Reviewers Handbook
A detailed guide for reviewers of proposals to the MRC including how to assess proposals, the assessment criteria and the scoring system used
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1. The Importance of Peer Review

All proposals submitted to the Medical Research Council are peer reviewed by independent scientific experts from UK and overseas. Effective Peer Review of research underpins every aspect of the MRC’s work as it ensures proposals are scrutinised by independent scientific experts who specialise in the areas of science covered in the proposal to assess for example the viability, quality, cost-effectiveness and impact of the science concerned.

In addition, the MRC’s research boards and panels assess proposals, drawing on external peer reviewers’ comments and making funding decisions. Board and panel members are high calibre, committed senior scientists at professor level or equivalent based in a leading UK or world renowned research institute, university or biotechnology and pharmaceutical industry, who have broad experience of cutting edge research.

The MRC’s peer review process is confidential to protect proposals and anonymous to support the free and frank exchange of views. All researchers supported by the MRC are expected to participate in peer review.

The objectives of peer review are to:
- Support the best practice and address the most important and urgent questions
- Obtain value-for-money and ensure effective and efficient use of resources
- Assess progress of scientific projects
- Train and nurture the best scientists in the best environments for these purposes

There is an implicit contract between the applicant, the MRC and the reviewer. Effective review requires the commitment of all three. The MRC outlines clear aims and assessment criteria for each of its schemes and calls. Proposals should fall within the criteria and explain clearly and comprehensively how they meet it.
2. The Assessment Procedure

- Research Proposal
  - Assessed (Peer Reviewed by specialist UK and International Experts in the area of science of the Research Proposal)
  - Reviewers score (0-6) using the Reviewer Scoring System
  - Shortlisting/Triage Meeting (for most, but not all calls)
  - Is the proposal suitable for funding?
    - No: Proposal rejected
    - Yes: Is the proposal ranked above the budget cut-off position?
      - No: Proposal taken to the next meeting
      - Yes: Board/Panel Meeting score proposals (1-10)
        - Is the proposal worth funding? (Boards only)
          - Yes: Proposal funded
          - No: Proposal rejected
This is a two stage process. The first stage involves external reviewers (UK and international) who provide expert assessment of the proposal. The second stage is the Board/Panel’s assessment and funding decision. This Board’s assessment usually involves two steps, the first being that the research proposals are sifted at triage so that only the highest scoring proposals go through to the board/panel. The second step is the Board/Panel meeting where the final funding decision is taken.

Peer Reviewer
The peer review process is normally conducted via the Joint electronic Submission System (Je-S). This is a secure system and requires individual login. Once you have logged into the Je-S system you will have access to all the relevant information you need to carry out your assessment. The assessment process is confidential to ensure that sensitive information provided either in the application or at another stage of the peer review process is protected appropriately and to ensure the free and frank exchange of views at the heart of the scientific peer review.

Further guidance on using Je-S can be found on the Je-S help pages or individual assistance is available by contacting the Je-S helpdesk.

- Email: JeSHelp@rcuk.ac.uk
- Phone: +44 (0) 1793 44 4164*
- Staffed Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm (excluding bank holidays and other holidays)

Where peer review is not managed via Je-S, it is managed via email, but this is rare and still needs to comply with the criteria mentioned throughout this handbook.

Board/Panel Member
Prior to the meeting board/panel members will be provided with login details and a password to access a secure area of the web site to view the applications. They will not be able to view any applications where they have a known conflict.

Introducers (ie board/panel members asked to lead on an individual application) should feedback their comments via Je-S taking care not to exceed the limit of 4000 characters per application.
3. Integrity of Reviews

Anyone working for, or on behalf of the MRC should follow the seven principles of public life outlined by the Committee on Standards in Public Life (Appendix 3). Personal interests of those involved must never influence the outcome. Integrity between the applicant and reviewer is essential as is the relationship between the MRC, applicant and reviewer. Reviewers must provide constructive and honest critique of the work proposed.

Assessment must not only avoid conflict of interest between reviewers and applicants, but also avoid circumstances that might give the impression there is a conflict of interest. Before reviewing a proposal, all potential conflicts of interest must be declared. If the conflict is considered to be material (see 3.1 below), the reviewer should decline to review and state the reason why so this can be recorded. For example, reviews often state that the reviewer has previously worked with the PI, but no further information is provided. In instances such as this, the relationship should be declared as a conflict of interest and further guidance sought from SSC Pre-Award or MRC Headoffice.

When undertaking to review, a reviewer commits to keeping all information confidential and never to use, retain or copy the information in the proposal. Reviewers must not make use of the research designs or research findings from a proposal under review and should not allow others to do so.

In order to participate in a MRC Board/Panel, individuals are required to agree to MRC’s confidentiality terms as set out in Appendix 2. These terms should be read in conjunction with the Code of Practice for members of Council, MRC Boards and MRC Policy on declarations of interest.

Anyone involved in the peer review process is required to treat as confidential all correspondence, documents and other material made available by the MRC. This includes, but is not limited to, response mode research grants and training proposals, targeted calls for proposals, MRC/university centres, reviews related to MRC research institutes and units and strategic reviews etc.

Such material will include information provided to the MRC on a confidential basis the release of which might compromise intellectual property arrangements or preliminary hypotheses and/or research data which might effect the potential to publish. The release of such information might also result in plagiarism or the misuse of personal information. The information contained in the confidential documents and applications is made available to the members of MRC research boards, subcommittees and panels as set out in Appendix 2.

The MRC will only use comments provided by reviewers or board members for the purpose of peer review. The MRC will not disclose peer review reports to any person except as is required for the peer review process or as is required under the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (or any other law or regulation to which MRC is or may become subject). Peer review forms are routinely provided to applicants to inform their future work but the identity of the external reviewers are not disclosed. Reports are provided to applicants on a confidential basis.

MRC funding decisions are taken collectively and membership of MRC research boards, subcommittees and panels is, in many instances, publicly available information.

The MRC will not release the names of individual board, subcommittee members in connection with any specific comments that are released under the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 without first obtaining permission to do so.

A register of interests declared by Board and Panel members are published on the MRC’s website, interests which relate to the peer review of a specific proposal are not published.
3.1 Declarations of Interests (DoI)

Conflicts of interest may arise, or appear to exist, at different stages of the research process. Anyone involved in the assessment process for proposals or for quinquennial reviews need to consider if there are any potential conflicts of interest and if so to inform the MRC as soon as possible. The text below outlines the steps to be taken to manage potential conflicts. More detail on interests that should be declared can be found in the detailed guidance prepared for Board and Panel members in Appendix 4.

3.1.1 What to declare

Conflicts of Interest should include:

- Any interests that may, or may appear to others to, influence the reviewers opinion, in most cases only current interests would be relevant, but past interests may also be relevant.
- Any close links with or interests in research organisations, industrial partners or collaborators involved in the proposal.
- Any commercial or financial/pecuniary interest for example where the reviewer is a member of an organisation that may benefit financially, directly or indirectly from any decision made
- Any non-financial/non-pecuniary interests or other interests that might be thought to influence the review
- Any personal or family interest with someone involved in the proposal or who may benefit (in any form) from any decision made.

3.1.2 Actual (material) conflict of interest where the reviewer must decline to review

Where the reviewer is:

- A close friend or is closely related to the applicant(s)
- Directly involved in the work the applicant proposes to carry out
- Located at the same department/research organisation as the applicant(s), co-applicant(s) or project partners
- Working closely with the applicant(s) (eg as a co-author or PhD supervisor) or has done within the last 4 years

3.1.3 How to declare interests

If someone asked to review a MRC proposal considers they have a conflict of interest, they should complete the Declarations of Interest section on Je-S. If this is an actual conflict (as outlined above) they should decline to review at this point. If unsure as to whether a conflict is actual or not, they should contact SSC Grants PreAward (grantspreaward@ssc.rcuk.ac.uk). The office contacts will discuss the interest raised with the individual and agree appropriate action.

3.1.4 Declarations of interest at meetings

Individuals who are members of a MRC Board or Panel, potential conflicts of interest will normally be managed by the individual having restricted access to information and not participating in the discussion of the proposals concerned and in any related decisions. The office will identify possible individual conflicts of interests and take necessary steps to manage access to documents.

- All known potential conflicts of interest are recorded by office staff on the cover paper for each item discussed at the meeting. Members are also required to declare any other interests as soon as possible if these have been omitted from the paper or become apparent at the meeting.
- The Chair will advise an action to be taken to manage any conflict of interest which becomes apparent. Depending on the nature and degree of interest, the chair will decide whether the interest is material and where this is the case may require the individual to leave the room for the item, or remain but take no part in the discussion.
- Members are required to raise any conflicts that may arise, or appear to arise as soon as they become aware of them so that appropriate action can be taken. If there is any doubt, members should consult with the Chair or the office for advice
- Actions taken in relation to declarations of interest will be recorded in the meeting minutes

3.1.5 Publishing and updating information on Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest for Council, Council subgroup, board, committee and panel members are published on the MRC website. When a declared interest ceases to be relevant, members need to inform the MRC so that the information can be removed.

The Declaration of Interest Information on the web site is updated annually and/or as information is received regarding any changes.
4. What to Consider when Reviewing

4.1 Rigour and Selectivity
Progress in medical research depends on careful scrutiny of research plans and selective investment of the limited funds and time available. This requires difficult judgments to be made. Assessments for funding should be competitive in nature, ie they should involve comparison with other proposals in the same scheme/call and usually in other schemes and across all relevant subject areas. This may not be possible at individual reviewer level, but happens further on in the peer review process, for example by boards and panels.

A reasonable ‘balance of risk’ must be maintained, some work supported carrying greater potential gain, but with lesser chance of success than other safer projects.

4.2 Equity
As far as possible all research should be assessed against the same basic set of consistent, clearly stated standards.

4.3 Confidentiality and integrity of reviewing
All reviewers must adhere to MRC’s requirements relating the confidentiality of reviewing.

In agreeing to review a proposal reviewers have accepted the requirements for confidentiality. This extends to all material relating to the review of research proposals made available to them by the MRC. Reviewers must not use the information in the research proposal for any purpose other than providing a review of it to the MRC. Reviewers must not disclose the fact that the applicant has applied to MRC for research funding and must not retain or copy any material under review or share it with others without express permission.

Reviewers accept and acknowledge that any comments submitted to the MRC may be provided to the applicant, on a confidential basis and in anonymised form, to allow an applicant to respond to issues raised as part of the peer review process and to benefit future proposals. Reviewers should be careful not to include information in their review which compromises their anonymity. Applicants are also required to maintain a similar duty of confidence as it is recognised that reviewers may, from time to time refer to ongoing research, either their own or other researchers for the purposes of comparison.

4.4 Security of Data
In the age of mobile devices it is important that a reviewer avoids storing confidential MRC data on their mobile device. If this is unavoidable, in order to protect the information, please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Follow the MRC policy to encrypt the device or the folder in which the data is to be stored, so that it is protected from unintentional disclosure. At the very least, the data should be compressed (using software like Winzip) and password protected.
- Ensure that you have a pin enabled on your device to prevent unauthorised access to the information.
- Enable auto-lock on the device and set to a maximum of 5 minutes.
- Avoid joining unknown Wi-Fi networks.
- Never leave your mobile device unattended.
- Under the terms of the Data Protection Act, you should securely delete data when it is no longer required (i.e. after a Board or Panel meeting has concluded). Paper copies of documents will continue to be left in the meeting room for destruction by MRC staff.
- In the event of a data loss, please report the incident to the MRC Grants Policy Service Delivery Team or your contact at NC3Rs.
4.5 Ethical Issues

The MRC expects reviewers to:

- Follow good ethical practice in their role of assessing individual proposals and reports and in reviewing topics
- Consider carefully the ethical acceptability of research proposals
- Assist MRC in identifying any wider potential implications eg could a piece of non-clinical research such as cloning animals have far reaching ethical implications?

4.5.1 Investigations involving human participants, data about them or material on them

The MRC Ethics Series outlines the MRC’s requirements and expectations around research involving humans including specific guidance and advice relating to work involving children, the mentally incapacitated, participants in developing societies, personal data, human tissues and biological samples.

Although most of this work involves independent scrutiny by an independent ethics committee, the MRC also needs to be satisfied that the work is acceptable. Many proposals have broad ranging programmes, but do not include detailed protocols. It is important therefore to focus on obvious problem areas and novel issues:

- Clinical trials – these are submitted with detailed protocols
- Proposals which may involve potentially novel risks need to take into account public as well as scientific perception
- Proposals where consent cannot readily be given or is not going to be obtained
- Proposals which entail using data or material in ways which the donor may not have envisaged. It is particularly important to undertake studies which may reveal findings that pose a dilemma in terms of feedback
- Proposals in areas of public concern (eg genetics) where the potential relevance to health may not be obvious

The Ethics, Regulation and Public Involvement Committee provides the MRC Council with expert ethical advice on a wide range of issues relating to medical research. This may include advice on funding for applications that raise specific ethical considerations. Further details can be found at Ethics, Regulation and Public Involvement Committee.

4.5.2 Bioterrorism and biomedical research

The MRC’s guidance can be found at MRC’s Position on Bioterrorism.

In essence reviewers, board and panel members are asked to address if:

- There are any ethical, safety or security issues or other potential adverse consequences associated with the proposed research?
- These issues would include any tangible risks that the research could be misused for harmful purposes. Such purposes would include actions which lead to harm to humans, animals or the environment including terrorist misuse;
- If such issues exist, have these been addressed satisfactorily in the proposal?

Board and panel members are also asked to consider:

- Where a board/panel has reached a decision that a proposal should be recommended for funding based on its scientific quality, it is asked to consider whether any risks of misuse associated with that proposal that remain unresolved are sufficiently great that they should be considered further before an award can be made.
- In such cases board/panel members should record their concerns which will be taken to Council for a final decision on whether funding should be provided.

4.5.3 Investigations involving animals

The MRC's guidance can be found at Responsibility in the use of animals in bioscience research: Expectations of the major research council and charitable funding bodies.

Reviewers, board and panel members are also asked to consider whether:

- Animals are needed for the proposed research
- The potential benefit justifies the adverse effects on the animals
- The numbers are appropriate
- The species is justified

This requirement applies whether or not the animals are to be purchased with MRC funds.
4.5.4 Investigations involving Institutions etc
MRC’s guidance can be found at Cluster randomised trials: methodological and ethical considerations

It is important if a proposal involves comparing institutions or different professional practices, for example to scrutinise proposals to ensure that the study is ethically fair to them as well as to the individuals participating in the research.

4.6 Concerned about the acceptability of a proposal
If a reviewer has reservations about the acceptability of a proposal, this should be discussed with SSC Pre-Award or MRC headoffice Board/Panel team. Where appropriate further information will then be sought from the applicant by MRC. The MRC headoffice, in discussion with the board/panel chair may decide that a particular proposal or a specific issue needs to be addressed before a funding decision is made. Any complaints about the MRC’s ethical position in relation to a study are investigated normally by headoffice staff (to whom such issues should be referred) or by a committee established by MRC itself.

The MRC’s Handbook for Applicant’s and Grant Holders provides further information on statutory and other regulatory requirements applicants need to comply with.
5. Writing the Review

The review needs to include sufficient information to ensure that it is usable and that justification is provided for any comments. However, reviewers should also be careful not to exceed the maximum length allowed, as Je-S will cut off the review once the maximum length is reached (4000 characters per section) and the rest of the commentary will be lost.

Assessment criteria depends on the type of grant being reviewed. The areas required will be clearly shown on the Peer Review Form. Please see below for the main areas reviewers are asked to comment on. Not all of these will be on every form.

5.1 Assessment Criteria
Please refer to Appendix 8 for a detailed list of assessment criteria for all types of grants

The assessment of any research proposal is based on three core criteria:

- **Research Quality**
  - Comment on:
    - The importance and competitiveness of the proposed research, including:
    - Strength of medical or scientific case
    - Level of innovation and whether that is likely to lead to significant new understanding
    - Management strategy proposed, including equitable access to any shared resources
    - Feasibility of experimental plans, including provision of preliminary data where appropriate
    - How risks have been identified, and will be mitigated

- **Research Environment and People**
  - Comment on:
    - The suitability of the investigator group and the environment where the proposed research will take place, including:
    - Track records of the individuals in their field(s) and whether they are best placed to deliver the proposed research
    - Level of commitment of host research organisation to supporting the proposed research
    - Whether appropriate facilities will be available to the researchers

- **Resources Requested**
  - Comment on:
    - Whether funds requested are essential and justified by the importance and scientific potential of the research
    - Investigator time and proposed involvement related to management of the research
    - Whether the proposal demonstrates value for money in terms of resources requested
    - Whether any animal use is fully justified in terms of need, spaces, number, conformance to guidelines

- **Ethics**
  - Ask:
    - Is the work ethically acceptable?
    - Are there any ethical issues that need separate consideration?
    - Are the ethical review and research governance arrangements clear and acceptable?

- **Data Management Plans**
  - Assess:
    - Does the applicant have (or are likely to have) a sound plan for managing the research data funded through the award, taking into account:
      - The types, scale and complexity of data being (or to be) managed
      - The likely long-term value for further research including by data share
      - The anticipated information security and ethics requirements
• **Impact**  
  o Assess the potential economic and social impact of the proposed research including:
    - Identification of realistic improvements to human or population health
    - Contribution to relieving disease/disability burden and/or improving quality of life
    - Identification of potential impacts of research and plans to deliver these

 Additional requirements for Fellowships:

• **Applicant**  
  o Comment on the applicant, considering whether their:
    - Track record and achievements to date
    - Expertise and skill set
    - Current research standing
    - Ability to carry out the proposed work
    - Potential for the future

Are appropriate level for this fellowship.

• **Project and Training**  
  o Comment on the importance and competitiveness of the proposed research, including:
    - Strength of medical or scientific case
    - Level of innovation and whether this is likely to lead to significant new understanding
    - Appropriateness and rigor of the methods and study designs
    - Feasibility of experimental plans
    - The value of the proposed training plans including the proposed placements or collaborations.

• **Environment**  
  o Comment on the suitability of the research centre where the proposed Fellowship is to be based, including:
    - Scientific impact in the field
    - Appropriateness for the work proposed
    - Level of commitment from supervisors, mentors and host institution
    - Opportunities for training and career development, actively identified and supported.

 Additional Requirements for DPFS/DCS Grants:

• **Need and Solution**  
  o Does the need exist and would meeting it significantly reduce disease and/or alleviate an important development bottleneck? Is the proposed solution reasonable and does it provide sufficient benefit over alternative approaches to be adopted?

• **Rationale**  
  o Is there a good medical/scientific rationale for the project?
  o Is there a reasonable body of evidence to support the proposed rationale?

• **Deliverability**  
  o Is the proposed approach reasonable?
  o Does the plan propose appropriate go/no-go milestones?
  o Do the applicants have the necessary expertise to deliver the plan?
  o Is the proposed risk management approach for the key risks appropriate?

 Additional Requirement for Partnership Grants:

• **Case for Partnership Grant**  
  o Comment on the suitability of the proposed research for a partnership grant, including:
    - Whether similar partnerships already exist
    - Whether the partnership between the applicants is likely to benefit the research
    - How the host research will support the research and whether management arrangements for ensuring equity of access are clear
Additional Requirements for Industrial CASE Studentship Grants

- **Strategic Relevance**
  - Comment on the relevance of the project to the remit of the MRC and the strategic objectives of the scheme.

- **Project Quality**
  - Comment on whether:
    - The project is sufficiently challenging and feasible in the timeframe proposed and has the potential to lead to a good PhD
    - The science meets MRC's quality criteria; original, potential to make a value-added contribution to science, well designed hypothesis driven research
    - The project is feasible in terms of the expertise, technologies, materials and infrastructure that will be available to the student.

- **Research and Transferable Skills**
  - Comment on whether:
    - Through this project the student has the potential to develop advanced research and transferable skills
    - The partners have the required specialist capabilities and capacity to support that training
    - The arrangements for generic skills training accord with prevailing standards.

- **Training Environment**
  - Comment on whether:
    - The two research leads have sufficient track records in the field of research
    - The broader intellectual environment is appropriate for a PhD student and will expose them to a range of excellent research beyond their project
    - The student will have access to taught courses relevant to their research
    - The student has the potential to experience two stimulating research cultures that will be of value during and beyond the project.

- **Added-Value Collaboration**
  - Comment on whether:
    - The project could be done without the collaboration
    - There is an existing, robust partnership
    - Both partners will make important contributions to the training of the student
    - There is a potential for the student to enhance the collaboration beyond producing a set of results.

- **Industry Contribution**
  - Comment on whether:
    - The scale and kind of the industry contribution is clear and appropriate to the balance of benefits arising from the project
    - The arrangement’s for safeguarding the student’s PhD progress should the company’s circumstances change are clear and acceptable.

- **Supervision and Recruitment**
  - Comment on whether:
    - There are clear day-to-day arrangements for supervision in both the academic and industry settings
    - The supervisors have a good track record in supervising PhD students
    - There are robust mentoring and feedback arrangements for the students
    - The advertising and selection plan is likely to lead to the recruitment of an outstanding student best able to benefit from the award.
5.2 What else to include
The following should also be included in the review:

- Whether the research and the researchers are at the forefront nationally?
- Whether the research and the researchers are at the forefront internationally?
- The evidence for these assessments
- Whether there are major flaws/weaknesses which the board should consider?
- What aspects of the research are innovative/novel and how may the work advance the field?

5.3 Other tips as to what makes a good review include:

- All assessments should be more than just a number. All arguments need to be justified
- The overall score should match the comments — otherwise the research board and applicants might not have confidence in the assessment
- DO NOT reiterate proposal or re-state the assessment questions
- All comments should be in English
- Be aware that not everyone reading the comment will be a specialist in that field. Therefore write comments that a generalist can understand
- AVOID bias in favor of your own specialism
- Where possible include references to other key papers in the field rather than saying “this work is rendered all the more/less important by the recent work of Smith.”
- A useful starting point is to list the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal
- Give balanced feedback and constructive criticism
- Where possible support criticism with examples
- Where appropriate suggest alternative approaches to improve the proposal
- Highlight any concerns with the proposal
- Make sure that you DO NOT include anything in the assessment that will identify you as the assessment needs to remain anonymised eg avoid references to where you have worked or who you have worked with as this may enable someone to recognise you
- Assess against the highest international standards in clinical and public health research
- Watch out for unintentional bias against high risk high pay-off proposals and early career investigators
- Try to make your review so that it can be used for comparable peer review

Reviews may be rejected if they include:

- A conflict of interest that is deemed too significant by the Office
- Anything which may be deemed libelous
6. The Scoring Process

6.1 Scoring by Peer Reviewers
Referees provide a score (1-6) which will be taken into consideration by the Board/Panel and will be used to shortlist proposals. Each reviewer will first decide whether the proposal is excellent, good, potentially good or unacceptable. They will then use the descriptions within the relevant band (see Appendix 6) to select a score that reflects their overall summary, using whole numbers only.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Exceptional. Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Excellent. Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very High Quality. Internationally competitive in parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>High Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Good Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Poor Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ineligible for funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reviewers should ensure their comments justify the score awarded.

6.2 Scoring by Boards/Panels
The scoring structure for Boards/Panels runs from 0-10 and can be used on all types of application at all Boards/ Panels. Only scores 1-10 will routinely be used as zero will be used by the office for applications that are outside of remit or ineligible for other reasons. Please refer to appendix 6 for a full description of the bands.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Exceptional – Top international programme or of exceptional strategic importance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge in most areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Very High Quality – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>High Quality – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>High Quality – Leading edge nationally, but not yet internationally competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good Quality – Nationally competitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Potentially Useful – with significant weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Potentially Useful – With major weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Poor Quality – Bordering on unacceptable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unacceptable quality or has serious ethical concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Ineligible for funding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.2.1 Other Considerations
Strategic Importance – Board/Panels are expected to consider the strategic importance of an application. These should include the following:
- MRC’s specific strategic aims in assessing the importance of the work
- Broader strategic issues that may influence the board/panel to give an application a ‘strategic uplift’ e.g. whether an application is from a young investigator or whether it is in an area highlighted in MRC’s strategy

Pathways to Impact – Boards/Panels are asked to consider impact in their assessment of each application. This falls into two areas:
- Scientific (academic) impact –
  - How much value could the application add to the knowledge base in the area?
  - Is addressing a key gap or question?
  - Is it high risk with the potential for high payback?
- Economic and Societal Impact –
  - How does this application fit into the wider societal context?
  - Is it likely to have scope to impact on treatment practices or the wider policy context or lead to novel technologies or improve the quality of life or economic competitiveness in the UK?

Data Management – Does the PI meet the requirements for research data quality, sharing and security?
6.2.2 Which applications are fundable?
Applications which score an average of between 6 and 10 are deemed fundable. However, the level of score which will be funded depends on the funding available for the meeting. At the end of the Board/Panel, the applications are ranked in descending order by their average score. The cumulative total funding required for the projects is included on the ranking spreadsheet and once this reaches the budget allocated to the meeting, this is the cut-off point as to which will be funded and which will not be. If there are a large number of applications which score highly in a meeting, some applications may be taken forward to the next meeting.
7. The Outcome of the Reviewing Process?

7.1 Which applications are funded

If Peer Reviewers are not directly informed of the outcome when applications they review, they can check the website as the MRC publishes information relating to funded research proposals as part of the RCUK’s Gateway to Research.

Application Success Rates detailing the percentage of applications funded for each type of grant are also published annually on the MRC web site.
Appendix 1

MRC Freedom of Information

1. Policy on Peer Review (July 2005)

The Freedom of Information (FoI) Act, which came fully into force on 1 January 2005, gives everyone a legal right to obtain information held by public authorities and universities, including the MRC. The Act sets out obligation for public authorities, but also provides the exemptions to the right of access to information. The purpose of this document is to set out what information the MRC will and will not release concerning the peer review process.

The MRC’s mission is to encourage and support high quality research with the aim of improving human health. The MRC aims to be as open as possible in informing others how it conducts its business, through the MRC portal, the web site, publications and face to face discussions. This extends to peer review.

Peer review in this context is the process by which research proposals submitted to MRC are reviewed for funding. It involves sending the proposals to other researchers working in the same or related fields in the UK or abroad and using their comments to assess the quality and relevance of the proposal as a basis for deciding whether the MRC should fund it.

Peer review has been used for this purpose by research funders for as long as they have been in existence. Peer review itself was itself reviewed in 1990 by an Advisory Group reporting to the then Advisory Board for the Research Councils.

The Group concluded, inter alia:

“While any system of human decision making is liable to fallibility, peer review is the only practicable method of assessment in the field of basic research in part because it has the overwhelming support of the academic community. However, the imperfections of peer review should be recognised, as should the consequent obligation to work hard continually on peer review practices to make these as effective as possible.”

All requests for information are considered case by case. The information requested is always reviewed prior to release. Where an exemption is considered, the case for and against release will be assessed, often in the form of a public interest test. Peer review needs to protect intellectual property rights (IPR), personal information, and confidential information, including that involved in the free and frank exchange of ideas in the decision making process. Peer review is thus a two sided process – both sides have interest in confidentiality: those submitting and those reviewing/making decisions. Overall, MRC believes that the confidentiality of aspects of the peer review process is in the best interests of good science, and hence also of the public good more generally.

The MRC must therefore ensure that there is no inappropriate release, and must not damage the system which is used in broadly similar ways by most other research funders and, by and large, works well. Once released, information cannot be retrieved. Specifically, damage to the peer review process may be caused by:

- Release of confidential and personal information. (Loss of IPR/subsequent challenge under the DPA).
- Loss of confidence of reviewers (including those outside the UK).
- Reviewers and board members being unwilling to provide free and frank comment.
- An overly defensive approach leading to inadequate recordkeeping

In consultation with the other UK Research Councils, and in line with other funders of medical research, in particular the US National Institutes of Health, the MRC has reviewed its policy concerning the release of information at various stages of the peer review process and has decided on the following framework for disclosure. The framework is applicable to the processing of all types of proposals for funding, including research, fellowships and training.
2. FOI and the Data Protection Act
The MRC’s Council and MRC staff aim to conduct all of their dealings with applicants, reviewers and other stakeholders in an open and responsible way with respect to scientific peer review the MRC:

• Has published its approach to the Freedom of Information Act as it relates to scientific peer review.

• Has outlined its expectations on confidentiality as it relates to the Freedom Of Information Act and the Data Protection Act Agreement.

• Will take all reasonable steps to ensure that the contents of research proposals are treated as confidential. Proposal forms and any associated materials are made available to reviewers and research board/panel members on a confidential basis.

• Recognizes that individual reviewers and research board/panel members who are involved in assessing proposals may need to consult confidentially with colleagues about individual proposals. In undertaking such consultation reviewers must ensure appropriate measures are taken to maintain and secure the duty of confidentiality.

• Considers possible conflicts of interest when selecting experts to review a proposal. However reviewers are asked to identify any possible conflicts of interest before they begin reviewing a proposal and to decline to review a proposal if there are any. The MRC will treat any such disclosures appropriately and fairly.

• Requires that any research board/panel members with a potential conflict of interest are not involved in the decision making process. A register of interests declared by members of research board and panel members are published on the MRC’s website interests which relate to the peer review of a specific proposal are not published.
Appendix 2

MRC’s Confidentiality Terms

Despite the importance for openness regarding the activities of MRC and the key decisions it takes, and the statutory provisions of the FOI Act 2000, the review process and all deliberations involved in Board/Panel decision-making are confidential, to allow free and frank expression of opinions; to protect the confidence of referees and individuals; and to avoid premature disclosure of intentions.

The MRC uses the Government Protective Marking scheme on all papers, documents and emails to provide a common baseline for safeguarding information. The expectation is that all marked documents should be kept in confidence but may be discussed with other board members. The MRC recognises that in exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to consult colleagues with specialist expertise—this should be done with the utmost discretion on the part of the recipient of the papers and those consulted are required to abide by the MRC confidentiality agreement.

As a reviewer and/or Board or Panel member, you must agree to treat as confidential all correspondence and documents sent to you by the MRC.

The information contained in the confidential documents and applications will be made available to you on the following terms and conditions:

1. “Confidential Information” means any information contained in the documents and applications that does not fall within the exclusions in paragraph 5 below.
2. Confidential Information should be used solely for the purpose of Board/Panel business including assessing and taking decisions for research support on behalf of the MRC.
3. You will not, without written consent from both MRC and the applicant, disclose the fact that an applicant has applied to MRC for support.
4. You will not, without written consent from both MRC and the applicant, either disclose Confidential Information to any third party or use Confidential Information for any purpose other than the purpose described in paragraph 2 above. For the purposes of this paragraph 4, third party means any party other than RCUK Shared Business Centre staff and MRC Head Office staff handling Board/Panel business or a fellow Board/Panel member and specifically includes others in your place of work.
5. It is understood that the foregoing restrictions on use and disclosure shall not apply to information which:
   (i) was in the public domain prior to your receipt of it, or which subsequently becomes part of the public domain by publication or otherwise, except by your wrongful act; or
   (ii) was in your possession prior to your receipt of it and was not acquired directly or indirectly from MRC or the applicant; or
   (iii) was received by you from a third party who did not acquire the same directly or indirectly from MRC or the applicant and who did not require you to hold the same in confidence.
6. These terms apply for the duration a person is involved in reviewing or having access to MRC proposals and other confidential MRC information.

MRC will not use comments provided by reviewers or Board/Panel members for any purpose other than is necessary for the peer review/funding process and will not disclose them to any person except as is required for the peer review/funding decision process or as is required under the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (or any other law or regulation to which MRC is or may become subject). MRC will release anonymised reviewers comments to the applicant, but will ask the applicant to keep them confidential.

MRC will not release your name in connection with any specific comments that are released under the Data Protection Act 1998 or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 without first obtaining your permission to do so. If you are a member of a MRC Research Board/Panel, this information is publicly available, as well as any interests you declare.
Appendix 3

The Seven Principles of Public Life

The MRC expects all those acting on its behalf to demonstrate the seven principles outlined by the Committee on Standards in Public Life.

Selflessness
Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest.

Integrity
Holders of public office must avoid placing themselves under any obligation to people or organisations that might try inappropriately to influence them in their work. They should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

Objectivity
Holders of public office must act and take decisions impartially, fairly and on merit, using the best evidence and without discrimination or bias.

Accountability
Holders of public office are accountable to the public for their decisions and actions and must submit themselves to the scrutiny necessary to ensure this.

Openness
Holders of public office should act and take decisions in an open and transparent manner. Information should not be withheld from the public unless there are clear and lawful reasons for so doing.

Honesty
Holders of public office should be truthful.

Leadership
Holders of public office should exhibit these principles in their own behaviour. They should actively promote and robustly support the principles and be willing to challenge poor behaviour wherever it occurs.

Identified by the Committee on Standards in Public Life: http://www.public-standards.gov.uk/
Appendix 4
Declarations of Interest – Guidance for Reviewers

See also MRC Policy on Declarations of Interest incorporated in the Code of Practice

Part A
All members of MRC Council, subcommittees and standing committees are required to declare any interests which conflict, or may be considered to conflict, with MRC business, or may be perceived as influencing decisions made in the course of their work on MRC bodies. These declarations support transparency and the integrity of the MRC decision making processes by providing assurance that any potential conflicts are considered and are managed effectively in line with the MRC policy on declarations of interest.

To ensure any potential conflicts are handled appropriately all reviewers are asked to declare all relevant private, professional, commercial, financial, political or other interests that might conflict with MRC interests, or might be considered by others to result in a conflict. Members are asked to complete a register entry at the beginning of their tenure and to update this on an annual basis or more frequently if additional relevant interests arise or circumstances change.

Guidance is provided below and examples of current entries that could be used as models can be found below. Any further questions should be discussed with MRC headoffice.

Register entries are published on the MRC website to provide transparency and reassurance to the public that conflicts are handled appropriately when MRC bodies make decisions on allocating public funds, and are used by MRC staff to identify potential conflicts when allocating work to Board or Panel members.

Introductory information
All members of the MRC decision making bodies (as listed above) are required to complete the form using the guidance outlined below. All others involved in the review purpose, should use this as guidance as to what interests need to be declared.

Our aim is to collect one register entry from each individual rather than a separate form for each committee a person is involved with. Including a link to a relevant research group, department or organisation web page would also be helpful.

Section 1: Personal remuneration (including employment, pensions, consultancies, directorships, honoraria). Examples can be found in Part B.

1.1 Provide the names of the body or company from which you receive personal remuneration, equal to or above £5k per annum:
(i) Any appointment at a university or research institute or similar body;
(ii) Any directorships, employment, consultancies or other connection with companies in any field where the company might benefit from support by the MRC either as a collaborator or in some other way;
(iii) Any position of authority in charities and other bodies providing research funding, or support for policy or communication in relevant fields;
(iv) Any other body involved in medical, bio-medical, pharmaceutical, healthcare provision or science or health policy/communication.

1 http://www.mrc.ac.uk/Utilities/Documentrecord/index.htm?id=MRC003373 (January 2010)
Interests in bodies which are supported by the MRC, or which benefit as collaborators or licensees etc. from which income is received should be declared however small the amount. The nature of the business and the position held should be provided for all bodies/companies listed.

1.2 The amount(s) of remuneration received does not need to be declared.

1.3 Where any pension is currently received (and, possibly, where it is to be received at some point in the future) either from any body that falls within the categories in para 1.1 (i) to (iv) above or from a closely related body that manages its pension scheme, the name of the body and the fact that a pension is received (or is to be received) should be declared.

1.4 Where no personal remuneration is received enter None.

Section 2: Shareholdings and financial interests in companies. Examples can be found at Part B.

2.1 Declare the name of any company in which you have direct shareholdings (with a market value equal to or greater than £10,000) or other financial interests which are involved or may in the future be involved in the medical, bio-medical, pharmaceutical, healthcare provision and similar fields.

2.2 Relevant share values should be reviewed annually.

2.3 The value of the shares/other financial interests does not need to be declared.

2.4 You do not need to declare:
   (i) Holdings in unit trusts, investment trusts, open-ended investment companies, unit-linked policies, pension schemes or similar arrangements through which the investor has an interest in a large number of enterprises, unless they specialise in high technology companies in the field of the Council and have a market value of greater than £10,000;
   (ii) Shareholdings, debentures, options and similar rights in a single company listed on the main market of a recognised stock exchange with a market value of less than £10,000 need not be disclosed unless they are known to benefit as participants in collaborative research or other projects funded by the Council or are known to be significant suppliers of goods and services:
   (iii) Ownership/shareholdings of companies that have never traded or carried on any form of activity

2.5 Portfolios that are managed by third parties e.g. Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) do not need to be declared except on receipt of information on investments in companies within the scope outlined in 1.1 (i) to (iv) above.

2.6 Where no relevant shareholdings or financial interests apply, enter None.

Section 3: Research income. Examples can be found in Part B.00

3.1 Declare the sources of all research income likely to be received within the relevant award session (1st April to 31st March), above £50k per grant.

3.2 Declare the sources of all research income from bodies supported by MRC or which benefit as collaborators or licensees etc. likely to be received within the relevant award session (1st April to 31st March).

3.3 The total award value or sum you expect to receive in the year does not need to be provided.

3.4 Where no research income is likely to be received enter None.
Section 4: Major Academic Collaborations (National and International). Examples can be found in Part B.

4.1 Declare the name of the university (and department), institute, company or similar body of any significant collaborators outside your own organisation.

4.2 For each collaboration provide information on the nature of the relationship e.g. research collaboration.

4.3 You will need to make a judgment as to what is ‘major’ bearing in mind that the smaller the number of collaborators and the larger the project the greater the need for disclosure. Details of locations of fellow principal investigators in major projects should be disclosed.

4.4 Where no major academic collaborations enter None.

Section 5: Unremunerated involvement with and membership of medical, bio-medical, pharmaceutical, healthcare provision and similar activities/organisations, i.e. Non-pecuniary interests. Examples can be found in Part B.

5.1 Declare any unremunerated involvement with, or membership of, any other body in connection with medical, bio-medical, pharmaceutical, healthcare provision and similar activity, including relevant:
   (i) appointments at a university or research institute or similar body;
   (ii) directorships or employment or other connection with companies in any field where the company might benefit from support by the MRC either as a collaborator or in some other way;
   (iii) positions of authority in charities and other bodies providing research funding or science or health policy/communication.

5.2 Membership of clubs and associations need not be registered unless they fall within the scope of 5.1 (i) to (iii).

5.3 Where you have no unremunerated involvement with relevant organisations enter None.

Section 6: Political/pressure group associations. Examples can be found in Part B.

6.1 Members are expected not to occupy paid party political posts, or to hold particularly sensitive or high-profile unpaid roles in a political party, pressure group or similar organisation.

6.2 Any political/pressure group associations should be declared.

6.3 Where there are no relevant associations enter None.

Section 7: Family. Examples can be found in Part B.

7.1 Declare any potential conflicts that may arise out of any known family interests and indicate which section (1-6) would apply.
   (i) Family interests would encompass immediate family or household (i.e. personal partners, parents, children [adults or minors], brothers, sisters, and the personal partners of any of these).
   (ii) You are only required to declare any known interests. You do not to make any special request for this information. However you must declare any interests once you become aware of them.

7.2 Individual family/household members do not need to be identified, either by name or their relationship to you.

7.3 Where there are no relevant associations enter None.
Confidential information
We do recognise that from time to time members will have interests that may be confidential and where the details cannot be published or shared openly with other members. However, it is still necessary to ensure such interests are acknowledged to ensure they are handled appropriately. If you do have such interests these should be discussed with the relevant MRC staff who will be able to advise further, you may be asked to identify the interest as usual but to mark it as confidential.

Further information
Further information can be found in the:

- MRC Policy on Declarations of Interest.
- MRC Code of Practice for Council.
- MRC Code of Conduct (for staff).
  (March 2012)

Part B
Examples of published declarations of interest register entries (as at 1 March 2012).

Please list all MRC bodies you are a member of:
E.g. Council, Strategy Board, Infections and Immunity Board, Expert Panel etc and your position on the Board.

Example – Sir John Chisholm, MRC Council:
- Medical Research Council (Chairman)
- MRC Nominations Committee (Chairman)
- MRC Remuneration Committee (Chairman)

Main form of employment:
Name of University and Department or other employing body (include location), and position.

Example – Professor Sir John Savill, MRC CEO and Deputy Chairman of Council:
- Medical Research Council – Chief Executive (time equivalent of four days per week, i.e. 32 hours)
- University of Edinburgh - Head of the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine (16 hours per week)

Research group/department web page:
Provide a link to any relevant web pages for your research group or individual page on your organisations web site.

Example – Professor Sir John Savill, MRC CEO and Deputy Chairman of Council:
- http://www.mrc.ac.uk/About/Structure/CEO/index.htm
- http://www.cir.med.ed.ac.uk/content.asp?sID=46&pID=65

Please give details of any potential conflicts of interests arising out of the following:

1. Personal Remuneration:
Including employment, pensions, consultancies, directorships, honoraria. See section 1 for further guidance.

Example 1 – Dr Richard Henderson (MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology, Cambridge), MRC Council:
- Consultant for Heptares Therapeutics, though honorarium is paid to a charity.
- Pension from the MRC pension fund (from October 2010).
- Part-time income from employment at MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology.
- Does not receive an honorarium for membership of MRC Council.

Example 2 – Professor Paul Morgan (University of Cardiff), MRC Council:
- Medical Research Council – Member.
- Salary from Cardiff University.
- Committee Chair at Wellcome Trust.
### 2. Shareholdings and Financial Interests in companies:
Include the names of companies involved in medical/biomedical research, pharmaceuticals, healthcare provision and related fields where shareholdings or other financial interests. See section 2 for thresholds and further guidance.

**Example 1 – Professor Michael Schneider (National Heart and Lung Institute), MRC Council:**
- Founder and Board Member, Kardia Therapeutics.
- Consultant, Cardio 3 Biosciences.

**Example 2 – Professor Christopher Kennard (John Radcliffe Hospital/University of Oxford), Neuroscience and Mental Health Board Chair and Strategy Board member:**
- The Westover Clinic.

### 3. Research Income during session (1 April – 31 March):
Declare all research income from bodies supported by the MRC and research income from other sources above the limit of £50k per grant. See section 3 for further guidance.

You do not need to provide the total value of the award or the anticipated income within the year though you may wish to do so.

**Example 1 – Professor Doreen Cantrell (University of Dundee), Infections and Immunity Board Chair and Strategy Board member:**
- Wellcome Trust Grant 065975/Z/01/A (August 2007 – July 2012).

**Example 2 – Professor Iain McInnes (University of Glasgow), Clinical Training and Career Development Panel:**
- I receive funding from MRC, Wellcome Trust, Arthritis Research UK, Nuffield Foundation.
- I have received research income from NovoNordisk, Pfizer and Roche.
- I perceive no obvious conflict of interest in these relationships for service on panel.

### 4. Major academic collaborators [national and international]:
Declare all significant collaborations outside your primary institution or organisation. See section 4 for further guidance.

**Example 1 – Professor Chris Day (Newcastle University), MRC Council:**
- National
  - Howard Thomas and Mark Thursz (Imperial College London), Stuart Forbes and John Iredale (University of Edinburgh), Kevin Park (University of Liverpool) – MRC project grant.
  - Professor George Davey-Smith and Professor Debbie Lawlor (University of Bristol) – MRC project grant.
  - Dr Satta (University of Glasgow) - Research collaboration.
  - Professor William Rosenberg (University of Southampton) - Research collaboration.
- International
  - Dr E Bugianesi (University of Torino), Professor G Marchesini (University of Bologna), Professor E Albano (University of Novarra), Dr Paul Angulo (Mayo Clinic USA), Dr Jacob George (University of Sydney) – All Research Collaborators.

**Example 2 - Professor Deborah Lawlor (University of Bristol), Population and Systems Medicine Board member:**
- Naveed Sattar & Scott Nelson – University of Glasgow.
- Anne-Marie Nybo-Andersen – University of Copenhagen.
- Chris Day – University of Newcastle.
- Bill Fraser – University of Liverpool.
- Shah Ebrahim, J-P Casas – London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine.
### 5. Un-remunerated involvement with and membership of medical, bio-medical, pharmaceutical, healthcare provision or science or health policy/communication and similar activities/organisations:

This may include non-executive and advisory positions, directorships and other positions of authority. See section 5 for further guidance.

**Example 1 – Professor Sally MacIntyre (MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit, Glasgow), MRC Council:**
- UKCRC DECIPHer Centre, Cardiff: Chair of Scientific Advisory Board.
- Wolfson Research Institute, University of Durham: Member of Scientific Advisory Board.
- NIHR School of Public Health Research: Member of Advisory Board.
- HEFCE Research Excellence Framework: Member of Unit of Assessment 2.
- Glasgow Centre for Population Health: Member of Board of Management.
- MRC Population Health Sciences Research Network: Member of Board.
- Fellow: Academy of Medical Sciences; Royal Society of Edinburgh; Royal Society of Medicine.
- Honorary Member: Society for Social Medicine.

**Example 2 – Ian White (MRC Biostatistics Unit, Cambridge), Methodology Research Programme Panel member:**
- Associate editor of JRSSA, 2004-8.
- Assistant editor of Addiction, from 2004.
- Member of the International Society for Clinical Biostatistics and Society for Social Medicine.
- Member of the Mental Health Research Network’s Methodology Research Group.

### 6. Political/pressure group associations:

Members are expected not to occupy paid posts, or hold high-profile unpaid roles within a political party, pressure group or similar organisation. Any political/pressure group association should be declared. See section 6 for further guidance.

**Example 1 – Tony Caplin, Council Member:**
- Was COO of Conservative Party, managed James Committee.

### 7. Family:

Provide details of any potential conflicts that may arise out of any known interests of immediate family. See section 7 for further guidance.

Please indicate which section (1-6) above applies. Family members do not need to be identified, either by name or their relationship to you.

**Example 1 – Professor Jane Endicott (University of Oxford), Molecular and Cellular Medicine Board member:**
- Partner, Martin Noble is a Director and academic Co-founder of Crysalin Ltd (Oxford University Spin-out Company).

**Example 2 – Professor Giles Hardingham (University of Edinburgh), Neuroscience and Mental Health Board member:**
- I have a brother who is a postdoc at Cardiff University.
- My father is emiritus professor at Manchester University (in receipt of pension).
## Appendix 5

### Scoring Matrix for Reviewers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exceptional – Top international programme, or of exceptional national strategic importance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Original and innovative; novel methodology and design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally, or of national strategic importance</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very High Quality – Internationally competitive in parts</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (Principal investigators and co-investigators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are fully considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score Indicators</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High Quality</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap or a valuable scientific resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically sound study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Strong leadership (track record, team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of projected delivery, anticipated knowledge generation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate staff time allocated to deliver project (may be scope strengthen management of the project)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are well considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good Quality</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically sound study but areas require revision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Likelihood of successful delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate leadership (scope to strengthen team; environment; collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potentially more limited return on investment (resources requested, likelihood of project delivery, and anticipated knowledge generation)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are adequately considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Poor Quality</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Quality and Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Poorly defined question</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically weak study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Limited likelihood of new knowledge generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scientific Potential</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Poor leadership</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Justification of Resources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potentially poor return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Other: Ethical and/or governance issues are not adequately considered</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ineligible for funding</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6

Scoring Matrix for Board and Panel Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Fundable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>10. Exceptional – Top international programme or of exceptional national strategic importance</strong></td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Highly original and innovative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Novel methodology and design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (team, environment, and collaborators are amongst the best in a broad field)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Internationally unique resource of value to many disciplines</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>9. Excellent – Internationally competitive and leading edge in most areas</strong></td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Original and innovative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Novel methodology and design</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (team, environment, and collaborators e.g. among the best in a specialist area)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Internationally significant resource of value to many disciplines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>8. Very High Quality – Internationally competitive and leading edge nationally</strong></td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Original and innovative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Excellent leadership (team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Crucial scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for high health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Resource of value to many disciplines.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Very high likelihood of successful delivery (risks well managed)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Score Indicators

#### 7. High Quality – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Fundable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Innovative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Robust methodology and design (innovative in parts)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Strong leadership (team, environment, and collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Key scientific question or knowledge gap or area of strategic importance to the UK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Valuable scientific resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for significant return on investment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o High likelihood of successful delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 6. High Quality – Leading edge nationally, but not yet internationally competitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Fundable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically robust study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Appropriate leadership (team, environment; collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Worthwhile scientific question or knowledge gap</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Justifiable scientific resource</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Potential for reasonable health and/or socioeconomic impact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Resources appropriate to deliver the proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o High likelihood of successful delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5. Good Quality – Nationally competitive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Fundable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically sound study but areas require significant revision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Leadership not optimal (scope to strengthen team, environment; collaborators)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Worthwhile scientific question with potentially useful outcomes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Moderate likelihood of contributing to new knowledge generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Resources broadly appropriate to deliver the proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Good likelihood of successful delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 4. Potentially Useful – With significant weaknesses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Indicators</th>
<th>Fundable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically weak study (approach or study design requires significant revision)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Leadership/environment not optimal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact</td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Contains potentially useful ideas but requires major revision</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Moderate likelihood of successful delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Resources inappropriate to deliver the proposal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Unlikely to significantly contribute to new knowledge generation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score Indicators</td>
<td>Fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Potentially Useful – With major weaknesses</strong></td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Quality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Question poorly defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Methodologically weak study</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Poor leadership/environment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Productivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Unlikely to contribute to new knowledge generation</td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Poor quality science, bordering on unacceptable</strong></td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Unacceptable quality or has serious ethical concerns</strong></td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>0. Ineligible for funding</strong></td>
<td>Not fundable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7

Additional Assessment Criteria for specific types of Grants

1. Partnership grants
   For outline applications ONLY:
   • Whether a partnership grant is the most appropriate form of support in this case;
   • The significance of the partnership in terms of its potential impact and strategic importance to the MRC;
   • Is there a case for an investment in the context of the board portfolio and budget?

   For full applications ONLY:
   Summary of assessment
   • Overall, what is the quality of the proposal?
   • Does the application demonstrate value for money of the partnership and its impact to the researchers and the scientific field?

2. Scientific plans
   • What is the scientific problem to be addressed and why is it important?
   • What are the innovative and possibly high-risk approached that are being proposed?
   • If successful, what is the potential of this research to offer groundbreaking advances in the scientific area (and perhaps others?) being addressed?
   • What skills and expertise do the investigators have to promise success in the proposed approaches?
   • What impact will this partnership grant funding have on scientific delivery?
   • What impact will this partnership grant funding have on the development of future science and strategy?

3. Environment and people
   • Has the environment(s) in which the partnership will take place been well described?
   • If the proposal is for shared equipment or expertise, has it described where this will be sited and how it will be supported by the host research organisation(s)? Have the management arrangements for ensuring equity of access been explained?
   • Is the partnership between the applicants likely to benefit the research?
   • Has the host research organisation(s) demonstrated a clear commitment to supporting the proposed partnership?
   • Does the partnership provide opportunities for the training and career development of personal working in the partnership?
   • Will any studentships requested provide a unique training experience which could not be supported by existing MRC studentship support for example, Doctoral Training Grant Funding, Capacity Building Studentship funding etc.?
   • Do all studentships requested meet MRC’s research training objectives and expectations? (see Appendix 1)?
4. Management

• How convincing and coherent is the management strategy proposed?
• Will the management strategy ensure equitable access to any equipment or staff that are to be shared between collaborators?
• Will the management strategy ensure high standards of supervision, mentoring and support for students, with a clear strategy for sustaining onward career development?
• Are the aims and objectives realistic within the timeframe and with the resources proposed?

5. Justification of resources requested

• Do contributions from the host research organisation(s) or from other sources enhance the value for money of the proposal?
• Will the expected benefits, if supported, justify the cost?
• Assessment criteria for Trial grants – outline stage

When assessing the outline proposal, referees address the following broad questions:

• Is there a real need for such a trial for this condition or group of patients?
• Is the most important question being addressed?
• What impact are the results likely to have on clinical practice or understanding of the proposed intervention?
• Is there evidence of an appropriate degree of liaison with consumer groups.
• Is the proposed trial feasible?
• Does the proposed team of investigators possess the necessary range of expertise and experience to successfully carry out the proposed trial?
• Should a full proposal be invited?

In addition, the MRC will be seeking preliminary views on the scientific merit of the proposed study in order to provide feedback or inform the development phase of the proposal. A specially convened panel (clinical trials cross board subgroup) will advise on whether to invite you to submit a full proposal or to discourage you on the basis that a full proposal would be very likely to be competitive.

Applicants whose trials have the potential to be successful in the general competition for MRC funds are then invited to submit a full proposal. Following a decision on the outline proposal, all applicants receive verbatim, but anonymous, referees’ comments. Applicants invited to progress their proposal to the full proposal stage are normally given detailed feedback to inform the further development of their trial. In addition, the applicant and other key players in the proposed trial (for example, Trial Manager) are invited to a Workshop at MRC head office to help clarify the next steps in the proposal procedure, advise applicants on key areas relating to the assessment of their full proposal and discuss generic issues concerned with the management and delivery of clinical trials. Scientific programme managers at head office will agree the deadlines for submission of final proposals with the applicants.
2. Trial grants – full stage
The referees assess the proposal using the main criteria on page 1. In addition they should also consider the following questions, as appropriate.

Important
• Is a Trial Grant the most appropriate form of support in this case?
• Is there an important “window of opportunity”, for example to introduce a new clinical advancement into practice?
• Do the proposals effectively address needs or strategies identified by MRC or other key organisations (e.g. Department of Health, Department for International Development)?

Scientific potential
Environment and people
• Has past work been exploited effectively, and/or has it had significant impact on healthcare?

Research plans
• How feasible is the proposed approach? Is this likely to be the most effective way of tackling the question?
• Are there realistic approaches to the translation of research findings into improved practice?
• Are there realistic approaches to commercial development of any intellectual property arising from the research?
• Where relevant: are plans for organising research and fostering links to add value both realistic and likely to deliver higher quality, or more productive, science?

Justification of resources requested
• Will the expected benefits of the research, if supported by a Trial Grant, justify its cost, taking account of both MRC funding and any additional costs (for example, those met by the NHS) of undertaking the research?

3. New Investigator Research Grants
New investigators can apply either as:
a) Senior Post-Doctoral Researcher – 3 to 10 years post-doctoral research experience. Must be full time on the NIRG, although can work up to 6 hours a week on other projects
b) First Time Lecturer – within 3 years of start of their first lectureship. This does not include posts which are leading to a full-time lecturer. Must commit to a minimum of 10 hours a week on the NIRG.
c) Clinician – applicants must be clinically qualified. Must commit to a minimum of 10 hours a week on the NIRG

In addition they should also consider the following questions, as appropriate.

Scientific Potential
Environment and People
• Has the applicant demonstrated that they will direct the proposed research and be actively engaged in carrying it through, taking into account research experience, supervisory experience and publications?
• Does the individual have the potential to progress to securing further MRC support (e.g. MRC Research Grant funding) at the end of this award?
• Is a New Investigator Research Grant the most appropriate form of support in this case?
• Are the collaborators well chosen?

Research Plans
• Pilot work or proof of principle i.e. grants of two years or less are not eligible for the New Investigator Award scheme.
4. MRC Industrial Collaboration Awards
MICA applications can be submitted to any of our research funding schemes (Programme Grants, Research Grants, Developmental Pathway Funding Scheme, Calls, etc.) for which the lead academic applicant is eligible.

The assessment criteria for MICAs will be those of the scheme that the MICA is submitted to. In addition, MICA applicants will need to:

- convince the relevant Research Board or funding panel that in the absence of the requested funding and collaboration the planned research could not be undertaken, or that it could not be undertaken to the quality level or timescale proposed, and
- demonstrate good management of potential conflicts of interest and that the agreed distribution of IP is appropriate.

5. Programme Grants
Please note item 1 is applicable for the assessment of Programme Grant Outlines and Full Applications; items 2 to 8 are solely for the assessment of Full Applications for Programme Grants.

For Outlines and Full Applications:
1. Suitability for a Programme Grant, Strategic Fit & Case for a Major Investment
   a. Is the proposed work a “programme” – i.e. a co-ordinated & coherent group of related projects which may be to answer an inter-related set of questions on a broad format?
   b. Does the work require long term and extensive support?
   c. Is the proposed work in an area of high strategic priority for MRC large investment?
   d. Is there a case for a major investment in the context of the Board Portfolio & Budget?

For Full Applications ONLY:
2. Summary of Assessment
   a. Overall, what is the quality of the proposal?
   b. How significant is the proposed programme in terms of its potential impact?
   c. To what extent will it extend the base of knowledge relevant to improving human health?

3. Detail of the proposed Programme
   a. Is it important to pursue this topic now?
   b. Is the proposal realistic in its timeframes & proposed resources?
   c. How convincing & coherent is the overall proposed approach?
   d. How original or innovative are the proposals?
   e. Has the work already been done or is it being done elsewhere?
   f. How good is the prospect for significant scientific advance?

4. People
   a. What is the track record and standing in the field of the named applicants?
   b. How appropriate is the expertise of the applicants to the proposed work?
   c. Is the applicants’ stated time commitment to the work appropriate & sufficient?
   d. Where MRC is being asked to fund personal salaries are the requests in each case reasonable?

5. Environment
   a. Is the proposed environment(s) suitable and does it have the variety of expertise & disciplines to support a programme?
   b. Has the host institution(s) demonstrated a clear commitment to the proposed programme for the duration of the grant?
   c. Are any collaborators well chosen?
   d. Does the environment provide appropriate opportunities for training & career development of personnel supported on the grant?
   e. Are there any dependencies on other organisations or funding of which MRC should be made aware?
6. Value for Money
   a. Does the proposal represent good value for money in respect of the resources being requested from the MRC?
   b. Are the proposed resources fully justified in terms of the science proposed?
   c. Will the expected benefits of the research justify its cost to the MRC?

7. Ethical & other Implications
   a. Is the work ethically acceptable?
   b. Where applicable, is the use of animals appropriate and in line with MRC guidelines?
   c. Where applicable, is the use of human participants or human tissue appropriate and in line with MRC guidelines?
   d. Are there any other implications which could put the MRC Council, participants in the research, or the applicants at risk?
   e. Are there any risks which MRC should take into account when deciding whether to fund this research?

8. External Communications & Commercial Exploitation
   a. Are the proposed arrangements for the public understanding of this work appropriate & sufficient?
   b. Are the proposed plans for disseminating the results of the research appropriate & adequate?
   c. Are the proposed arrangements for the commercial development of any intellectual property arising from the research appropriate & adequate?

6. Fellowships
   There are three stages to the assessment process:
   • External peer review
   • Shortlisting
   • Interview

   The referees and interview panel members are asked to consider the:
   • Standing and potential of the person
   • Suitability and scientific merit of the research project
   • Excellence of the place where the research will be based

   Where pre-to-postdoctoral fellowships incorporate doctoral research training, interview panels will additionally draw on the assessment criteria for students.

Summary of MRC fellowship assessment criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The applicant</th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Pre- to post-doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Has the applicant demonstrated their independence as a research scientist?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the applicant demonstrated their potential as a high-calibre researcher?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the applicant have the ability to carry out the proposed project work?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Has the applicant shown that they can effectively lead a research team?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does the applicant show significant potential of becoming a leader in their field</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Pre- to post-doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is the proposed project of high scientific merit (taking into account overall quality, originality, and importance – both in terms of the likelihood of scientific advance and of increasing knowledge relevant to improving health)</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the overall approach convincing, coherent and effective? Is the methodology appropriate?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it achievable within the timescale and resources, taking into account clinical commitments where appropriate?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there a clear training element? How will this benefit the applicant, and will the work enable them to become independent?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### The place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Senior</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Pre- to post-doctoral</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The standing of the proposed centre in the field</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the centre an appropriate one for the proposed project and career goals of the applicant?</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the quality of training that the applicant would be likely to receive there?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where there is an overseas/industrial training component, is the proposed period appropriate and justified? How will the applicant benefit? The standing of the proposed centre in the field?</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>x</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 6.1 Addition requirements for pre-doctoral Fellowships

**The Applicant**
- Does the applicant have adequate research experience to carry out the proposed project work?
- Is the applicant committed to a career in academic medicine?
- Do you think the applicant has played a significant role in the design of the project and the writing of the research proposal?

**Justification of Support Requested**
- Pre-doctoral applicants are not eligible for FEC. The Research Training Support Grant (up to £20,000 per annum) should be justified by the applicant.

**Issues which could be explored at interview**
- Please indicate if there are any such issues.

**Dissemination of research results**
- Are the proposed plans for disseminating the results of the research to potential users appropriate and adequate?

**Public Engagement in Science**
- Are the arrangements for the promotion of the public engagement with science in respect of the proposal appropriate and sufficient?
6.2 Additional requirements for post-doctoral Fellowships (Intermediate and Senior)

The Applicant
- How appropriate is the expertise of the applicant to the proposed area of research?
- Does the applicant have the potential to progress to securing major MRC support or similar support from other funders either during or by the end of the fellowship?

The Project
- Is the fellowship applied for, the most appropriate form of support in this case?

Significance of the Topic
- How timely are the proposals? Is it important to pursue the topic now?
  For example: does the proposal capitalise on a new advance, offering the UK the possibility of an international lead; does it relate to a new or developing healthcare need; does it exploit a “window of opportunity”, e.g. for the introduction of a new clinical development into practice?
- Is the proposal “high risk, high pay-off”? If so, how?
- Is the proposal internationally competitive?

Details of Proposal
- Is the experimental design appropriate; in particular, is this the most effective and economical way of tackling the problems?
- Has the work already been done or is it being done elsewhere? How persuasive is the case that earlier work needs to be replicated or extended to another system?

Justification of Support Requested
- Directly Incurred costs: is the number of staff appropriate for the work described and are the reasons for purchasing major items of equipment clearly set out?
- Directly Incurred costs: are the resources requested fully justified in terms of the science proposed? (If not, indicate any pruning of staff, running expenses, equipment or any other requests you consider inappropriate)
- Directly Allocated Staff costs: (if requested) is the time estimated for each requested staff member consistent with their involvement with the project? Is the involvement of the requested staff necessary or sufficient for the successful prosecution and management of the research?
- Other Directly Allocated costs: (if requested) is the requested level of access to institutional research facilities, such as equipment, IT systems, clean rooms, technical staff, appropriate and justified?
- Does the proposal represent good value for money in respect of the resources, including the estates and indirect costs elements, being requested from the MRC?

Other issues which could be explored at the interview
- Please indicate if there are any such issues.
6.3 Additional Requirements for Senior Fellowships Only

The Project – Under this heading please comment on:

Summary of assessment of the proposed research
- Is a Senior Non-Clinical Fellowship the most appropriate form of support in this case?
- Is the topic important for other reasons? Has the applicant adequately explained and justified these?
- Are the proposals internationally competitive?

Details of Proposal
- Is the experimental design appropriate; in particular, is this the most effective and economical way of tackling the problems?
- Has the work already been done or is it being done elsewhere? How persuasive is the case that earlier work needs to be replicated or extended to another system?

The Research Centre
- How effective in enhancing productivity is any additional underpinning support provided by the Centre or other organisation likely to be?

Other issues which could be explored at interview
- Please indicate if there are any such issues.