

TUS NEWSLETTER

August 2012

Plans are maturing for the 2013 MRC Centenary programme. These plans are directed at building on the gains of the last 100 years of MRC discoveries and promoting continued prominence and excellence in the undertaking and funding of medical research. The programme of events and activities include: supporting scientists through the MRC Centenary Early Career Awards; mass participation experiments; showcasing research to the local communities through open days and; an interactive public installation to tell the story of the last century of research and to take a look to research of the future. The NTUS look forward to local inclusive events that will communicate recognition of staff contributions and efforts towards making the MRC the success that it is.

As we approach our Centenary year, the MRC is undergoing considerable change in the way that it funds research. The move to the University Unit funding model is gathering pace and will reach a peak in 2013. Following on from these transfers, the opening of The Francis Crick Institute is scheduled for 2015. The success of these ventures will be measured through the establishment of thriving research institutes that lead to ground breaking research and new medical treatments as the MRC enters its second 100 years.

These changes will have a direct impact on over a third of MRC staff as they move to the employ of several universities and The Crick. The NTUS is playing a significant role in managing change by informing staff of the implications of transfers, addressing staff concerns, and supporting and coordinating consultations between the MRC and local trade union groups.

Amongst these changes, the NTUS welcomes an initiative to work with management to review careers in the MRC. The review, as well as having direct implications for those who remain employed by the MRC, will also aim to be relevant for those employed in the wider academic biomedical research environment.



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University Units

The NTUS are taking a lead role in coordinating consultations at units under consideration for University Unit status. A series of "Gateways" have been introduced to evaluate the transfer process. At each of these Gateways Council considers whether progress has been sufficient to move to the next stage. The NTUS have recently agreed with MRC management a framework to allow effective consultation with staff and this is detailed in the University Unit Consultation Policy.

The NTUS involvement in the consultation process at unit level begins by first meeting the staff. This is followed up by a programme of advice and support to the Local Trade Union Side as the consultations develop. The NTUS are participating in ongoing discussions with management to establish a consistent corporate approach to the transfers across the MRC.

The following units are currently being assessed within the Gateway process:

- **Centre for Virus Research** to the University of Glasgow
- **Lifecourse Epidemiology Unit** to the University of Southampton
- **Social and Public Health Sciences Unit** to the University of Glasgow
- **Protein Phosphorylation Unit** to the University of Dundee
- **Epidemiology Unit** to the University of Cambridge
- **Anatomical Neuropharmacology Unit** to the University of Oxford
- **Functional Genomics Unit** to the University of Oxford
- **Cell Biology Unit** to University College London
- **Clinical Trials Unit** to University College London

Pay

It is against the backdrop of government policy on pay restraint, directing an average 1% increase across public sector pay, that the NTUS have submitted its formal pay claim to the MRC. The claim details the extent that MRC pay scales have fallen behind that of our comparators. Whilst the government pay policy may seem restrictive, the government has also indicated its willingness to continue its level of investment in the biomedical research sector. Therefore, in order that the MRC is able to recruit and retain talented staff, the NTUS has asked that the MRC seek to address the disparity with our comparators within its pay remit.

The main elements of our claim are:

- Full implementation of our new pay structure
- The reintroduction of incremental progression
- A 1% revalorisation of the pay structure
- Revalorisation of allowances
- Non consolidated pay awards should be made to a minimum level of 25% of staff, paid at 4% of the relevant band A maximum (underpinned to a minimum of £700)

The NTUS understand that the MRC are soon to submit its pay remit to BIS. Due to the complexity of the process the timescales for approval are unclear. Any pay award made will be backdated to the 1st April 2012.

Staff are continuing to be assessed for A to B promotions via peer review as they fulfil the competency requirements for the role.

The Francis Crick Institute

At NIMR the LTUS continues to meet regularly with the MRC HR Director, and they recently hosted another open meeting for all staff to address employment related questions.

A significant development has been an announcement by The Crick that, subject to continued funding levels, there will be a position available in the new institute to all staff in post at NIMR at the point of transfer. It was also made clear that the transfer of staff would be conducted under TUPE regulations; these are directed at protecting employees' terms of employment in these circumstances. It is expected that consultation on the measures that detail the terms of transfer will begin in early 2013.

Sir Paul Nurse (Director) and Sir David Cooksey (Chair of Board of The Francis Crick Institute) met with Council in May to discuss the scientific strategy. The planning and activities for the transfer and transition to the new site are gathering pace. The construction of the new building continues on schedule. More information on TUPE, the minutes of the Council meeting and other Crick related information, such as The Crick Newsletter, can be found by visiting the [NTUS website](#).

Health and Safety

The NTUS actively support and encourage staff involvement in health and safety issues across the MRC. To further this, the NTUS recently held a health and safety seminar in Head Office London which was well attended by MRC staff. Presentations were given by MRC safety advisers, union officers and the Health and Safety Executive. A number of topics such as the functions of union safety representatives, forthcoming

legal changes, Stress Risk Assessment and equality issues were covered on the day.

The UCU speaker gave a presentation on the importance and role of union safety representatives. He advised that the role of a trade union safety representative is defined by law and that employers must provide reasonable access to facilities and assistance. The role is fully supported by the MRC and each of the MRC trade unions provide free accredited H&S training and support from their own H&S officers. The TUC also offer courses and support via the unionlearn organisation.

The main duty of the union safety representative is to help identify and investigate potential hazards at the workplace and to attend meetings of the local Safety Committee. He also advised that those wishing to become a H&S representative could find out more from the TUC document [Safety Representatives and Safety Committees](#).

The Unite representative spoke about union concerns regarding recent changes in legislation. It is thought these could lead to fewer HSE inspections and less enforcement with a corresponding risk of increased injuries and ill health. She also gave a presentation on equality issues from a H&S perspective and gave details of two important websites that deal with such issues – the [World Health Organisation](#) and the [European Commission](#).

The HSE speaker summarised the work of the executive as the independent regulator of H&S in the UK's workplaces. They have three statutory roles: to undertake research, provide information and advice, and to enforce H&S related legislation. The speaker also outlined his specialised work in the Biological Agents Unit. This unit has primary inspection/enforcement responsibilities for all the UK's facilities that deal with high hazard pathogens, such as the Containment Level 3 and 4 facilities

found in some MRC units, as well as genetically modified organisms. The full presentation can be found on the NTUS website.

A presentation was given by the Facility Resource and Training Manager at the Mary Lyon Centre, MRC Harwell. He outlined the importance of the continuing process of ensuring units and institutes are a safe and healthy place to work. This is done by some typical checks such as ergonomic assessments of the workstations, reducing manual handling, and radiation checks. This presentation is also available on the NTUS website.

The final speaker gave a talk on the Francis Crick Institute, and in particular the need to make sure that health and safety is part of the overall process in building and fitting out the new building.

It was agreed by those attending that the seminar had been both an interesting and useful event, and that it was important that staff who are involved in health and safety issues across the MRC meet on a regular basis. David Poor has agreed to arrange this and will be contacting interested staff in the near future.

Terry McDonald

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

