and Ted Smith**

On behalf of the management and trade union sides - January 2012

