

MRC Cohort Strategic Review Group

Terms of Reference

Purpose of the Group

The MRC makes significant investments in large-scale long-term cohort studies that require sustained support for regular data sweeps and sample collections, maintenance of the resource and associated research. The Cohort Strategic Review Group (CSRG) will assist the MRC in delivering its strategic objective of maximising the impact of population health studies by providing advice on the strategic fit of major cohort applications submitted to individual Boards, in cognisance of the overall portfolio of MRC and externally funded cohort studies, and advising on strategic priorities regarding MRC support of cohort studies.

Role of the Group

The group will perform the following functions:

- Assist the MRC in the development of cohort-related policy, including strategic advice for the management of partnerships and regular review of the MRC and wider UK population cohort portfolio.
- Assess cohort outline applications in the context of the cohort outline application template criteria and in light of other MRC and major externally funded cohort studies.
- Decide whether an application should go forward as a full application to a board based primarily on its fit to MRC strategy and added value in terms of existing MRC and other funded cohorts in the UK and internationally, but also considering key study design plans as summarised in the outline.
- Provide feedback to applicants related to the points above (and on the cohort template).
- For applications invited to make a full submission, provide relevant Boards with the Groups' decision regarding the value of the proposal to the overall MRC cohort portfolio and fit with MRC strategy, as well as any methodological concerns that were raised by the Group, in order to assist their funding decisions.
- Group members will not act as advocates for applications that go forward to full board submission. Full applications will be considered by the board in relation to scientific value and competitiveness considering all other applications at the board.
- Monitor the success of applications that progress to a full submission to the board and the emerging MRC cohort portfolio and advise Strategy Board, as appropriate, on strategic issues related to the MRC cohort portfolio, including on data access and use of the cohorts, collaborative initiatives and gaps in the portfolio.

Membership

The membership of the Group will be drawn from the MRC Boards, to help ensure continuity of thinking between the CSRG and the Boards, and other experts as required. The Group will be chaired by the chair of the Population Health Sciences Group (PHSG). The appointment term to the Group will be commensurate with membership of the research Board / PHSG (for the Chair). Guest members from relevant MRC Boards and external experts (e.g. representatives and nominated experts from other funders) will be invited onto the Group as necessary to assess individual applications. The secretariat will be provided by MRC Head office.

Frequency of Meetings

The Group will meet three times a year in accordance with the timetable for submission of full proposals to MRC Boards.

Governance and relationships

The Group will be a subcommittee of PHSG and will report to Strategy Board where a contribution to the cohort is required from the Strategy Board budget. Boards will devolve

responsibility to the Group for assessment of and subsequent feedback on outline proposals to applicants. Funding decisions on full applications will be made by the Boards.