

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY REPORTER

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UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

NOTICES

Calendar

9 July, *Tuesday*. Discussion by videoconference at 2 p.m. (see below).
 16 July, *Tuesday*. Discussion by videoconference at 2 p.m. (see below).
 18 July, *Thursday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 10 a.m.
 19 July, *Friday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 10 a.m.
 20 July, *Saturday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 10 a.m.

Ordinary issues of the *Reporter* for the remainder of the 2023–24 academic year will be published on 24 and 31 July 2024. Issues will only be published on 10 and 17 July if needed for urgent items of business. The first issue of the 2024–25 academic year is currently scheduled for publication on 25 September 2024.

Discussion on Tuesday, 9 July 2024

The Vice-Chancellor invites members of the Regent House, University and College employees, registered students and others qualified under the regulations for Discussions (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 111) to attend a Discussion **by videoconference** on Tuesday, 9 July 2024 at 2 p.m. The following item will be discussed:

1. Forthcoming disposal of land at West Cambridge for the Cambourne to Cambridge busway (*Reporter*, 2023–24: 6744, p. 626, and 6747, p. 705).

Those wishing to join the Discussion by videoconference should email UniversityDraftsman@admin.cam.ac.uk from their University email account, providing their CRSid (if a member of the collegiate University), by 10 a.m. on the date of the Discussion to receive joining instructions. Alternatively contributors may email their remarks to contact@proctors.cam.ac.uk, copying ReporterEditor@admin.cam.ac.uk, by no later than 10 a.m. on the day of the Discussion for reading out by the Proctors,¹ or may ask someone else who is attending to read the remarks on their behalf.

In accordance with the regulations for Discussions, the Chair of the Board of Scrutiny or any ten members of the Regent House² may request that the Council arrange for one or more of the items listed for discussion to be discussed in person (usually in the Senate-House). Requests should be made to the Registry, on paper or by email to UniversityDraftsman@admin.cam.ac.uk from addresses within the cam.ac.uk domain, by no later than 9 a.m. on the day of the Discussion. Any changes to the Discussion schedule will be confirmed in the *Reporter* at the earliest opportunity.

General information on Discussions is provided on the University Governance site at <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/governance/decision-making/discussions/>.

¹ Any comments sent by email should please begin with the name and title of the contributor as they wish it to be read out and include at the start a note of any College and/or Departmental affiliations held.

² <https://www.scrutiny.cam.ac.uk/> and https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/regent_house_roll/.

Discussion on Tuesday, 16 July 2024

The Vice-Chancellor invites members of the Regent House, University and College employees, registered students and others qualified under the regulations for Discussions (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 111) to attend a Discussion **by videoconference** on Tuesday, 16 July 2024 at 2 p.m. The following items will be discussed:

1. First-stage Report of the Council, dated 2 July 2024, on the alteration and refurbishment of the Stirling Building on the Sidgwick site (p. 729).
2. First-stage Report of the Council, dated 2 July 2024, on a new temporary facility for the Molecular Imaging Chemistry Laboratory at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (p. 731).

For information on joining the Discussion and/or contributing some remarks, please see the Notice above.

Notice of a benefaction and renaming of the Centre for Trophoblast Research

27 June 2024

In 2007, the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences set up a Centre for Trophoblast Research, to be supported by an endowment fund, the Trophoblast Research Fund, established with funding from Cambridge in America, following a donation from Professor Charlie Loke.

The Vice-Chancellor gives notice that she has accepted with gratitude a significant donation from Ms Amanda Loke, in honour of her father Professor Loke, to be added to the Trophoblast Research Fund. In recognition of this donation, the Committee on Benefactions and External and Legal Affairs, with the support of the General Board and the Managers of the Fund (who include the Head of the Department of Physiology, Development, and Neuroscience), has agreed to the renaming of the Centre as the Loke Centre for Trophoblast Research.

The Council is submitting a Grace (Grace 1, p. 738) to update the name of the Centre in the regulations for the Fund.

Election to the Council

28 June 2024

The Vice-Chancellor announces that the following candidate has been nominated in accordance with Statute A IV 2 for election to the Council, and that it has been certified to her that the candidate has consented to be nominated:

Class (a): one from among the Heads of Colleges

Professor CHARLES ALAN SHORT, President of Clare Hall

nominated by: Ms H. J. Hancock, *JN*, and Prof. P. J. Rogerson, *CAI*

No other persons having been nominated, Professor Short is elected to the Council in class (a), to serve from 16 July 2024 until 31 December 2026.

Election to the Board of Scrutiny

28 June 2024

The Vice-Chancellor announces that the following candidates have been nominated in accordance with Statute A VII 3 for election to the Board of Scrutiny, and that it has been certified to her that the candidates have consented to be nominated:

Class (c)(ii): a member of the Regent House

Professor NEIL WYN EVANS

nominated by: Prof. V. Belokurov and Prof. M. H. Kramer, *CHU*

Ms MARÍA MATILDE GOODALL

nominated by: Dr R. V. L. Doubleday, *CHR*, and Prof. R. G. Cacho, *CL*

It is necessary to hold an election to select one from among the two candidates. Those elected will serve with immediate effect until 30 September 2027. **Online voting will open at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 July and close at 5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024.** Hardcopy voting papers and supporting materials will be distributed not later than Wednesday, 10 July to those who opted in November 2023 to vote on paper; the last date for the return of voting papers is 5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024.

Election to the Nominating Committee for External Members of the Council

28 June 2024

The Vice-Chancellor announces that the following candidates have been nominated for election to the Nominating Committee for External Members of the Council, and that it has been certified to her that the candidates have consented to be nominated:

Class (d): two members of the Senate elected by the Regent House

The Reverend Canon JUTTA BRUECK, *F*

nominated by: Mr T. N. Milner, *DAR*, and Prof. K. Ottewell, *LC*

Mr MARTIN DANIEL MACCONNOL, *M*

nominated by: Prof. E. V. Ferran, *CTH*, and Ms C. D. Lloyd, *M*

No other persons having been nominated, the above-named candidates are elected to the Nominating Committee in class (d), to serve with immediate effect until 30 September 2025.

Amendment to Grace 2 of 12 June 2024 (EJRA) initiated under Special Ordinance

A (ii) 5: Notice in response

28 June 2024

The Council has received a proposed amendment to Grace 2 of 12 June 2024, put forward by 64 members of the Regent House (*Reporter*, 6747, 2023–24, p. 706). The Grace recommends the retention of the Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA) but with changes to its scope and other revisions to the University's Retirement Policy.¹ The Council notes that the amendment seeks the abolition of the EJRA by removing reference to the fixed retirement age from Special Ordinance, replacing the Report's recommendations. The amendment, if approved in the ballot, would take immediate effect, when the outcome of the ballot is announced on 23 July 2024.

The Council has agreed to authorise submission of the amendment under Special Ordinance A (ii) 7, with some minor changes to the drafting (see below). This will enable a vote to be taken on the proposal to abolish the EJRA at the earliest opportunity. The Council is content that, if the amendment were to be approved in the ballot, it would be possible for its immediate impacts to be managed and for other implications to be considered over the longer term without any major disruption to the operations of the University. Most changes resulting from the abolition of the EJRA would be cultural – setting expectations, standards and norms – and these could be introduced over time. Providing additional tools for Heads of Department, to manage their staff more effectively, would be necessary but also a sensible step in any case. Those tools could draw on examples of good practice from across the University, where some institutions have already introduced their own ways to support the development of their staff. Institutions could be encouraged to adopt better practices because they result in better relationships. Also, proposals for changes to the provisions that aim to protect academic freedom are likely to be presented in due course as part of a review of the disciplinary procedure for officers. When there is capacity for that review, the Council and the General Board would be asked whether they wish to consider further changes as a consequence of the abolition of the EJRA. The Council has also considered the costs of abolition of the EJRA, noting the Review Group's estimate of approximately £7.4m a year in steady state on additional salary costs, compared to £2.2m if the EJRA is increased to 69.² In the event that the ballot results in the abolition of the EJRA, the Finance Committee and the General Board will, as part of the normal budgetary process each year, examine how the consequential financial implications can be managed.

Options on the ballot paper

The Vice-Chancellor has made minor changes to the wording of the amendment, using her authority under Regulation 11(c) of the Ordinance for Graces and Congregations. The effect of these changes is to remove imperfections in the drafting, so that the amendment has the intended effect (if approved) of amending Special Ordinance C (ii) 12, rather than simply replacing the Report's recommendations with the alternative of abolishing the EJRA.

The revised wording of the amendment in full is as follows, with the minor changes to the text highlighted in bold:

That the recommendations in paragraph 14 of the Joint Report of the Council and the General Board, dated 14 May 2024, on the University's Retirement Policy and Employer Justified Retirement Age (*Reporter*, 6741, 2023–24, p. 578) **not be approved and that instead** Special Ordinance C (ii) 12 (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 77) be amended to read as follows, having the effect of abolishing the Employer Justified Retirement Age:

12. Subject to the provisions of Statute C and any Special Ordinance made under Statute C, a University officer shall be entitled, unless the tenure of their office is limited in accordance with the provisions of any other Statute or Ordinance or by Grace, to hold office until their employment terminates so long as they satisfactorily perform the duties of the office.

The Vice-Chancellor has decided that the options on the ballot paper in the vote on Grace 2 of 12 June 2024 will be as follows:

- (A) In favour of the Grace in its original form
 - The EJRA only applies to academic officers, the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellors
 - The EJRA takes effect at the end of the academic year those officers reach 69
 - The changes to the Retirement Policy and Ordinances are made with effect from 1 September 2024, as set out in the Report
- (B) In favour of the Grace as amended
 - The EJRA is abolished for all officers, both academic and academic-related, with immediate effect
- (C) Against the Grace, whether in its original or amended form
 - The EJRA is retained for all officers, both academic and academic-related, as it currently stands, retiring at the end of the academic year in which they reach 67

The Single Transferable Vote regulations³ will apply in this ballot. **Online voting will open at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, 10 July and close at 5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024.** Hardcopy voting papers and supporting materials will be distributed not later than Wednesday, 10 July to those who opted in November 2023 to vote on paper; the last date for the return of voting papers is **5 p.m. on Monday, 22 July 2024.**

¹ See the Joint Report's recommendations, *Reporter*, 6741, 2023–24, p. 579.

² See paragraph 5.4.8 of the Review Group's report, <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/reporter/documents/ejra/EJRAReviewGroupReport2024.pdf> (University Account required).

³ *Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 121. See also the explanation of the voting system on the governance site: <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/ballots/rh/Pages/STV-explained.aspx>.

VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.**Electors to the Professorship of Applied Mathematics**

The Council has appointed members of the *ad hoc* Board of Electors to the Professorship of Applied Mathematics as follows:

Professor Dame Ann Dowling, *SID*, in the Chair, as the Vice-Chancellor's deputy

(a) *on the nomination of the Council:*

Professor Annalisa Buffa, *École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne*

Professor Edriss Titi

(b) *on the nomination of the General Board:*

Professor Colm-cille P. Caulfield, *CHU*

Professor Anders Hansen, *PET*

Professor Endre Suli, *University of Oxford*

(c) *on the nomination of the Faculty Board of Mathematics:*

Professor Julia Gog, *Q*

Professor Nigel Peake, *EM*

Professor Andrew Stuart, *California Institute of Technology*

Electors to the Professorship of Translational Auditory Neuroscience

The Council has appointed members of the *ad hoc* Board of Electors to the Professorship of Translational Auditory Neuroscience as follows:

Professor David Cardwell, *F*, in the Chair, as the Vice-Chancellor's deputy

(a) *on the nomination of the Council:*

Professor Liat Kishon Rabin, *Tel Aviv University*

Professor Maria-Grazia Spillantini, *CLH*

(b) *on the nomination of the General Board:*

Professor Manohar Bance, *CL*

Professor Ruth Litovsky, *University of Wisconsin-Madison*

Professor Brian Roberts, *Aston University*

(c) *on the nomination of the Faculty Board of Clinical Medicine:*

Professor Deniz Baskent, *University of Groningen*

Professor Alasdair Coles, *CC*

Professor Patrick Maxwell, *T*

REPORTS

First-stage Report of the Council on the alteration and refurbishment of the Stirling Building on the Sidgwick site

The COUNCIL begs leave to report to the University as follows:

1. In this Report the Council is seeking approval in principle for the alteration and refurbishment of the Stirling Building on the Sidgwick site as set out below.

2. The building, which is Grade II* listed, was designed by James Stirling and completed in 1968. It currently accommodates the Faculty of History and the Seeley Library, which hosts library collections for History, Land Economy, Latin American Studies, Politics and International Studies, and Sociology. A plan showing the location of the building is provided below (p. 730).

3. There is an urgent need to refurbish the building since it is likely to become unsafe for occupation within the next few years. The environmental performance of the building is poor, particularly in extremely hot or cold conditions, and many spaces within the building are problematic from the point of view of accessibility and basic efficiency. The building occupies a central position at the heart of the Sidgwick site and the required refurbishment introduces an opportunity to sensitively alter the building so that it provides excellent space for its current users and

for a much wider community of students and staff from across the Schools of Arts and Humanities and the Humanities and Social Sciences.

4. The budget for the project is £78.4m at RIBA Stage 3. A further £5.3m is likely to be required to meet the costs of decanting the Faculty of History and the Seeley Library for the duration of the building works. The Seeley Library will be temporarily relocated to dedicated space in the West Room at the University Library. Some of the Faculty's activities will be hosted in other buildings on the Sidgwick site, some of the teaching will be accommodated at nearby Colleges, with the remainder of the Faculty's activities likely to be located in a temporary building on the Sidgwick site; these arrangements will be finalised as part of the Full Business Case.

5. An Outline Business Case for the project was approved by the Planning and Resources Committee in June 2024. A Full Business Case will be prepared and a Second-stage Report will be published in due course to seek approval for implementation of the project.

6. The Council recommends:

- I. That approval in principle be given for the works outlined in this Report.
- II. That the Director of Estates be authorised to apply for detailed planning approval in due course.

2 July 2024

DEBORAH PRENTICE,
Vice-Chancellor

ZOE ADAMS

MADELEINE ATKINS

GAENOR BAGLEY

MILLY BODFISH

SAM CARLING

ANTHONY DAVENPORT

JOHN DIX

SHARON FLOOD

HEATHER HANCOCK

LOUISE JOY

FERGUS KIRMAN

ELLA MCPHERSON

SCOTT MANDELPROTE

SALLY MORGAN

SHARON PEACOCK

PIPPA ROGERSON

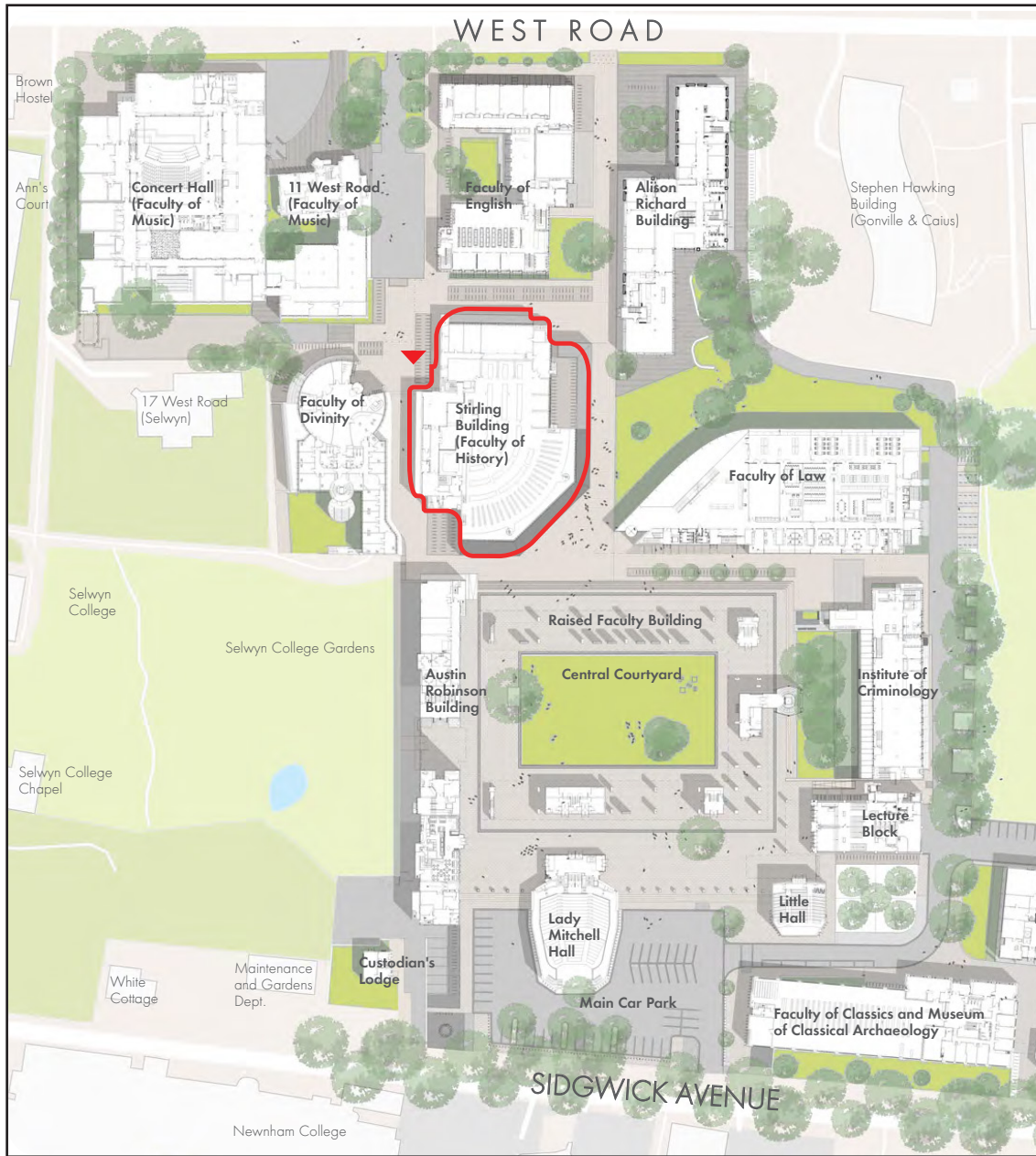
JASON SCOTT-WARREN

ANDREW WATHEY

MICHAEL SEWELL

PIETER VAN HOUTEN

Location of the Stirling Building on the Sidgwick site



First-stage Report of the Council on a new temporary facility for the Molecular Imaging Chemistry Laboratory at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus

The COUNCIL begs leave to report to the University as follows:

1. In this Report the Council is seeking approval in principle for the submission of a full planning application for a new temporary modular building on the Forvie site at the Cambridge Biomedical Campus (CBC) to accommodate the Molecular Imaging Chemistry Laboratory (MICL).

2. The project outlined in this Report ('Temporary building for the MICL') will replace the MICL's current accommodation with temporary accommodation in advance of a longer-term move in the future.

3. The School of Clinical Medicine has a strategic plan, based on its existing strengths in radiochemistry and positron emission tomography (PET), to create an internationally leading centre for molecular imaging on the CBC. The MICL is a dedicated preclinical facility for researchers from across the University to undertake research in the discovery, development and clinical translation of novel radiotracers for the biomedical technique of PET. It is a key component of the integrated PET imaging infrastructure.

4. The current accommodation for the MICL in the West Forvie Building (WFB) on the Forvie site is extremely unsatisfactory for a number of reasons:

- (a) Much of the Mechanical, Electrical and Public Health (MEPH) infrastructure is beyond or approaching the end of its life expectancy and at risk of operational failure and/or regulatory non-compliance with Environment Agency and other statutory quality and safety standards. If the MEPH failed, all experimental procedure, especially radiochemical procedure, would have to stop. This would risk serious disruption to the MICL and its research capabilities. If regulatory compliance failed, certain research activities, which support a number of Departments, may have to cease.
- (b) The building is ranked number one across the University's estate in the prioritisation list for the Decarbonising Heat Programme. As this programme gains momentum, there is likely to be increasing pressure to find a way to address the carbon emissions of the WFB.
- (c) Without significant alteration the building will not be able to accommodate new equipment and does not have the capacity for expansion of research programmes. For example, the MICL has identified the need for a new dedicated mini cyclotron, which would enable it to have more regular access to – and a wider range of – radioisotopes, and avoid the need to transfer the radioisotopes batches from the Radiopharmaceutical Unit (RPU) facility that is situated within the basement of the nearby Wolfson Brain Imaging Centre (WBIC) and reaching its operational maximum.
- (d) The building does not provide an environment that is conducive to positive staff and student well-being. The WFB once housed biomedical facilities now relocated to the Anne McLaren Building and the Jeffrey Cheah Biomedical Centre. The MICL is therefore now the last remaining facility in a building that is otherwise empty in preparation for demolition. The poor working environment is impacting the retention and recruitment of staff to the MICL to support its research programmes.

5. Work started on a project (MICL 2) to provide long-term alternative accommodation for the MICL and proposals for a new, mixed commercial and academic building on the Forvie site were drawn-up. However, since then, other matters have intervened, forcing a rethink of the project and delays to the development of plans for a longer-term solution. These matters include the discovery of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete within the West Forvie Building, which necessitated propping, further compromising an already poor working environment.

6. In December 2023, the Estates Committee endorsed the strategy to review the feasibility of temporary accommodation for the MICL before submission of the appropriate business case for a new permanent building. A subsequent Initial Feasibility Report, based on the information available at the time, concluded that:

- (a) it is technically possible to house the MICL in a modular building;
- (b) the preferred location for the modular building is on the east side of the Forvie site;
- (c) a temporary planning application would be required for the modular building;
- (d) the building could be one or two storeys with a separate modular unit for activities involving radiation;
- (e) the building could be in use by the end of 2025.

7. A project to develop a 'Temporary building for the MICL' was therefore registered with the Planning and Resources Committee (PRC) in February 2024. The plan below shows the expected location of the proposed temporary building.

8. There are inherent inefficiencies in a strategy that involves double relocation. However, the scope that has been developed will accommodate the MICL in suitable laboratory and write-up space, where the requirements for the facility are based on the minimum viable product for the team to continue to operate over approximately a five-year period. This temporary solution is intended to provide the University with sufficient time to enable the issues with the longer-term plans to be resolved, for a strategy for the University's landholdings across the Cambridge Biomedical Campus to be developed, and for providing the MICL with appropriate long-term accommodation.

9. The Project Cost of the new temporary facility is estimated to be £9.2m. This initial estimate will be refined during the next phase of design development, which will be undertaken through the procurement of a specialist modular contractor under a pre-construction services agreement.

10. The Estates Committee expects to receive the Outline Business Case (OBC) for the project on 22 July 2024. Due to the timing of the Estates Committee meeting, after the last General Board and PRC meetings of the Easter Term, approval from the General Board and PRC will be sought by circulation.

11. The urgent need for a replacement facility for the MICL means that approval from the Regent House to apply for full planning permission for a temporary facility is being sought ahead of approval from the Estates Committee, General Board and PRC for the OBC. However, if the OBC is not approved by all, or any one of these committees, approval from the Regent House will be considered null and void.

12. The Council recommends:

- I. That, subject to the approval by the Estates Committee, General Board and Planning and Resources Committee of the Outline Business Case for the project, approval in principle be given for the construction of a new temporary facility for the Molecular Imaging Chemistry Laboratory on the Forvie site.
- II. That the Director of Estates be authorised to apply for full planning permission in due course.

2 July 2024

DEBORAH PRENTICE,
Vice-Chancellor

ZOE ADAMS

MADELEINE ATKINS

GAENOR BAGLEY

SAM CARLING

ANTHONY DAVENPORT

JOHN DIX

SHARON FLOOD

HEATHER HANCOCK

LOUISE JOY

FERGUS KIRMAN

ELLA MCPHERSON

SCOTT MANDELBROTE

SALLY MORGAN

RICHARD MORTIER

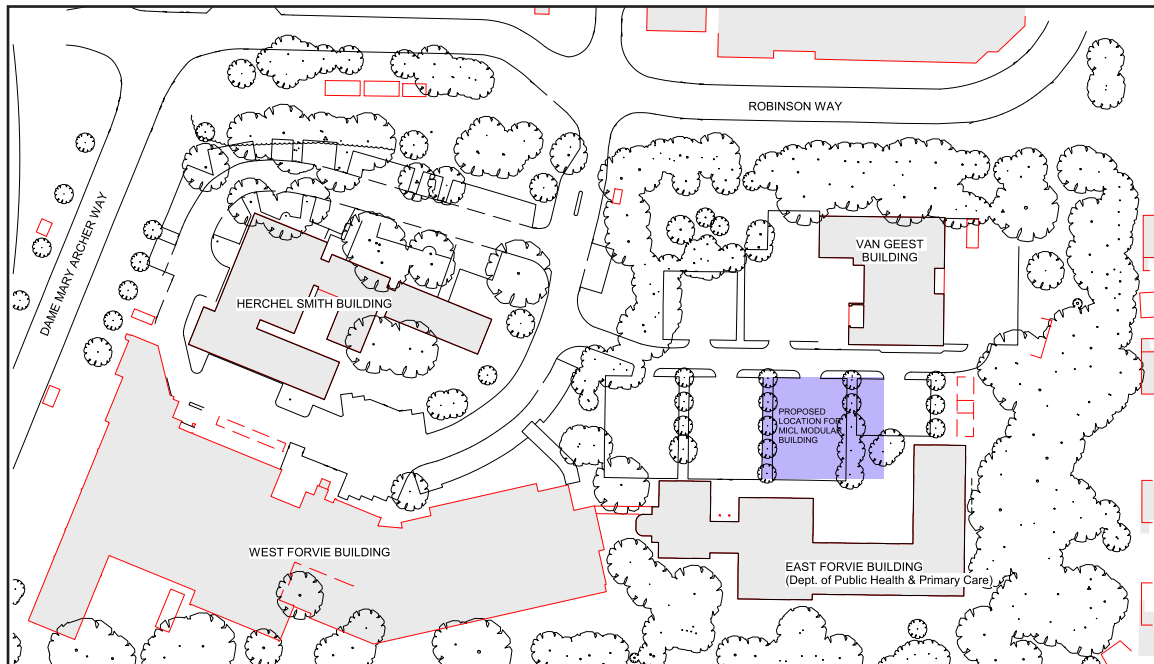
SHARON PEACOCK

JASON SCOTT-WARREN

ANDREW WATHEY

MICHAEL SEWELL

PIETER VAN HOUTEN

Indicative temporary building location plan

CLASS-LISTS, ETC.**Approved for degrees**

The relevant Degree Committees have approved the following persons for the award of degrees. In the case of degrees where theses are required to be deposited in the University Library, the title of the thesis is shown after the name of the person by whom it was submitted. These lists do not include candidates who opted to withhold their names from publication.

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This content has been removed as it contains personal information.

OBITUARIES

Obituary Notice

MARTIN JOSHUA MAYS, M.A., Ph.D., Emeritus Fellow and formerly Vice-Master, Senior Tutor, Admissions Tutor and Director of Studies in Chemistry of Downing College, sometime University Senior Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry, died on 23 June 2024, aged 87 years.

GRACES

Grace submitted to the Regent House on 3 July 2024

The Council submits the following Grace to the Regent House. This Grace, unless it is withdrawn or a ballot is requested in accordance with the regulations for Graces of the Regent House (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 112), will be deemed to have been approved at **4 p.m. on Friday, 12 July 2024**. Further information on requests for a ballot or the amendment of Graces is available to members of the Regent House on the Regent House Petitions site.[§]

1. That in Regulation 2 of the Ordinance for the Trophoblast Research Fund (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 1005) the reference to the Centre for Trophoblast Research be amended to refer to the Loke Centre for Trophoblast Research.¹

¹ See the Vice-Chancellor's Notice, p. 725.

[§] See <https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/governance/key-bodies/RH-Senate/Pages/RH-Petitions.aspx> for details.

ACTA

Approval of Grace submitted to the Regent House on 19 June 2024

The Grace submitted to the Regent House on 19 June 2024 (*Reporter*, 6746, 2023–24, p. 702) was approved at 4 p.m. on Friday, 28 June 2024.

Congregation of the Regent House on Wednesday, 26 June 2024

A Congregation of the Regent House was held at 9 a.m. at which, in addition to the necessary Officers, more than twenty members of the Regent House were present for the transaction of business. The supplicat for degrees to be conferred in absence was approved and the Congregation dissolved. Ceremonies to mark the conferral of these degrees then took place.

This content and pages 739-742 have been removed as they contain personal information.

Congregation of the Regent House on Thursday, 27 June 2024

A Congregation of the Regent House was held at 9 a.m., at which, in addition to the necessary Officers, more than twenty members of the Regent House were present for the transaction of business. The supplicat for degrees to be conferred in absence was approved and the Congregation dissolved. Ceremonies to mark the conferral of these degrees then took place.

This content and pages 744-747 have been removed as they contain personal information.

This content has been removed as it contains personal information.

Congregation of the Regent House on Friday, 28 June 2024

A Congregation of the Regent House was held at 9 a.m., at which, in addition to the necessary Officers, more than twenty members of the Regent House were present for the transaction of business. The supplicat for degrees to be conferred in absence was approved and the Congregation dissolved. Ceremonies to mark the conferral of these degrees then took place.

This content and pages 749-752 have been removed as they contain personal information.

This content has been removed as it contains personal information.

Congregation of the Regent House on Saturday, 29 June 2024

A Congregation of the Regent House was held at 9 a.m., at which, in addition to the necessary Officers, more than twenty members of the Regent House were present for the transaction of business. The supplicat for degrees to be conferred in absence was approved and the Congregation dissolved. Ceremonies to mark the conferral of these degrees then took place.

This content and pages 754-757 have been removed as they contain personal information.

This content has been removed as it contains personal information.

E. M. C. RAMPTON, *Registrar*

END OF THE OFFICIAL PART OF THE 'REPORTER'

REPORT OF DISCUSSION

Tuesday, 25 June 2024

A Discussion was convened by videoconference. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Ann Dowling, *SID*, was presiding, with the Registry's deputy, the Senior Proctor, the Junior Pro-Proctor and 47 other persons present.

Due to time limitations, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor ruled that the twenty-four sets of remarks received by the Proctors ahead of the Discussion be included in the formal record without being read out. Contributions to the Discussion were made as follows:

Report of the Council, dated 21 May 2024, on the demolition of derelict buildings on the North West Cambridge Estate

(Reporter, 6742, 2023–24, p. 598).

No remarks were made on this Report.

Report of the Council, dated 4 June 2024, on the term of office of the Chancellor and the High Steward

(Reporter, 6744, 2023–24, p. 634).

Professor G. R. EVANS (Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History), received by the Proctors:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Oxford and Cambridge are both about to be in need of new Chancellors though both retain their High Stewards. Oxford's Chancellor appoints its High Steward but in Cambridge the High Steward is elected by the Senate, so its High Steward is included in this Report. The Regent House has a role because its approval (subject to Privy Council consent) will be needed to make the necessary adjustment to the Statutes. It is now proposed to amend Statute A 19 to include the 'terms' of office of both Chancellor and High Steward to read:

The arrangements prescribed by Statute and Ordinance for the election and term of the Chancellor shall apply also to the election *and term* of the High Steward. (my emphasis)

The ten-year term

The considerations which have been weighed in making the proposal to limit both Chancellor and High Steward to a ten-year term of office concentrate on the Chancellor. Whether the reasons given also apply to the High Steward does not seem to have been discussed. The length of the periods of service of the two Chancellors now resigning has not been exceptional. Lord Patten entered office as Chancellor of Oxford in 2003 and Lord Sainsbury became Cambridge's Chancellor in 2011. Patten's two predecessors each served for a quarter of a century. Cambridge had only three Chancellors between 1689 and 1811 and Sainsbury's predecessor, the then Duke of Edinburgh, served as its Chancellor from 1976 to 2011. High Stewards too have often held office for considerable periods. At present both High Stewards remain in office, Baron Reed of Allermuir for Oxford (since 2018) and Lord Watson of Richmond for Cambridge (since 2010).

The Council sets out its argument for limiting the Chancellor's tenure to ten years by suggesting that the prospect of a life-long appointment may put off a number of potential candidates. An appointee could of course resign at any time. Council accepts that but says it is concerned about the further possibility that, 'with a lifetime appointment, a Chancellor could become unable to carry out the duties of the office but be incapable of resigning (or unwilling to

do so)'. It foresees reputational risk to the University because a removal would be 'such public action' that a fixed term seems a 'prudent measure'. The current arguments for and against forced retirement for University officers at 67 have not been much concerned with any suggestion that an EJRA is needed because their decline with age might make them 'incapable of resigning'. Such fears about declining powers are apparently not thought to attach to membership of the Regent House as the University's governing body, which now carries no age limit.

It is worth noting that to set a ten-year period of office for the Chancellor and High Steward will add to what is already quite an assortment of periods in Cambridge's leading offices. A Vice-Chancellor is allowed five but up to seven years and a Pro-Vice-Chancellor three years but renewable up to six and (if the proposed amendments to the EJRA are approved in the forthcoming ballot) a Registry will be facing no fixed retirement age. Are Registraries safe from the declining of their powers while Chancellors and High Stewards are not?

The Nominating Committee

The Council also proposes a return to a form of 'Nominating Committee', a provision abandoned by the University only in January this year.¹ Oxford recently found it faced strong opposition and reputation-damaging headlines when it sought to give a Nominating Committee of its own something of a 'sorting hat' role in the listing of candidates for the vote of Convocation for its own next Chancellor. The *Oxford University Gazette* of 16 May recorded a climb-down. A Chancellor's Election Committee is now to 'play no substantive role in the election of a Chancellor'. It may only establish the 'timeline' for the process of election; 'advertise the role' and 'establish the information to be provided to candidates'.

Cambridge may be wise to remind itself of its own past controversies over nominations for the election of its Chancellor. The story has been told by A. W. F. Edwards in a series of articles in the *Oxford Magazine* between 2011 and 2014.² The Statutes created by Cambridge in 1926 under the Oxford and Cambridge Act of 1923 had required only that 50 members of the Senate sign a nomination to put forward a candidate for election as Chancellor. However in 1953, after the confused election of Lord Tedder in 1950, Cambridge created its own Nomination Board. This was not put into Statute, merely made an Ordinance. It proved to be inefficient at the next election, failing to nominate Prince Philip as Chancellor before the deadline so that an extension had to be permitted.

On 14 May 2014 a Report was published on 'the process for the nomination and election of the Chancellor'³ to put forward the proposals of a working group. These did not include the abolition of the Nomination Board but in the Discussion which followed on 27 May 2014 Professor A. W. F. Edwards argued that:

the creation of a Nomination Board in 1953 was a mistake and that it should be abolished, and that future elections should return to a procedure in which all members of the Senate have an equal right to propose candidates. Anything less incurs a democratic deficit.⁴

The Grace proposing the new Ordinance was withdrawn and a Notice in the *Reporter*⁵ suggested letting the matter rest until a new election came into view. Before Cambridge's Nomination Board was abolished by the Senate this January there was an attempt to address (among other things) the practical difficulties of achieving a vote of such an enormous body with a Report of 15 November 2023 tackling that question.⁶

The ‘role description’

Lord Patten has been an active Chancellor, Lord Sainsbury less so, though the generosity of his benefactions has been remarkable.⁷ At a Council meeting in February 2024 it was suggested that a ‘Draft Role Description’ for the new Chancellor would be needed. The medieval Chancellor’s role was judicial, primarily with the purpose of maintaining the ‘good order’ in the University still generally looked for in its *Statutes and Ordinances*.⁸ The Chancellor and later the Vice-Chancellor was judge in his own Court. A High Steward is recorded from 1418, again at first having a role in connection with the University’s courts. In Cambridge the ‘judicial’ task since has been largely taken over by the Commissary.

However, under the Universities Act of 1825 the Chancellors and Vice-Chancellors of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge but not their High Stewards still have the power to appoint and swear Constables to maintain order. Each Constable is appointed for one year from 1 October, and their part-time contracts are renewable. On appointment Constables swear an oath to carry out their duties faithfully and have all the powers of a constable within a five-mile radius of Great St Mary’s, the University Church.⁹ That has helped to meet a practical need in the period of Gaza protest and the encampments of recent weeks.

One additional responsibility for Cambridge’s Chancellor survives from the nineteenth century legislation.¹⁰ It remains in force in the present Statutes in much the same wording. This is the Chancellor’s power to resolve ‘any doubt’ arising ‘with respect to the true meaning of any statute’.¹¹ Could the High Steward lawfully do that if necessary?

Otherwise the formal responsibilities of Cambridge’s Chancellors are mainly ceremonial. A Chancellor exercises a fundamental academic power of the University, ‘to call Congregations of the Regent House, and to admit candidates to degrees and titles of degrees’.¹² At Honorary Degree Congregations the Chancellor normally makes an appearance to preside in person. There is Latin to be read.

So what kind of person is needed now? The Report we are discussing mentions only the need for a ‘diverse field of high-calibre candidates’. The Council Minute of 24 March adds the need to ‘ensure that the candidates have a good and fair experience’ and the importance of protecting ‘the reputation of the University’. So is it a matter of character or qualification?

¹ *Reporter*, 6725, 2023–24, p. 227.

² 0th Week, Hilary Term, 2011; 0th Week Michaelmas Term, 2011; 0th Week Trinity Term, 2012, 0th Week Michaelmas Term, 2014 and Fifth Week, Michaelmas Term, 2014.

³ *Reporter*, 6347, 2013–14, p. 536.

⁴ *Reporter*, 6350, 2013–14, p. 614.

⁵ *Reporter*, 6361, 2014–15, p. 57.

⁶ *Reporter*, 6718, 2023–24, p. 113.

⁷ See <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27006> and <https://www.varsity.co.uk/news/27770>.

⁸ See for example in Statute A I 4.

⁹ <https://www.proctors.cam.ac.uk/directory/constables>.

¹⁰ The *Universities of Oxford and Cambridge Act* (1877) contains at s. 52, with reference only to Cambridge, an amended version of s. 42 of the *Cambridge Act* of 1856.

¹¹ Statute A IX 2.

¹² Statute A I 3.

Topic of concern to the University: MRC Unit funding

(*Reporter*, 6745, 2023–24, p. 660).

MRC	Medical Research Council
CoRE	Centre of Research Excellence
DIST	Department for Science, Innovation and Technology
fEC	Full economic cost
QQR	Quinquennial Review
QR	Quality-Related [funding]
REF	Research Excellence Framework
UKRI	UK Research and Innovation

Professor D. E. ASTLE (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Department of Psychiatry and Robinson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the loss of MRC Units from the Cambridge research landscape represents far more than merely the end of a funding scheme. These are places of tremendous interdisciplinary creativity that have provided a training ground for generations of world-leading scientists, and vital research infrastructure that has become essential to the success of the wider University. If we allow them to be lost they will be impossible to recreate, not to mention the impact on careers and livelihoods.

It is now well over two years since we first learnt of the MRC’s plan. However, we are little further forward with a clear plan for each Unit’s future. When will staff be told if their job will continue beyond the end of the current funding period? What is that decision contingent upon? What is the financial model for post-MRC Units, with or without new MRC CoRE awards?

I would urge the central University to work closely and swiftly with each Unit to establish a clear concrete time-frame, a series of decision points, and a sustainable financial model. Without these it is impossible for individuals or research teams to plan effectively.

Dr W. J. ASTLE (MRC Biostatistics Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I make these remarks as the Membership Secretary of the Cambridge branch of the University and College Union. Although I am employed in the MRC Biostatistics Unit, unlike many colleagues, I am fortunate that the changes we are discussing today do not put me at direct risk of redundancy, because my unestablished post is funded by the NHS rather than by the MRC.

The MRC sponsors twenty research Units at eight research intensive universities in the UK.¹ It describes them as ‘focused investments established for as long as needed to support a scientific need or deliver a research vision’.² Six of the Units belong to the University of Cambridge. One – the Toxicology Unit – is in the School of the Biological Sciences; five – the Biostatistics Unit, the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, the Epidemiology Unit, the Metabolic Diseases Unit and the Mitochondrial Biology Unit – are in the School of Clinical Medicine. The Metabolic Diseases Unit was established in the Department of Clinical Biochemistry in 2014, but the other Units were originally internal departments of the MRC. They have been absorbed into the University since 2013 as part of a national reform, reputedly motivated by the coalition government’s wish to reduce the size of the civil service.³

The older research Units have academic histories to rival those of long-standing University Departments. The Biostatistics Unit, for example, was created in 1914 as the MRC Statistical Department and has played a major role in the establishment of the modern fields of medical statistics and epidemiology, in which the UK remains very strong.⁴

In the 1940s the Unit performed the analysis of the first double blinded randomised control trial, to assess the effect of the antibiotic streptomycin in the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis.⁵ In the 1950s it established the British Doctors Study,⁶ the first prospective study to demonstrate a link between smoking and lung cancer, and developed the first multistate models of carcinogenesis.⁷ In the 1990s the Unit played a major role in the development of computational statistics, a field better known now as ‘machine learning’. Biostatistical machine learning remains one of the Unit’s strengths. It is also at the forefront of research in causal inference, statistical genetics, the analysis of clinical trials and the epidemiology of infectious diseases. During the SARS-CoV2 crisis many of the Unit’s researchers worked continuously to perform the statistical modelling required to provide the real-time estimates and projections of the state of the pandemic for Public Health England, the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) and the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M).

Cambridge’s other MRC-sponsored Units have made similarly impressive contributions to medical science, although I am less familiar with their respective fields. Many maintain web pages describing their scientific histories and their ongoing research.^{8, 9, 10, 11} The Mitochondrial Biology Unit was established in 1927 as the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory and carried out important early work on vitamins. More recently it has developed a worldwide reputation for its research into mitochondria. The Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit was created in 1944 as the Applied Psychology Unit and performed wartime work before establishing itself as one of the leading centres in the UK for research in theoretical and applied cognitive science. The Toxicology Unit was established in 1947 and carried out important studies into the toxicity of industrial compounds, including DDT. Today it is at the forefront of research into drug safety and environmental hazards. The Epidemiology Unit was established in 2003. Together with the Metabolic Diseases Unit, it forms the Institute of Metabolic Science, a world-renowned interdisciplinary centre for research into obesity and diabetes.

Until recently, MRC funding for the research Units was allocated quinquennially. An eighteen-month-long evaluation of each Unit was performed at five-yearly intervals, including extensive peer review of its published research and its plans for the future and a site inspection by an expert panel. Sometimes an evaluation led to the closure of a research group – usually consisting of a principal investigator and a small number of research staff – and occasionally to the closure of an entire Unit, but generally each Unit persisted providing it remained scientifically exceptional. The closure of Cambridge’s MRC Cancer Unit was unusual.¹² The rate of Unit closures during the last decade corresponds to an average Unit lifetime of approximately 30 years.¹³

In July 2022 the MRC announced this system was to change. It planned a new ‘strategic’ and ‘challenge-led’ approach to ‘ensure investment in areas with clear opportunities for impact’.^{14, 15} After more than a century, the sponsorship of research Units by the MRC is to cease. Instead, the money will be used to create ‘Centres of Research Excellence’ (CoREs) funded by large grants which will be ‘time-limited’ (14 years) and awarded competitively in an open process.¹⁶ Researchers at existing MRC Units are free to apply for funds from the CoRE scheme to support their research after their Unit’s final

quinquennium, but it seems unlikely that a single successful CoRE application will suffice to support the complete research activity of a Unit. In any case, CoRE applications can only be successful if the University is willing to commit to sustaining the existing technical research infrastructure of the Units.

The MRC Council began planning for the change in Spring 2021 by convening a ‘taskforce’. It held a webinar in November 2021 ‘for senior leadership in universities hosting MRC units and unit directors’, outlining the ‘key elements’ of its proposals.¹⁷ Although many members of staff in MRC-sponsored Units are employed with MRC terms and conditions under the TUPE regulations, the MRC later explained in answer to questions from staff, that it believes it had no legal obligation to consult them about the changes because:

Following the transfer of MRC units into their host universities several years ago the universities became the employer of all unit staff, regardless of whether they retained MRC terms and conditions. As such any engagement with the trade unions on employment matters should be managed through the host universities in their capacity as employer.¹⁷

In October 2022, the Heads of the Schools of the Biological Sciences and Clinical Medicine and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research emailed staff working in the Units as follows:

Our key message to you is that the University of Cambridge very much values our current MRC Units and the staff who work in them... We are engaging with the MRC to ensure that they work with us constructively to develop appropriate mechanisms to support the transition. Throughout this process, the University will aim to be as flexible as possible, and work closely with your Unit Director, to ensure that we can address any challenges together and secure the best future for our Units and our talented staff. We will also aim to keep you updated as new information becomes available.

In Michaelmas 2023 – two years after the University first became aware of the MRC’s plan to stop funding Units – a project board was established under the Planning and Resources Committee, to consider the University’s approach to the problem. (This is not, apparently, a Board in the sense of Statute A VI 2, which would require it to be established by Grace of the Regent House.) The project board is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Strategy and Planning. Its membership includes the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Research and for University Community and Engagement, the Heads of the Schools of the Biological Sciences and Clinical Medicine and various senior administrators from HR and finance, but it does not include Unit Directors or representatives of Unit staff or, despite requests, representatives of the unions. The project board met for the first time in November 2023 and the second time in January 2024. Its minutes are private, even to members of the Regent House.

The project board seems to have published no decisions before today, despite the fact that the final quinquennium of one Unit will end in March 2025. However, two hours before today’s Discussion an email from its Chair was circulated to the staff of the Units. It explains that the Schools will receive 50% of the QR (i.e. REF) funding attributable to each Unit ‘to facilitate the transition away from Unit status’. However, these are funds that are received already for the Units. The email also mentions that the project board has initiated

a programme of formal engagement with Units to start discussing their technical, support and administrative needs including initial discussions on how those might evolve in different funding scenarios.

However,

these meetings are still at the very early stages so there is nothing concrete yet to report... but we are starting this process now to give us as much lead time as possible to plan a smooth and orderly transition from the old Unit funding model to whatever comes next. This means that we should be in a position to consult on any organisational change plans at the earliest opportunity possible.

It is difficult to be sure of the number of staff presently employed by the University in the MRC Units, partly because the most recent figures published on the University's Tableau server are from 2022 and partly because the Metabolic Diseases Unit is not a standalone Department.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the information available suggests that more than 550 people work in the affected Units. Although this number corresponds to 5% of the University's workforce, it is lower than the increase in the number of staff employed by the University in posts that are neither academic or research roles over the three years to July 2023.¹⁹

The implications for staff of the funding change vary by role. A CoRE has no provision for funding support staff unless their functions directly support the research programme of the CoRE. The cost of departmental administration, librarians, IT support, communications, will all fall to the University under the new system.²⁰ The support staff in MRC Units are often specialists in areas in which it is difficult to recruit, because their skills are in high demand in universities and industry. They are generally highly trained and experienced with many years of service because they were often recruited on open-ended contracts with attractive terms and conditions when the Units were departments of the MRC. The University is lucky to have them. Given our recent recruitment difficulties,²¹ it would seem sensible for us to guarantee their continued employment now, irrespective of the outcome of CoRE applications, before they begin to look for jobs elsewhere.

Ph.D. students and postdocs are largely supported by funding that is guaranteed in advance, but they will be affected if their supervisors seek work elsewhere because of continued uncertainty about their future employment in the University. Many Principal Investigators and senior scientists in the Units are employed as researchers on an open-ended basis, without the strong protection against redundancy enjoyed by University office holders under the Schedule to Statute C. Unless such staff are given guarantees of continued employment in the University, they have little incentive to stay in post to support CoRE applications, the rejection of which might lead to their redundancy.

Indeed, a recent application to host a CoRE by the Epidemiology Unit did not succeed. Its staff have applied for funding from other sources to support their research, but the University's future commitment remains uncertain. Even if an application to host a CoRE is successful the grant will, after a transition period, cover no more than 30% of the working time of each Principal Investigator.²⁰ Principal Investigators with job security will be able to fund a large fraction of their time using funds from other sources, but their employment will have to be underwritten.

Since the MRC Units were absorbed by the University, several Principal Investigators have been promoted from research posts into established academic offices. In most cases these staff have been issued with employment contracts containing clauses that make their University employment coterminous with the continued provision of supporting funds by the MRC.²² The Council claims that this constitutionally irregular practice allows for the employment of a University officer to be terminated when supporting funds are withdrawn, without the need to invoke the redundancy procedure in the Schedule to Statute C.²³ Presumably – and perhaps the Council will confirm this – there would be no redundancy payment. Such a termination would be controversial, with implications for academic freedom across the University. It is likely to be open to challenge legally and under Statute A IX. Will the Council assure the University it will not happen and that the employment contracts of University officers working in MRC Units will be regularised?

In most cases, those Principal Investigators and senior scientists employed in the Units on an unestablished basis have duties which are indistinguishable from those of academic staff employed in the School of Clinical Medicine. They perform administration for the University, do research, supervise postgraduate students, teach for M.Phil. courses and sometimes give Tripos lectures for other Schools. The principal difference between the two groups of staff is that the unestablished are paid for their teaching on a casual basis. They are expected – in fact required – to teach, because otherwise the M.Phil. courses would be unviable. There is a strong argument that such staff ought to be employed as academics. This was certainly what the MRC thought when the Units were first absorbed by the University. It set out its expectations in 2012, in a 'key policy principles' document, stating:

Some appointed staff will need long-term commitments. Universities will be expected to make open-ended appointments and view the award as more than just a grant with an end date.²⁴

Oxford and Edinburgh have managed to absorb most of the Principal Investigators in their MRC Units into academic posts. Cost must be a consideration, but the University receives a lot of income from the Units in addition to their core MRC funding, including grant overheads, QR (i.e. REF) money and the fees from several new M.Phil. courses. Fees from the M.Phil. in Population Health Sciences, for example, amount to over £2 million per year, yet a small fraction of that has been invested in teaching. No new permanent posts have been created, allowing the University administration to extract a huge surplus.

When the University absorbed the MRC Units it took on a responsibility for their staff, many of whom have given decades of service to their Units. Staff in the Toxicology Unit rearranged their domestic lives in 2020 to follow their Unit from Leicester to Cambridge. Recently appointed Principal Investigators and Unit Directors have committed to Cambridge, perhaps rejecting offers elsewhere, only to find themselves without the jobs they expected. If the University wishes to be an attractive employer, able to recruit academic, research and support staff of the highest calibre, it needs to treat its existing staff well. The Regent House urgently needs to see a plan that allows the University to support the employment of the staff in its MRC-sponsored Units, so that their superb research and teaching can continue. There will be an historical stain on

the University if Units with such a rich academic culture close because of institutional inertia. In some cases there is an obvious academic need for a new statutory ‘big-D’ department, in other cases it might make sense to absorb the Unit into an existing department. Either way, there should be equality of treatment of Units, irrespective of the outcome of CoRE applications and equality of treatment of staff. Any plan must respect the University’s commitment to academic freedom and employment security, embodied in the Schedule to Statute C.

¹ MRC list of institutes, units and centres, <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/institutes-units-and-centres/list/>, accessed 23 June 2024.

² MRC Investigators and Directors, Directory of research programmes at MRC Institutes and Units, <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MRC-110122-DirectoryMRCInvestigatorsAndDirectors.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2024.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/civil-service-reform-plan>, accessed 23 June 2024.

⁴ Higgs E., Medical Statistics, Patronage and the State: The development of the MRC Statistical Unit, 1911–1948, *Medical History*, 2000, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025727300066734>.

⁵ Marshall et al., Streptomycin treatment of tuberculosis meningitis, *The Lancet*, 1(6503) pp. 582–596 (1948), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(48\)92003-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(48)92003-0).

⁶ Doll R. and Bradford Hill A., The mortality of doctors in relation to their smoking habits, *The British Medical Journal*, 1(4877), pp. 1451–1455 (1954), <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.1.4877.1451>.

⁷ Armitage P. and Doll R., The age distribution of cancer and a multi-stage theory of carcinogenesis, *The British Journal of Cancer*, 8(1), pp. 1–12 (1954), <https://doi.org/10.1038%2Fbjc.1954.1>.

⁸ <https://www.mrc-mbu.cam.ac.uk/past-and-present>.

⁹ <https://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/history/>.

¹⁰ <https://www.mrc-tox.cam.ac.uk/about-us/our-history>.

¹¹ <https://www.mrc-epid.cam.ac.uk/about-us/history>.

¹² *Reporter*, 6635, 2021–22, p. 105.

¹³ Medical Research Council, Minutes of the Council business meeting, 5 October 2021, <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/MRC-170222-MinutesCouncilBusinessMeetingOctober-2021.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2024.

¹⁴ MRC to change approach to unit and centre funding, UKRI press release, 18 July 2022 <https://www.ukri.org/news/mrc-to-change-approach-to-unit-and-centre-funding/>.

¹⁵ Scientists fear funding threat to stellar MRC research units, *Times Higher Education*, 2 March 2023, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/scientists-fear-funding-threat-stellar-mrc-research-units>.

¹⁶ MRC Centres of Research Excellence, <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/centres-of-research-excellence/>, accessed 23 June 2024.

¹⁷ MRC CoRE Transition Q&A, answers to questions raised in a webinar for staff in MRC sponsored units, circulated in February 2023.

¹⁸ https://tableau.blue.cam.ac.uk/#!/site/InformationHub/views/databook_2021-22/1_1StaffHeadcountwithineachUniversityInsitutionasat31stJuly?iid=2, accessed 23 June 2024 (University Account required).

¹⁹ *Reporter*, 6745, 2023–24, p. 670.

²⁰ MRC Centre of Research Excellence: round two: invited full application, <https://www.ukri.org/opportunity/mrc-centre-of-research-excellence-round-two/>, accessed 23 June 2024.

²¹ See Dr Astle’s remarks at *Reporter*, 6717, 2023–24, p. 106.

²² *Reporter*, 6699, 2022–23, pp. 657–658.

²³ *Reporter*, 6703, 2022–23, p. 713.

²⁴ MRC Unit transfer to University Units – key MRC policy principles, 29 May 2012, <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/MRC-130122-UTUU-keypolicyprinciples.pdf>, accessed 23 June 2024.

Professor D. DE ANGELIS (MRC Biostatistics Unit and Department of Public Health and Primary Care):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I speak as the Deputy Director of the MRC Biostatistics Unit. I have worked at the BSU for over 30 years, including since 2011, as Programme Leader and since 2019 as holder of a personal chair: Professor of Statistical Science for Health.

This experience has allowed me to appreciate the international excellence and relevance of the BSU’s contributions to key quantitative underpinning of biomedical research and its crucial role in training generations of biostatisticians.

But I also see clearly that, despite its leading international reputation, current uncertainty about the future is having a significant destabilising effect. There is a distinct danger that our current generation of world leaders in biostatistical and data science methodologies will be lost to the University. In an atmosphere of uncertainty, many will seek greater stability and welcome in other research and commercial institutions, where a myriad of such possibilities exists. The consequent reputational and scientific damage to the University would be profound.

The BSU’s mission is the development, application and communication of innovative statistical methods for the improvement of health. The Unit, the direct descendant of the Statistical Department established over a century ago in 1914 as an essential part of the newly formed MRC, is an enabling component of much outstanding medical research.

The relevance of the BSU’s work has never been so evident as today, given the ever-increasing availability of complex health data and the explosion of analytical approaches designed to extract information of direct benefit to health improvement. The BSU is uniquely placed at the cutting edge in development of data analytic methodologies in this contemporary landscape, and is motivated by strategic local, national and international collaborations.

BSU’s success in this role has been consistently recognised by its key contribution to the University’s REF outcomes, and its highly successful evaluations in MRC Quinquennial Reviews, most recently in 2023. The University of Cambridge has, over several decades, derived significant reputational benefit from the research excellence of the BSU, which was only formally incorporated into the University in 2016.

As well as being an international centre of research excellence, the BSU fulfils a key training function: many prominent UK biostatisticians, and significant numbers of international leaders, undertook doctoral research at the BSU. In recent years, through the M.Phil. in Population Health Sciences, the BSU is training multidisciplinary cohorts of the next generations of health data scientists.

As a University, Cambridge is developing its focus on biomedicine, with the rapid expansion of its activities on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus. Among international competitors, such as Harvard, Stanford, Oxford and Imperial, Cambridge is unique in not currently having or planning a Department of Biostatistics or Biomedical Data Science. With the recent changes in MRC Unit structures and funding models, the University of Cambridge is at risk of losing a critical component of any institution with the ambition to carry out world-leading biomedical research. Commitment of the University to the establishment of a Department of Biostatistics and Health Data Science would avoid this.

Dr M. C. ANDERSON (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I make these remarks as a senior scientist at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit. For 15 years, I have led a research group focusing on the brain mechanisms of memory in this world-renowned cognitive neuroscience Unit. In my remarks today, I seek to communicate, as clearly as possible, the magnitude of the loss the University will suffer, if it does nothing to ensure the security of the scientists and staff of this MRC Unit. In so doing, I seek to give voice to the many who are aware of this value and are deeply concerned about its loss.

As an American, I took the major step of moving across the Atlantic from the United States, where I had been a full Professor of Psychology at the University of Oregon. When I moved to the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit 15 years ago, I left a chair position and a thriving laboratory in an incredibly beautiful place. What would motivate someone, especially someone who has endured the rigours of the American tenure process, to relinquish this hard-fought accomplishment and move halfway across the world? It would need to be something quite special.

It was indeed special. Simply put, the CBU is among the world's very best places to conduct research in human cognitive neuroscience. The CBU is graced with a storied history, generating future leaders in the fields of cognitive psychology and cognitive neuroscience for over 80 years. Its directors have included Sir Frederick Bartlett, Donald Broadbent, Alan Baddeley and many other exceptional individuals, whose contributions shaped and continue to shape our discipline's history. Its programme leaders, when I joined, included luminaries in the field, doing some of the most ground-breaking work in the world on the neural basis of attention, memory, perception, intelligence, language and development. Turn on the BBC in any given week, and you will see one of us making news about scientific discoveries of interest to the British public. The CBU is famed the world over, and its work makes a difference to the citizens who have funded it. The choice to come to Cambridge to develop my work and to be part of its scientific history was obvious. Indeed, I agreed to a sizeable cut in salary for the pleasure.

Less obvious to the outside world, but directly related to its historical successes, the CBU has cultivated a treasure trove of outstanding support staff, who made its history of innovative science possible, many boasting decades of experience and dedication: physicists, radiographers, statisticians, laboratory managers, and professional staff. Because of the MRC's sustained investment in its scientists and support staff, the Unit has, over time, evolved a unique atmosphere that invites scientists to be their best and to cooperate with one another. The Unit possesses a golden, and sustained *esprit de corps* – a shared sense of being part of something historic, important and valued the world over. It draws young aspiring scientists from across the globe to a singular, uniquely supportive and ambitious community. When early career scientists complete their time at the Unit, they invariably maintain loyalty and attachment to it, often visiting when possible, and sending their very best students to us.

Despite this remarkable history and international presence, the CBU, together with other MRC Units in Cambridge, finds itself buffeted by forces outside of our control, the collective action of which threatens to destroy what is inarguably a jewel not to be lightly tossed aside. But we are, through inaction, diffusion of responsibility, and territoriality, being allowed to sink into oblivion.

The coalition government's push to downsize the civil service has led the MRC to push for the integration of its treasured Units with universities across the country, pushing their obligations onto universities who are not necessarily prepared to accept the accompanying burdens. The University of Cambridge, quite understandably, has not reacted well, and has thus far not given any clear indication that it intends to secure the positions of the scientists and staff of these Units, despite clear histories of accomplishment. Indeed, we repeatedly receive the opposite message of a lack of such commitment. Thus, the MRC considers us the University's problem; and the University is reluctant to accept this. Moreover, the Schools within the University (specifically the School of the Biological Sciences and the Clinical School), themselves buffeted by budget shortfalls and obligations to their constituent Departments, readily dismiss out of hand entreaties to offer positions to anyone outside their direct line of responsibility. The CBU is composed of a mixture of scientists, some of whom may find a more natural home in the Clinical School; others of whom, would find a more natural home in the School of the Biological Sciences. It is unlikely that the Clinical School could support us all; yet, the School of the Biological Sciences maintains that the CBU is not their problem.

It is important to understand the impact of the MRC's news and the resulting dreadful impasse on the members of the MRC Units themselves. It is difficult to express how deeply shocking it was when, after our recent highly successful quinquennial review, the members of our Unit were informed about the MRC's intention to discontinue funding for its Unit investments. The elation of our success was followed by a gut punch that left many of us wandering in shock, in the CBU's halls. The impact of this announcement was devastating to the feelings of aspiration, community and security of everyone at the Unit. Ambitious plans for the future gave way to fear and uncertainty.

When news of the MRC's decision spread, colleagues around the world responded swiftly. Consider this comment from Professor Michael Posner, member of the National Academy of Sciences and winner of the 2008 US National Medal of Science:

As a reader of almost all of the quinquennial reports of the MRC CBU from my first visit to in 1968 through to deep into the current century, I have followed the great contributions of the Unit and its continued commitment to the health and welfare of people everywhere. The MRC CBU's centrality to the many fields that depend fundamentally on our brains and our minds is a testimony to what its closure means for the British scientific community. At a time when Britain has chosen to express its independence it is a tragedy to its leadership to shut down a unit that has proven to be a true world leader and continues to express the very highest standards of the United Kingdom in science and in public service.

When a member of the Unit tweeted the news about the MRC decision on Twitter, the outpouring from scientists across the world was swift and dramatic. Scores of comments (publicly available on X) described the closure of the Unit as a 'dreadful blow', 'short-sighted', and 'unbelievable'.

The uncertainty about the CBU's fate cannot last much longer. This state of affairs is precarious. The storied history of this incredible Unit is on the verge of coming to an end. It is natural for the talented scientists and staff of the Unit to be concerned about their futures, and with the

level of uncertainty currently surrounding the CBU's fate, it seems like only a matter of time before people choose to move elsewhere, and the Unit disintegrate.

We are told that the University has formed a project board to consider the fate of its MRC Units. But whatever progress this board may be making has not been communicated to us clearly, and in a timely way. Moreover, we do not feel as though we have a voice in our own futures. Many of us who have sought to secure positions within the University have been met with impersonal pronouncements about the impossibility of creating positions for us. Once a treasured member of the University community, we now face a wall of inaction that bodes poorly for the preservation of this international treasure.

What is required to save these rare assets to the University community is a change in perspective that acknowledges and protects the value we bring to the community. I respectfully call for the following:

- (1) **A voice:** ensuring broader representation on the project board – including Unit Directors, union leaders, senior Unit administrators and other members of the wider University (e.g. CUDAR, business development staff) so that they can develop viable financial models for these Units beyond the end of their current MRC funding.
- (2) **Advocacy:** the project board and senior University leaders must play an active role in lobbying the MRC/UKRI and decision makers in the next government to provide additional investment so that MRC-funded research excellence in Cambridge is not allowed to decline.
- (3) **Flexibility:** establish and fund new career paths so that researchers, technical and administrative staff with a track record of making critical contributions to these research Units can be supported for the long term.

Dr O. HAUKE (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have worked at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit for almost 24 years in different roles, currently as a Senior Investigator Scientist with responsibilities for methods training and support.

I am one of 33 employees at our Unit who are still on MRC Terms and Conditions. Like all of our colleagues, we are very concerned about the future of our jobs. But even if the University is planning to continue our employment, we are concerned that the University will want us to change to their T&Cs. MRC T&Cs are more favourable with respect to pension and redundancy pay, i.e. we would be more expensive for the University. Thus, this may be a factor in decisions on who will be kept and who won't.

We were transferred from the MRC to the University under 'Protection' of employment regulations. I am not aware of any attempts by the University to engage with staff on MRC T&Cs, even just with a simple email.

Can the University assure us that they will honour this agreement, both in cases of continued employment as well as in cases of redundancies?

It is also clear to me that our University administration has not been prepared for the upcoming changes to our funding model. In late 2022, members of the CBU asked our administration for copies of their contracts. It took over a year and a number of reminders to finally receive these contracts. I also asked for my job description, which I received more quickly and after fewer reminders, but it was not the correct one and several years out of date. I also

asked for information about the financial consequences of moving from MRC T&Cs to a comparable post under University T&Cs. After several attempts to arrange a meeting or call I eventually gave up, at least for now.

Our administration doesn't seem to have the resources or the information to deal with this. And I am just one of hundreds of employees who will want to know where they stand before they are making decisions about their future. We are expected to get on with our working lives based on rumours rather than facts.

Allegedly it is the University's ethos 'to recognise and reward our staff as our greatest asset'. I can't see much evidence for this here. I used to say in these surveys that we get from time to time that I was proud to work for the MRC or the University. This is not the case anymore. I think we are being let down.

Dr S. R. SEAMAN (MRC Biostatistics Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a Senior Research Associate at the MRC Biostatistics Unit. The BSU has existed, in one form or another, for over 100 years, and remains just as relevant and important as ever, in a world where complex health-related data are increasingly available. I fear that the uncertainty and job insecurity caused by the MRC's transition to the new CoRE structure and the University of Cambridge's slow response to this change will cause serious problems for the BSU and other MRC Units in Cambridge.

Will experienced computer and other support staff tolerate this uncertainty, or will they seek employment elsewhere? My experience has taught me that experienced computer staff, in particular, are difficult to recruit and retain.

Will Principal Investigators and other senior researchers not be tempted to look elsewhere for posts that offer more security or, if they must accept insecurity, then at least higher salaries? And if they do leave, will it be possible to recruit equally experienced researchers to replace them? What will be the consequences of staff leaving?

Will the satisfaction and productivity of research staff suffer, due to the departure of other researchers with whom they have been collaborating, or due to inadequate computer and administrative support?

Will new supervisors need to be found for Ph.D. students and junior research staff? What will be the effect of such changes in supervisor on the satisfaction and productivity of such students and staff? What will then be the consequences for the reputation of the University as an employer?

The BSU and the MRC Epidemiology Unit contribute around two-thirds of the teaching staff for the M.Phil. in Population Health Sciences – an M.Phil. to which, in recent years, around 70 students per year have been recruited. If one or both of the BSU and Epidemiology Unit ceases to exist, what will happen to this M.Phil. course and to the income that it provides to the University?

The University may wish to ask itself all these questions and to take appropriate steps, without unnecessary delay, to provide more certainty to its MRC Units.

Remarks sent to the Proctors in advance of the Discussion follow below in order of receipt.

Dr K. A. HORNIGOLD (MRC Toxicology Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I would like to express my concerns around the University's response to the change of funding model for MRC-funded Units. This change removes job security for all staff within these Units and significantly impacts the ability of the Units to attract and keep high quality staff. This will have a significant impact on the impacts and outputs of these Units which have to date been scientifically excellent and a credit to the University. These changes have wide-reaching effects at all levels, from students through to support staff and established Principal Investigators, and so I urge the General Board and Council to carefully consider how the University employs support staff, researchers and academics supported by external funds going forwards.

Mr G. J. CHANDLER (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I would like to highlight just one aspect of the changes to the system of funding by the Medical Research Council in the crucial role of the various support staff across all Units.

Within the research units across Cambridge, once the current MRC funding ends, all staff face an uncertain future with the threat of redundancy across many roles. The only certainty we have been told at this stage is that the new Centres of Research Excellence reduced funding opportunity from the MRC – if successfully secured – will specifically not fund support staff posts. With our current funding due to end in early 2027 we are still waiting for any information that would allow us to understand what the department will look like and if we play any part in its future.

As a longstanding employee, I am bitterly disappointed with the MRC in the way the change has been implemented without consultation at any level and without a thought specifically for the support staff posts. The time scale for the change with such a short period of adjustment has made this all the more difficult. Up until this point the MRC recognised that in order to get the most out of their distinguished scientists they were allowed to concentrate on what they are best at, the science. The superb support staff across the Unit allowed them to do just that.

Without the support staff posts the fundamental research will suffer with many years of experience and expertise lost and the ability to offer bespoke solutions to help Principal Investigators lost with it.

The University has made the first step with setting up a project board to consider the future of the MRC units but at present there is no representation from the units or unions which I would like to see change.

I am sure that the project board and the wider University of Cambridge community understand the importance of retaining its key asset – the highly skilled staff that allow the University of Cambridge to continue its internationally renowned biomedical research. The University of Cambridge should consider underwriting the posts of all those currently employed.

Dr R. LAKSHMAN (MRC Epidemiology Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, it is very disappointing to hear about the closure of the MRC Epidemiology Unit. Please can you clarify whether staff are eligible for redundancy payments, how the termination of contracts will be communicated and how the accrued pensions will be dealt with?

Professor G. R. EVANS (Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the funding format of Cambridge's six MRC Units is to be replaced with funding formats for 'Centres of Research Excellence'.¹ Cambridge will have to decide how to fund what it chooses to maintain through this change. Will the University accept responsibility to make up the funding which will apparently now be needed to replace what will be lost, and for how long?

That raises questions about two employment problems the University has repeatedly postponed tackling, though it recognises it is important to resolve them. One is the distinction between established and unestablished academic posts. The other is the slow progress in creating a consistent route to promotion for research staff to give them realistic prospects of long-term employment in the University.

Some Principal Investigators and group leads hold University Teaching Offices, others do not. The unestablished were given a degree of security by the rolling MRC funding, which was expected to continue. The unestablished postholders may now be unable to apply for grants or take on Ph.D. students and the holders of the unestablished posts are likely to find it impossible to build up research groups.

The Penty Review on the EJRA promised that there would be 'a separate review of established and unestablished posts',² to be undertaken by Human Resources, partly in connection with the scale of the protections enjoyed by the 'established' under the Schedule to Statute C. Such a review has repeatedly been promised over several years, with the Human Resources Committee then reporting that it has been postponed again. Where has it got to? Has it even been started? The current EJRA dispute is one consequence of this failure to tackle the problem.

Cambridge's system of employment for its academic staff has changed with the creation of Career Pathways, so far for 'teaching and research' and 'teaching and scholarship'. This year's promotions on those Pathways are the subject of another Report for Discussion today. The future of MRC posts is likely to be affected by the Research Career Pathway under preparation because it will depend on the University's willingness to guarantee salaries. Proposals on that additional Pathway were promised in Michaelmas Term but I see that now the plan is to look into it during the next academic year. Will this join the queue of ever-deferred reviews?

¹ <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/centres-of-research-excellence/>.

² <https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/cam-only/reporter/documents/ejra/EJRAReviewGroupReport2024.pdf> (University Account required).

Dr K. D. BAKER (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit): Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the dissolution of MRC Units will be very sad to see, as it will dismantle a very special set of collaborative research communities within the University. What is being dismantled is far more than a funding system. Units have a unique culture within which new ideas, new approaches and new investigators are supported, yielding diverse impacts far beyond Unit walls and grant deliverables. In particular, Units have provided unrivalled opportunities for interdisciplinary research, not matched by any other current Departmental or School structures.

Specifically with regard to the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, the University has no other department of cognitive neuroscience. The CBU welcomes investigators and students from biological science, social science and physical science backgrounds, recognising that contemporary human challenges do not fit into historic academic boxes, neither do the people who can solve these challenges together. We converge on theoretical questions and applied problems cutting across health, education, technology and policy sectors. Our work is relevant to every age of human life and every corner of our globalised world.

Whilst interdisciplinary networking initiatives are nice, they do not provide the jobs, time and facilities needed to do this work. Those of us without employment beyond these final QQR periods are already required to constrain our research into that which fits behind traditional Departmental boundaries, and might potentially secure under-writing. Programme leaders, myself included, without established positions do not currently have permission to participate in a CoRE proposal, badged by the MRC as 'transition'.

I am saddened not only by the imminent losses of livelihoods and careers but also by the future losses to our University, science and society that will arise from Unit closures. I remain hopeful that our University can recognise the end of MRC Units as a narrow window of creative opportunity, not to be missed. We need urgent, intensive, collective and inclusive actions to grow sustainable research communities from these strong roots.

Dr I. JAMES (MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I support the case presented by Dr Astle (p. 760) and other Unit colleagues on the University's response to the MRC's plan to cease the funding of its research Units.

Dr R. J. THOMPSON (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have been fortunate enough to work at one of the MRC research Units for over 20 years, and during this time it has been my privilege to find myself part of a community of dedicated and focused individuals all committed to carrying out scientific research of the highest quality. The MRC research Units enjoy an international reputation for excellence, and contribute to the University in many ways, not least financially through REF funding and tuition fees for M.Phil. courses.

The decision to defund the Units and replace them with the proposed 'Centres of Research Excellence'¹ puzzled many people, including the then Minister of State for Science, George Freeman. Concern over the decision² has been amplified by the lack of discussion or consultation with Unit staff or host institutions beforehand, as well as

the absence of a compelling argument for completely dismantling the existing structures rather than adapting them through the existing peer review process, as has happened in the past. In many ways the CoREs seem complementary to the existing Units rather than being direct replacements, and hosting CoREs within Units may have been a mutually beneficial arrangement. The apparent urgency in changing the funding model also seems odd given that a review commissioned by the MRC in 2020 concluded that '... the current portfolio of Units and centres has enormous strengths and has made important contributions'.³

In his review of the wider research landscape, Sir Paul Nurse concluded that 'Research institutes and units play a unique, beneficial role in the UK's RDI landscape and this sector should be expanded to contribute more to the UK's RDI capability'.⁴ This unique role arises in part from the open-ended funding model which gives individual researchers the freedom to focus on long-term programmes, and on basic research in areas where practical applications may not emerge for many years.⁵ The Units also support many translational and applied research programmes alongside this basic research. In contrast, the CoREs will be more tightly focused on specific areas of applied or translational research and will have a strictly limited lifespan. Given their more limited focus and lifespan, it is hard to see how completely replacing the existing Units with CoREs will not reduce academic freedom or the capacity for basic research.

The size of the existing Units also allows them to bring together large, multidisciplinary teams, and to build up a critical mass of scientific and technical expertise in a particular area,⁵ something that is seen as critically important in tackling complex scientific challenges.^{6,7} This was acknowledged by the MRC's own 2020 review, which argued for greater integration and collaboration between existing Units rather than increased fragmentation and specialisation. The size of the Units, as well as the resources available to them, also gives them an important strategic role in training future generations of researchers.⁵ Again, given their reduced funding, smaller size, and the restrictions on the number of graduate students they can host, it is hard to see how the CoREs on their own could generate the same synergy as the current Units, or replicate their role in training.

The range of skills that exist within the Units can be seen not only in their wealth of scientific talent, but also in their support teams. The range of expertise within these teams is immense, including, at our Unit alone, data scientists and statisticians, methodological and medical imaging specialists, specialist IT support, technical design and electronics specialists, graphic designers, HR professionals, accountants and financial professionals, and public relations and communications experts. Speaking as a member of one of these teams, I hope it does not sound presumptuous to say that I feel we play a meaningful role in facilitating the research carried out within our Units, and in enhancing their productivity.

One of the most rewarding aspects of working at one of these Units is the ability to provide a completely bespoke service, often working in collaboration with specialists in other areas. For example, within our Unit the technical team provide a totally unique service designing and building custom scientific equipment (some of which is now in use by labs around the world), enabling research that would otherwise be almost impossible to implement. My own team have worked on numerous development projects, including working with individual researchers to

implement specific data analyses, custom web applications or data sharing platforms, or working with the technical team to set up systems for delivery of experimental stimuli. Projects taken on by Unit staff have also been of benefit to the wider academic community, for example members of our administrative team have been instrumental in leading initiatives on open access publishing, public communication and engagement with science, and in developing University-wide projects such as the UPS5 payment system.

The smaller size and the greater emphasis on using support services provided by host institutions will make it difficult to replicate this type of support under the CoRE model. No matter how excellent centrally provided services are (and the University is fortunate to have truly excellent central services), they are not typically designed to provide customised support integrating multiple specialisms. The emphasis, quite naturally, tends to be on providing a single type of service efficiently at scale. Under the CoRE model, I worry that much of this project based support will be outsourced to private contractors at a far higher cost.

Whatever the relative merits of CoREs and research Units, I think that one of the most important outcomes from this discussion would be a co-ordinated response by the University, and I would like to suggest two steps that could be taken in this direction. Firstly, I think it would be valuable for the project board to be expanded to include representation from all interested parties, including members of staff from the affected Units, representatives from their host Schools, trade union representatives, HR professionals, and members of the Development and Alumni Relations team. This expanded board could provide a much-needed forum for open and transparent discussion about the future of the Units, and could act as a point of liaison with similar bodies at other institutions affected by the MRC's decision. Secondly, I would like to see the University engage with the MRC leadership (and beyond them, with UKRI and DSIT) in an official capacity, and to represent the views of interested parties within the University.

Asking for a complete reversal of the MRC's decision may be unrealistic, but given its suddenness and the many long-standing and loyal members of staff (not to mention host institutions) facing negative consequences, it does not seem unreasonable to ask for some sort of compromise, such as a longer period of transition and adjustment. There are many ways in which this could be implemented, perhaps the simplest being a final, transitional funding period for each Unit under the existing model (subject, of course, to the usual peer review). Alternatively, greater flexibility in the way CoREs are implemented, even if this only lasted for the initial funding period, would allow a more reasonable window for discussion and planning regarding the future of the Units. Possible hybrid arrangements might include hosting a CoRE within each existing Unit and guaranteeing additional funding to cover a proportion of the shortfall. Alternatively, existing units could be allowed to host multiple CoRES, with those CoRES benefiting from access to shared infrastructure. Existing Units could also fully transition to CoREs, but with a higher upper limit on funding and fewer restrictions on funding particular staff roles. Any shortfall in funding would need to be made up from other sources, but this is exactly where the University's development team would be able to bring valuable expertise. The University could also contribute by waiving the costs that they charge the MRC Units. These charges are significantly lower than the

cost of redundancy payments and the reduction of REF funding that would arise should the Units simply be allowed to close.

While the University may not have any direct influence on MRC policy, it is clearly an institution of the highest prestige within the scientific research community, and I am sure its opinion would carry weight within the MRC and UKRI. I would also like to think that the new MRC leadership are reasonable enough to engage with the concerns of Unit staff and host institutions if they were presented in an official forum. While Unit staff are employed by the host institutions, the Units are still overwhelmingly funded by the MRC, and the MRC has made a deliberate decision about which posts will be funded under the CoRE model. To simply walk away claiming that Unit staff are no longer their concern would be a disappointing abrogation of responsibility.

In the longer term, there are many possible ways in which the expertise and resources present in the MRC Units could continue to benefit the University. Giving free rein to the imagination, it is possible to see the Units becoming the kernels of an integrated institute of medical research, perhaps building on existing institutions such as NIHR/BRC and CIMR. Something on this scale would obviously be ambitious, but would fit with the strategic vision for the biomedical campus, and be capable of attracting truly international funding. In the immediate term, the important thing is to secure the time and space to discuss the options fully before the resources and skills present in the MRC Units, as well as their international reputation and ability to attract world leading researchers, are lost.

¹ MRC Centres of Research Excellence, 2022, <https://www.ukri.org/who-we-are/mrc/centres-of-research-excellence/>.

² Scientists fear funding threat to 'stellar' MRC research units, *Times Higher Education*, 2 March 2023, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/scientists-fear-funding-threat-stellar-mrc-research-units>.

³ MRC Unit and Centre Portfolio Review, 2020, <https://www.ukri.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/MRC-231120-Unit-and-Centre-Portfolio-Review-EL-v3.pdf>.

⁴ Independent Review of the UK's Research, Development and Innovation Organisational Landscape, 2023, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-development-and-innovation-organisational-landscape-an-independent-review>.

⁵ Research Council Institutes, House of Commons Science and Technology Committee, Fourth Report, 2006–2007, <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200607/cmselect/cmstech/68/6802.htm>.

⁶ M. L. Disis, and J. T. Slatery (2010). The road we must take: Multidisciplinary team science. *Sci. Transl. Med.* 2, 22.

⁷ R. L. Martino (2004). The importance of multidisciplinary teams in a large biomedical research program. The 26th Annual International Conference of the IEEE Engineering.

Dr T. MANLY (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a programme leader at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit. I would like to echo the concerns articulately expressed elsewhere about the impact of the MRC's termination of the funding model for Units, including the six that transferred to the University just a few years before this change. Here, I particularly want to highlight the pernicious effects of uncertainty, the importance of retaining excellent research support staff, and the impact of the changes on equality/diversity and postgraduate student places/experience. I will focus on examples from my own Unit but feel sure that these issues are reflected in the other centres of excellence.

In 2022, we learned about the MRC's new funding model. This of course raised concerns about employment continuity and the continuity of excellent facilities, processes and people that greatly facilitate our research. At the CBU, for example, the dedicated coordination between the IT and technical departments, radiographers and physicists and administrative staff have created a very streamlined and highly productive system that has made it a great place to do human functional imaging studies (indeed, many other researchers from around Cambridge and elsewhere have conducted their imaging at the CBU for this reason). We have been encouraged, not least by the MRC, to ensure high quality and long-term curation of expensive research data in a way that can be shared with the wider research community. Accordingly, our IT department oversee a considerable data storage facility that requires continuous maintenance, updating and so on. Even before our current funding runs out, the uncertainty about the future risks us losing valuable, highly trained and experienced colleagues and years of built-up knowhow. The very features that have made us such an efficient research environment – and which help make us attractive to a range of funders – may begin to fragment. Any timely initiatives that can help reduce this uncertainty and secure this skilled workforce in the longer term are therefore likely to be a great investment for the University.

Uncertainty also, of course, has effects on mood, motivation, willingness to develop scientific collaborations and influences whether one's focus is more on the immediate rather than longer-term developments and innovations. Knowing more about the University's thinking around mitigating the impact of the MRC changes, indeed, having Unit and union representation in those discussions, could be a very helpful step. Whilst Cambridge is not alone in dealing with MRC Units that have transferred, the scale of its responsibilities is unusual and it would be interesting to know, for example, what pushback or representations (e.g. to the MRC, UKRI, Department for Science, Innovation and Technology) to mitigate risks have, and are, being made.

At the CBU, there are researchers who are neither at the PI or immediate postdoctoral stage who have been drawn to work here in part because of the continuity of employment. This is important when it is not easy to move away from Cambridge because of caring responsibilities, not wanting to change children's schools, need to get on the housing ladder etc. These researchers have often built up highly specialised skills that are of great benefit to the Unit's research. They are also disproportionately female. In terms of the representation, retention and career development of women in STEM – something that both the University and MRC have championed – it is important to think about the likely effects and potential mitigation of the MRC change in funding in this respect.

The CBU provides an outstanding environment for postgraduate research and training and is currently home to 50–60 Ph.D. students from around the world. An immediate effect of the MRC changes is that potential supervisors who do not have contracts with the University guaranteed to extend beyond 2027 cannot now take on new students (unless there is co-supervision from a researcher with a longer-term contract) or are reluctant to do so because they could not guarantee their support. The CBU (and University) will also lose its annual allocation of six MRC Ph.D. studentships. In addition, the CBU is home to a new and highly attractive Master's programme in cognitive neuroscience. This relies on input from staff from across the CBU and access to supervision for research. Unless

important steps are taken to mitigate the risks, the University may lose this exceptional learning environment, miss out on brilliant students and their influence in 'exporting' the reputation, work, methods and research culture of the University and Units like the CBU around the world.

Dr C. L. M. NORD (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, Department of Psychiatry and Christ's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I write in my capacity as Programme Leader and co-Director of Postgraduate Education at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit. In its 80-year history, the CBU has taught hundreds of M.Phil. and Ph.D. students across the Schools of Clinical Medicine, the Biological Sciences, and Engineering via our neuroimaging, cognitive neuroscience, and behavioural science training. There is no comparable postgraduate training elsewhere in Cambridge.

Unfortunately this training is delivered and supported by senior academics and administrators, the vast majority of whose positions end in March 2027. Several taught M.Phils. in the Schools of Clinical Medicine and the Biological Sciences (e.g. the M.Phil. in Basic and Translational Neuroscience, the M.Phil. in Cognitive Neuroscience, and the forthcoming M.Phil. in Foundations of Clinical Psychology) have curricula that depend on our training. Unless considerable mitigating steps are taken, the closure of MRC Units will dramatically weaken Cambridge's postgraduate research training landscape in neuroscience, mental health, and behaviour science. We risk losing our best future neuroscientists to other universities.

Dr A. C. ORBEN (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and St John's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I support my colleagues – whether academic, academic-related or staff – who have so skilfully described in their own contributions the deep impact the current uncertainty about MRC Units and their future in the University is having on our lives. The widespread spectre of redundancy impacts not just research and teaching, but families, friends and livelihoods. As a longstanding member of the University, I urge you to prioritise providing clear and timely communication, and appropriate consultation, especially in light of the increasingly hostile fiscal climate in Higher Education that will make it difficult for many to secure appropriate roles at short notice.

Dr D. J. MITCHELL (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the current MRC Unit funding model has been immensely successful over many decades. It has offered efficiency and stability, through comprehensive and tailored in-house support, to enable the highest quality research. Several Cambridge Units in particular, including the Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, have long-established and world-renowned reputations.

The MRC's decision to end this model, with minimal consultation and minimal clarity for the future, appears short-sighted at best. The hasty and wholesale replacement of intramural funding with short-term and piecemeal grants, covering a fraction of current programmes, threatens the stability of the research, and of the researchers, who are currently University employees. Staff feel cast

adrift. In the current environment, staff retention can be a challenge, yet Unit employees on open-ended contracts want to stay. With Units at real risk of closure or decimation, the loss to medical research would be tragic; for staff facing redundancy, the loss will be felt on a personal level; losses for the University would include research output of the highest calibre, supervision of Ph.D. students, teaching of M.Phil. courses, access to cutting-edge equipment and specialised volunteer cohorts, as well as further erosion of staff morale.

The University has an opportunity to avert this tragedy; to demonstrate to its MRC Unit employees that they are valued, and that the University is committed to supporting medical research at the highest levels of excellence. Whatever the outcome, staff facing redundancy deserve timely, transparent, clear, and fair decision-making. A solution is possible that preserves the operational autonomy of the Units; that retains their infrastructural and personnel assets; that provides stability for their science and scientists; that reaps the benefits of their established reputations and world-class research outputs. Such a solution could transform a self-inflicted loss for the MRC into a victory for the University.

Dr E. DE LUCIA ROLFE (MRC Epidemiology Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a long-standing employee of the MRC Epidemiology Unit (since 2004). I was so disappointed to see that the University has no concrete plans in relation to the change of the new MRC funding model. I feel that the change in funding will affect staff retention as well as morale and Cambridge will struggle to attract the same high calibre of international researchers and professional specialists, once the core MRC budgets are cut.

In addition, I would like to highlight that many researchers funded by MRC core teach University M.Phil. courses and run courses with CUH to increase best practice in clinical settings. Removing their posts from the University will put the future of these programmes in jeopardy. In the MRC Epidemiology Unit, many professional teams funded by MRC core provide expertise and capacity to support UK and international research. Together with the different research programs, these teams play a key role in methods innovation and publish scientific papers, contributing to the University REF exercise.

It would be helpful to have clarifications of the position of the University and on the impact of these changes to people's jobs.

Dr M. M. CORREIA (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and Downing College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I work at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, where I run the Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) facility. The MRI scanner at the CBU has been operational since November 2005, offering an average of 220 hours of scanning per month, and I manage a team of five staff. Together we provide essential scientific support to 15 major research programmes within the CBU, as well as many other projects within the University that utilise our scanning facilities. We also have equipment for simultaneous MRI and Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) as well as MRI and Transcranial Ultrasound Stimulation (TUS), a setup which is unique in Cambridge and one of only a few in the world.

Without any intervention from the University, all of the MRI staff, myself included, will likely face redundancy at the end of the current QQR period (March 2027). Without

any skilled staff to run and support the equipment, it is unclear what will happen to the MRI scanner facility and all its equipment, worth millions of pounds. As a line manager, I can feel the anxiety building up amongst my staff, and without further clarity about the future of our equipment and associated support roles, I am expecting staff to start leaving in the short term, which will prevent us from even completing the research plan as outlined in our current QQR. I therefore urge the University to take action to prevent the loss of highly skilled staff, as well as the waste of research equipment.

Another major concern is the impact the closure of the MRC Units will have on postgraduate students and early career researchers. Many students will need to find new supervisors if their current ones are made redundant at the end of a Unit's QQR period, which will be disruptive for their projects, potentially causing severe delays to their thesis submission. But beyond that, I am concerned about the loss of specialised training programmes. At the CBU we run a number of annual training courses and hands-on workshops for postgraduate students and postdoctoral researchers, including an 'Introduction to Neuroimaging Methods'. This training course is unique in Cambridge, and is well attended by researchers from other Departments, including Psychology and Clinical Neurosciences. From October 2024, this course will also be part of the formal teaching component of the M.Phil. in Cognitive Neurosciences. Currently, the majority of the staff teaching on this course hold unestablished positions within the CBU, and therefore running it will no longer be feasible if those staff members are made redundant in March 2027. All our other training courses will be equally affected, creating a gap in specialised training in Neuroimaging and Cognitive Neurosciences in Cambridge.

In 2022, the University of Cambridge communicated via email that it 'very much values our current MRC Units and the staff who work in them'. Now is the time for the University officials to demonstrate this appreciation concretely by providing specific solutions to all staff currently at risk of losing their jobs.

Dr F. C. MURPHY (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a researcher at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and write following various roles I have held that have focused on maintaining and improving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI). These have included helping to secure an initial Bronze Athena Swan award for the CBU, and Silver award status in 2018 following the CBU's transfer to the University. Since, I have been an active member of the School of Clinical Medicine's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Governance Group (EDIGG) and Athena Swan Self-Assessment Team, contributing to its Silver renewal in 2022 and Silver or Gold submission due in 2027. I am concerned that the closure of MRC Units may exacerbate leaky pipelines and existing inequalities within marginalised and under-represented groups of academic and research as well as professional, technical and organisational staff – unless Unit closures and any redundancies are handled carefully.

Mr K. M. SYMONDS (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and Cambridge University Library):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, having worked in the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit for nearly 22 years the impact of both the MRC's sudden abandonment of the MRC Units and of decades of work carried out by scientists and support in their name did come as a shock to all.

Transferring in 2017 and all the work that was done by those of us working in multiple workstream meetings alongside our new colleagues in the University was the start of a new commitment and greater integration of the Units and the University. But it seems now that these changes from the MRC were always in place to happen even if no one either in the Units – from Unit Directors, scientific, administration, technical and IT staff – or indeed in the University, was ever involved in any element of the change.

But it is now the case that the University needs to add to the work we have done before to fashion an appropriate response and future for all those University members of staff that are involved, no matter what their grade or position.

The quality of our work is not in question, the work we do and its importance in scientific and societal impact is not in question. So why are our Units' futures now in question? Why are the Units' futures being held behind closed doors since the announcement and why are no members of staff being involved in any discussions?

Risk of redundancy seems to be the only rumours coming from anywhere and that is not an adequate level of information to be leaking out of something that involves so many people.

I call on the University to actually involve staff that are affected. Involve the unions and actually have discussions about what has already been discussed and what the future is for us all.

The MRC seems to have completely abandoned us, stating that we are nothing to do with them, that we are employed by the University and that the past doesn't matter. Please don't let the University treat us the same way.

Dr A. R. C. RAINE (MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have been employed in a support role in the MRC Mitochondrial Biology Unit for nearly 24 years, and was an academic member of the Department of Biochemistry for ten years before that. Over all that time it was impressed on me, by contacts within the University and the MRC, and by the various panels that have reviewed our work, that the MRC Units have had a world-changing impact on both fundamental science and wider human health. It saddens me that the effects of the funding changes currently in progress for MRC Units will bring an end to this continuous thread of public good.

The University is of course not responsible for the MRC's change in policy but, as an enthusiastic partner in the transfer of seven MRC Units into the University, and now our employer it does surely have responsibility to act to mitigate the harms the change will have on: the public good that flows from the research of the Units; the 'Impact' and reputation that the University has in the world; the careers and especially the wellbeing of Unit staff, students and researchers.

The most obvious and likely harm is that, without the security of employment that the old MRC funding model provided, and without the security of 'normal' academic status, Principal Investigators in the MRC Units will seek or take advantage of better conditions or security elsewhere.

I have seen evidence of the stress experienced by some of my senior colleagues, and they couldn't be blamed at all if they acted to remove that stress on themselves and their families. This would be a loss to the University, reputationally, financially and the opportunity of being the institution where future groundbreaking work will be done.

Likewise, but less visible, is a similar effect on support staff, whose job security is even less assured under the new funding model: CoRE grants are apparently not intended to cover the costs of support staff directly, but instead are intended to cover support through the general 'overheads' mechanism. Most of those overheads do not end up with the Department in which the funded research takes place, so the prospects for support staff in the Units seem bleaker than for scientific staff of the Units. I have seen no mention of the situation for support staff in any University communication – can I ask whether their futures will be given as much attention as those of scientific staff?

I understand that a project board was established in late 2023 to consider how to deal with the transition to CoRE funding, but I also understand that it hasn't (yet) published any minutes or findings. I also gather that it hasn't (yet) consulted our Unit Directors. Can I ask: how will the board engage with the Units, and what is the timescale for the board to make its findings/recommendations known?

Dr M. H. DAVIS (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and Cambridge Language Sciences Interdisciplinary Research Centre):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am an MRC Programme Leader at the MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit and co-Director of the Cambridge Language Sciences Interdisciplinary Research Centre.

The University of Cambridge is rightly regarded as the leading University for medical research and education in the UK.¹ A large part of this success is due to the remarkable strength and breadth of MRC-funded Units which have long been central to the Cambridge research environment, though only formally integrated into the University in the last 10 years. These MRC Units provide research leadership in their respective fields, have an exceptional track record in training future generations of scientists, and support infrastructure which is vital for biomedical research in Cambridge and beyond.

I've seen examples of these contributions to leadership, training and infrastructure at the CBU, which is world-leading and home to award-winning scientists including FRS, FBA, and Heineken-prize recipients. We trained five of the last 50 recipients of the Spearman 'early career' award from the British Psychological Society. We host substantial MRC-funded research infrastructure for cognitive neuroscience including state-of-the-art MRI and MEG scanners, multiple forms of brain stimulation, and participant panels for research in neuropsychology, mental health and development.

The loss of long-term MRC funding at the end of the current five-year funding period threatens to end this success, and presents a substantial challenge to the wider Cambridge community. Beyond the approximately 500 staff in these MRC Units, there are many ways that the University benefits from MRC investments – e.g. through research collaborations, by attracting, training and developing exceptional students and research fellows, and by contributing to research-led teaching and administration across the University. This is not to mention the substantial financial benefits that the University has accrued (e.g. grant overheads, and REF-QR funding).

The University belatedly recognised the seriousness of this threat and has responded by establishing a project board. However, it should be apparent from the number of requests for this Regent House Discussion that this board – and the wider administration – is failing to deliver on the responsibilities it took on when these MRC Units were absorbed into the University. There has been little or no involvement of MRC Unit Directors on this board – despite these Directors being best placed to document the past contributions of their Units and determine their future needs. Communication with affected staff has been minimal, and there has been no systematic pathway to alternative University employment for staff within MRC Units. It is hard to view the University's approach to this challenge as anything other than managed decline – as recently happened during the closure of the MRC Cancer Unit in Cambridge, and is now occurring in other institutions (e.g. the Wellcome Centre for Human NeuroImaging at UCL lost many decades of work through resignations of senior support staff that could not be supported outside of Centre/Unit funding).

I therefore urge the Regent House to send a clear message to the project board – and the University administration more broadly – that they need to redouble their efforts to support and retain the staff, infrastructure and research excellence found in these MRC Units. At this time, three actions should be prioritised:

- (1) ensuring broader representation on the project board – including Unit Directors, union leaders, senior Unit administrators and other members of the wider University (e.g. CUDAR, business development staff) so they can develop viable financial models beyond the end of their current MRC funding;
- (2) the project board and senior leaders must take an active role in lobbying the MRC/UKRI and decision makers in the next government to provide additional investment to ensure that existing research excellence in Cambridge is retained; and
- (3) establish and fund new career paths so that researchers, technical and administrative staff with a track record of making critical contributions to these research Units can be supported for the long term.

¹ For example, see <https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings/medicine>.

Professor D. CARDWELL (Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Strategy and Planning, Department of Engineering and Fitzwilliam College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am speaking today in my capacity as Chair of the project board convened to coordinate the University's response to the changes announced in 2022 by the Medical Research Council. Those changes are significant and are clearly very unsettling for the many University staff who will be affected.

The current arrangements whereby the Unit award from the MRC covers the full, direct costs of a Unit will be replaced – if at all – by Centres of Research Excellence awards analogous to large programme grants, made on a fEC basis and funded at a rate of 80%. The total funding available via a CoRE award will be much reduced compared to the current Unit model, and existing Units are not guaranteed funding under the new model. These changes will be phased over several years; Units whose previous award was due to end in 2024 have been permitted by the MRC to apply under the traditional quinquennial review mechanism for a final, five-year Unit award before transitioning to the CoRE model by 2029.

MRC Units, in the form in which we know and understand them, will close. This does not mean, however, that the superb fundamental and clinical research in the current Units, nor the excellent work of scientific support staff which underpins that research, will cease. The Heads of the two affected Schools are working with the current Unit Directors to facilitate a transition of current Unit activity – and any CoRE awards made by the MRC – into the University's existing academic department structures.

Pending the transition to Enhanced Financial Transparency, the project board has recommended that Chest allocations equivalent to 50% of the mainstream QR attributable to each Unit – which are currently made as a condition of the University's transition agreements with the MRC – should continue to be made to the School of the Biological Sciences and the School of Clinical Medicine, to facilitate the transition away from Unit status and leverage the best possible outcome from the CoRE application process.

Dr A. WOOLGAR (MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University is risking reputational damage if it does not act quickly to protect its MRC Units. The MRC Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit is an internationally recognised brand, with a revered 80-year history and enduring reputation for world-leading research. It is viewed internationally as one of the top places in the world to study cognitive neuroscience, one that consistently advances the frontiers of knowledge through close cross-research-group collaboration, development of advanced analytics, and outstanding infrastructure supported by deep technical expertise. When I speak to colleagues nationally and overseas they intuitively assume that the University of Cambridge will protect this most valuable investment and are surprised when I have to explain that the University is not automatically absorbing the CBU into its core infrastructure, and has not yet set out plans for the staff or facilities beyond the current MRC funding period. They are dismayed that the CBU risks closure and cannot understand why the University is not immediately using special measures to create positions for its world-leading PIs and deeply specialised support staff.

Underwriting Unit PIs within the existing budgets of established Departments does not seem to be realistic. It is not tenable to wait for retirements, and even where positions are opened, this puts Departments in a difficult position to choose between supporting a University investment, securing the positions of their own eligible staff, or recruiting new external talent. Top-down organisational and financial support is urgently needed to create real pathways to secure the talent and expertise in these Units for the University's future.

I also want to acknowledge that internally, the prolonged uncertainty is already taking a toll. It is not easy to push the boundaries of human knowledge when in the background we are unsure of our continued existence. It is not possible for individual PIs to continue building leading research programmes when they cannot apply for external funding because their positions are not secure. It is not tenable to take on early career researchers when we are not sure whether we will still be here to supervise them. The University must act to resolve this quickly.

Mr R. S. HAYNES (University Information Services):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a Senior University Computer Officer based in the University's Information Services, and a long-standing member of UCU.¹

The previous Vice-Chancellor powerfully articulated so many concerns over the undue political pressure toward marketisation of education, as in his phrasing that:

The focus should be on what values our society expects to see reflected in our universities, not just value for money.²

The vital values of our society, and those of our University, must continue to show favourably in how we honour the essential work, the dedicated efforts of the staff and partners, and the public commitments which we as a Higher Education institution took on when bringing the MRC Units into our Community.

Given the close relationships that continue to exist between University and MRC staff, and the ongoing need and value of the Units' work, what discussions and negotiations have been or could be initiated to try to persuade the MRC to reconsider its damaging plans to so detrimentally change its funding policies.

In keeping with principles of good employers and good employment in the University, including all those working in and enabling the excellent work of the MRC Units, will all staff groups have proper representation on the project board? In advance of initiation of the Organisational Change Policy, will there be fuller discussion in the MRC Units and the wider University community to consider more options and creative responses possible to the funding challenges being highlighted?

To reiterate, let us focus our energies and efforts on our higher values for our society and our essential higher education endeavours, not least when dealing with such challenges we together must face as a community, currently with the future of our MRC units.

¹ University and College Union, <https://www.ucu.org.uk>.

² <https://www.cam.ac.uk/news/the-future-of-uk-universities-vice-chancellors-blog>.

Report of the Council, dated 7 June 2024, recommending the budget and allocations from the Chest for 2024–25

(*Reporter*, 6745, 2023–24, p. 670).

Professor G. R. EVANS (Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History), received by the Proctors:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the CAPSA disaster will not have been forgotten by those who were members of the Regent House twenty years ago. Michael Shattock and Anthony Finkelstein were commissioned to undertake the necessary review. Shattock pointed to lessons for the operation of the University's governance and management. Finkelstein tracked the history of 'the unmitigated disaster that was go-live' of the new commitment accounting system.¹ The Board of Scrutiny reviewed their findings and added its own criticisms of the working of the Cambridge University Finance System (CUFS) in practice in the post-CAPSA period.²

The Finance Committee has now 'agreed a roadmap for the Finance Transformation Programme (FTP), including the replacement of the University Finance System (CUFS)'. It is confident that the FTP 'is proceeding to plan', specifically that 'the replacement finance system has been selected and contracted, and procurement of a System Integrator (SI) partner commenced'.

Procurement was the moment when things began to go badly wrong with CAPSA. I hope those involved in the replacing of CUFS will read carefully through the extensive record, all to be found in the *Reporter*, recording CAPSA's initiation, its collapse, and the abortive ensuing attempt to make changes to Cambridge's governance when Shattock suggested that it needed more and better management.³

¹ *Reporter*, 5861, 2001–02, p. 155 at para. 7.67.

² *Reporter*, 5885, 2001–02, p. 835.

³ *Reporter*, 5890, 2001–02, p. 945.

Dr S. J. COWLEY (Faculty of Mathematics), received by the Proctors:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a member of the Board of Scrutiny but I speak in a personal capacity.

This Report is not happy reading. Some of the good news is that the Chest outturn in 2021–22 was £46.5m better than Chest budget, and that the Chest budget deficit this year is £27m better than 2023–24. However, the lowlights of the bad news are that the Chest outturn in 2022–23 was £13.7m worse than Chest budget, and the Chest deficit this year is a whopping £62.5m. The latter is, I believe, one of the largest Chest deficits ever. The proposed 5% reduction in Chest expenditure across the next two financial years (2024–25 and 2025–26) is expedient, although I note that the deficit is 9.4% of the 2024–25 budget after the initial reduction, and still 4.3% of the 2025–26 indicative budget. This suggests that additional reductions in expenditure may be required further down the line.

I am writing this whilst at an academic/industrial workshop. Side conversations with colleagues have emphasised that Cambridge is not the only university with budget problems. Huddersfield have closed down their Mathematics course with redundancies, Nottingham are facing 500 job cuts, and Divisions at Oxford have five or so years to break even. I presume that Cambridge does not want to close down Mathematics (although since I am retired, it would not affect me), but to my mind it is inevitable that there will have to be a reduction in staff numbers. The issue is how this will be achieved.

The Report proposes 'a reduction in Chest allocations of 5% for *all* institutions' (my emphasis). This may not be the best way to proceed. If Schools are requested to make a 5% cut within two years, then it is almost inevitable that academic posts will be frozen. Yet in the data provided in the Report, teaching and research academic staff have only increased by 2% between 2017 and 2023, while staff not on an academic contract have increased by 24%, and if you use the figures in the 11 October 2023 issue of the *Reporter*, the increases are 2% and 29% respectively between 2016 and 2023. As I noted in the Discussion of 19 March 2024, these staff numbers are in a far less detailed form than previously, e.g. with academic-related (administrative), academic-related (computing), academic-related (other groups) and assistant staff all grouped together as 'Not an academic contract'. While this combination is apparently HESA approved, it makes the data far less informative (particularly since I gather that this year's increase of 453 in staff not on an academic contract may include hundreds of research staff in MRC/CRUK laboratories who have transferred to University contracts). Moreover, the 2% increase in teaching and research staff presumably includes those employed to deliver the new Master's courses that 'have generated some net financial benefit to the University', whom it would be counter-productive to cut.

Surely the message of the above numbers, even given the inadequacy of their broad-brush form, is that the reduction in expenditure must be on the non-academic side. Salami slicing of academic staff risks death to the University by a thousand cuts. The University needs to make a conscious decision to stop doing things which it might like to do in an ideal world, but which it cannot now afford. Given that many other universities are in the same position, an approach to the regulators may need to be made concerning expectations. The University may also need to 'make do' rather than excel in some non-core functions, and possibly stop employing expensive consultants. What the University certainly must do is protect its research and teaching, on which its world and national reputations depend.

Last year in the Discussion of 11 July 2023,¹ I covered the fact that the deficit is a long-standing problem that predates both the pandemic and the Ukraine war, and arises, *inter alia*, because of the lack of a proper planning process. I will not repeat my criticisms, but I believe them still to be pertinent. To those criticisms I would add the observation that on the communication front, this Report could be clearer.

For instance, it is noted that the 'University Group as a whole (including Press & Assessment) continues to generate an annual cash flow surplus from its operations and distributions from the endowment'. Yet in the Annual Reports and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2023 it is stated that 'management regard the most representative measure of underlying performance to be the adjusted operating deficit for the year of £9.5m' (my emphasis). The cash flow may be positive, but the KPI is negative, and the picture is not rosy. As the current Report notes as regards total, i.e. Chest and non-Chest, expenditure,

The overall operating cash flow position for the Academic University as reported to the Finance Committee was an overall deficit of £32m in 2022–23. The projected deficit for 2023–24 is now £53m (a deterioration relative to a projection of £30m on a like-for-like basis for 2023–24 at this time last year). On this basis, a deficit of £47m is predicted for 2024–25.

The consequences are spelt out:

Cash flow deficits from core academic operations must be met from unrestricted reserves, while a failure to deliver a cash surplus from core academic operations leaves the University substantially reliant on Press & Assessment and philanthropy for the capital it needs for investment to remain a world-leading university.

My view is that for much of the last decade, the University has been complacent as regards budgetary control. I warned of this in my Notes of Dissent to the Allocation Reports four years ago,² and the chickens have now come home to roost. Research and teaching is best driven bottom up, but financial and administrative leadership and planning, and the responsibility to ensure that there are the resources to fund and innovate in research and teaching, is by nature predominantly topdown. This Report is an indictment of that leadership over much of the last decade.

¹ *Reporter*, 6709, 2022–23, p. 875.

² *Reporter*: 6586, 2019–20, p. 513 and 6593, 2020–21, p. 101.

Report of the General Board, dated 7 June 2024, on the introduction of Clinical Academic (Teaching and Scholarship) offices and posts

(*Reporter*, 6745, 2023–24, p. 683).

Dr W. J. ASTLE (MRC Biostatistics Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, when the HR Committee first considered the creation of the new class of office of Clinical Professor it noted

that the new academic titles structure had removed the sole distinction between clinical Readers (G11) and clinical Professors (G12). Now that they would all have the title of Professor (with pay determined according to NHS seniority only) the recruitment process for both groups would need to be the same.¹

The subsequent joint Report of the Council and the General Board on changes to the recruitment process for clinically qualified academics to Professorships,² stated that:

for clinicians the purpose of applying for promotion under the University's academic promotions scheme is solely to achieve a change in title, with their pay remaining the same.

The Report we are discussing today states similarly that:

Doctors who are clinical academics are paid on the NHS consultant pay scales based on their clinical seniority and not their academic seniority and thus on promotion a clinical academic only receives a new title, not an increase in pay.

But the offices of Professor (Grade 11) and Professor differ administratively and academically. They are regulated differently by the *Statutes and Ordinances*. Among other things, their holders qualify differently for membership of Faculty Boards and election to Fellowships of Colleges. Promotions into each of the two types of office under the Academic Career Pathways scheme depend on different criteria.³ The criteria for promotion through the Research and Teaching Pathway into the office of Clinical Professor are broadly equivalent to those for Professor rather than those for Professor (Grade 11), yet confusingly when the office of Clinical Professor was introduced those clinicians holding Readerships were invited to transfer to the new office of Clinical Professor.²

This Report, proposing the introduction of clinical Teaching and Scholarship posts, also states that

Those currently holding the offices of Reader and Professor (Grade 11) would be invited to transfer to the new office of Clinical Professor.

The table in paragraph 14 implies that the criteria for promotion to a Clinical Professorship through the Teaching and Scholarship Pathway are to be equivalent to those for promotion to the office of Professor rather than the office of Professor (Grade 11). If this is so, why are those holding the office of Reader and Professor (Grade 11) to be invited to transfer to the office of Clinical Professor?

The alteration of the arrangements for University teaching officer posts for clinicians appears to have eliminated the possibility of promotion for a clinician into an office that is academically equivalent to Professor (Grade 11). The justification given for the need to eliminate the Reader/Professor (Grade 11) level office is that:

Unlike the recruitment of non-clinical Professors where there is a standard role profile for both Grade 11 and Grade 12 Professors and their pay is correspondingly differentiated, there is no mechanism or legitimate basis

under the UCEA agreements to differentiate pay on the NHS pay scales nor to have differential recruitment processes, so arrangements for all Clinical Professors need to be the same.

The argument seems to be that it is necessary that the University academic offices for clinicians are differentiated by the stipends they attract and the academic titles associated with them, rather than by academic criteria only. Clinical academics are paid on the NHS rather than the University pay scale in order to encourage clinicians to take up academic careers. There is effectively a market pay scheme. Why should such a scheme preclude clinicians from holding the usual academic offices differentiated on academic (rather than pay) grounds? What changed in 2021 to make the new clinical office necessary? If it was only the change of academic titles, should the need to alter the officer arrangements for clinicians not have been pointed out at the time of the proposal to make that change?

Will those presently holding the office of Reader or Professor (Grade 11) who choose to transfer to the office of Clinical Professor be expected to sign new contracts making their employment coterminous with the holding of NHS honorary contracts? Such contracts began to be issued to clinical academics systematically in 2019.⁴ The Council claims that they allow for the termination of employment if an honorary contract is withdrawn, without the need for a redundancy.⁵ It also states that coterminous contracts are necessary because ‘without an honorary clinical contract [University] officeholders cannot work as clinical academics at the University’.⁶ This seems more of a restatement of the policy than an explanation. If the honorary NHS contract of a University clinical academic is withdrawn what impediment is there to their continued employment by the University in the absence of clinical duties? Is it legal or financial?

In places the Report implies there is a proposal to create a new class of University office. Paragraph 14 contains a table with a column titled ‘Proposed office’ and paragraph 15 refers to ‘the new office of Clinical Professor’. Presumably, what is actually proposed is the creation of a new set of criteria for promotion or appointment into the existing class of office of Clinical Professor.

¹ Minutes of the Human Resources Committee, December 2021, [https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/hr/2021-12-02/MeetingDocuments/HRC_Minutes_2_December_2021_\(Unreserved\).pdf](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/hr/2021-12-02/MeetingDocuments/HRC_Minutes_2_December_2021_(Unreserved).pdf), accessed 23 June 2024 (University Account required).

² *Reporter*, 6646, 2021–22, p. 256.

³ Academic Career Pathways 2024 (Research & Teaching) https://www.acp.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/acp_rt_guidance_v1.4_-_september_2023.pdf

⁴ *Reporter*, 6699, 2022–23, pp. 657–658.

⁵ *Reporter*, 6703, 2022–23, p. 713.

⁶ *Reporter*, 6708, 2022–23, p. 840.

Professor G. R. EVANS (Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History), received by the Proctors:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, this Report begins with a reminder that the ‘academic staff’ category of ‘Teaching and Scholarship’ was approved on 21 May 2021, but notes that at that time ‘no requests for clinical posts were put forward’. That is now being attended to, and this Report is needed to set out the proposed legislative changes.

However, that seems hasty when an underlying problem has still not been addressed. The Report on the introduction of the new Teaching and Scholarship Pathway in the *Reporter* of 24 March 2021 recognised:

that the question as to whether academic (teaching and scholarship) posts should be established as offices or not is complex. It may be appropriate for some staff at Grade 9 and above to hold offices to provide parity with academic (research and teaching) posts, and particularly where the individual’s current post is already established. Other staff will be employed on an ‘unestablished’ basis where there are justifiable operational reasons to do so.¹

A key reason for pressing ahead with those ‘justifiable operational reasons’ still undefined seems to lie in the assertion that Clinical staff applying to transfer to the Academic (Teaching and Scholarship) pathway would not only need a new contract ‘with terms and conditions similar to a Clinical Academic (Research and Teaching) contract’, but would also still need an honorary contract from an NHS body to enable that individual to undertake clinical duties and responsibilities’. It is not clear why a co-terminous contract should continue to be required for clinical staff in teaching-focused roles. Does an NHS honorary contract necessarily guarantee the relevant expertise for teaching?

The Human Resources Committee’s Minutes of its meeting on 14 March 2024² record that it had papers before it proposing changes to guidance for the two existing ‘Career Pathways’. For Teaching and Scholarship there is at present no requirement for a teaching qualification, but there must be evidence of three years’ teaching experience in ‘collegiate Cambridge’. A suggestion of the School of Clinical Medicine had been to require a ‘narrative CV’ from applicants. A further paper was expected for the meeting in the Easter Term. If the HRC received that, may we be told what it proposed by way of rating competence to teach in this field?

If this Report’s proposal is approved, Clinical Academic (Teaching and Scholarship) staff would then be eligible to apply for promotion under the Academic Career Pathways (Teaching and Scholarship) scheme, ‘updated to include Clinical (Teaching and Scholarship) roles’. For these the Schools of Clinical Medicine and of the Biological Sciences would ‘create relevant assessment criteria’. Should those not have been agreed before this Grace was offered for approval, and perhaps linked with some clarified ‘justifiable operational reasons’.

Moreover, the Report’s mention of a need for ‘support tailored to the needs of this group of staff’ leaves those needs far from clear.

¹ *Reporter*, 6612, 2020–21, p. 454 at para. 11.

² [https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/hr/2024-03-14/MeetingDocuments/HRC_Minutes_14_March_2024_\(Unreserved\).pdf](https://www.governance.cam.ac.uk/committees/hr/2024-03-14/MeetingDocuments/HRC_Minutes_14_March_2024_(Unreserved).pdf) (University Account required).

Report of the General Board, dated 7 June 2024, on the outcomes of the Academic Career Pathways (Research and Teaching) and (Teaching and Scholarship) 2024 exercises

(Reporter, 6745, 2023–24, p. 685).

Dr W. J. ASTLE (MRC Biostatistics Unit):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, congratulations to all those named in this Report.

In response to the Discussion on last year's Report on the outcomes of the Academic Career Pathways 2023 exercises¹ the General Board agreed that in reports on future exercises it would indicate:

- which of the proposed promotions into established offices would be fixed-term appointments,
- for those appointments that would be fixed-term, the objective justification for the fixed-term appointment and the conditions that can cause the employment contract to expire,
- for those fixed-term appointments that would be coterminous with another role, the nature of the role including the title of the role, the appointing institution and an indication of whether that institution is funding the costs of the University office.²

However, it seems to have forgotten to do so in this Report. The information is important because the University claims it is possible for it to terminate a fixed-term contract of employment in certain circumstances, without invoking the redundancy procedure in the Schedule for Statute C. Please will the General Board provide it.

¹ Reporter, 6707, 2022–23, p. 836.

² Reporter, 6708, 2022–23, p. 840.

COLLEGE NOTICES

Elections

Pembroke College

Elected to a Professorial Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2024:

Professor Constantine Yannelis, B.A., *Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*, M.A., *Université Paris I: Panthéon-Sorbonne*, Ph.D., *Stanford*

Elected to the Stokes Research Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2024:

Javier Antoran, B.Eng., *Zaragoza*, Ph.D., *DAR*

Elected to the Mark Kaplanoff Research Fellowship with effect from 1 October 2024:

Alice Raw, B.A., M.St., D.Phil., *Oxford*

Elected to a Bye-Fellowship with effect from 21 May 2024:

Melissa Leach, M.A., *N*, M.Phil., Ph.D., *SOAS*

Elected to a William Pitt Fellowship:

Tariq Hussain, B.Sc., *Swansea*

St John's College

Elected to a Fellowship under Title E with effect from 1 January 2025:

Josephine Crawley Quinn, B.A., *Oxford*, M.A., Ph.D., *UC Berkeley*

Sidney Sussex College

Elected to an Honorary Fellowship from 26 June 2024:

Sharad Javali, B.A., *St Joseph's University, Bangalore*

Professor Joanne Martin, M.A., *SID*, M.B.B.S., Ph.D., *London*, MRCPath, CBE

Prakash Melwani, M.A., *SID*, M.B.A., *Harvard*

Elected to a Fellow Commonership from 26 June 2024:

Nico Muhly, B.A., *Columbia*, M.M., *Juilliard*

Vacancies

Newnham College: Director of the Margaret Anstee Centre; tenure: part-time (200 hours per academic year) for three years from 1 October 2024 (renewable once); salary: £6,120; closing date: 15 July 2024 at 12 noon; further details: <https://newn.cam.ac.uk/vacancy/margaret-anstee-centre-director-2024-2027/>

Information and Support Manager; salary: £40,521; closing date: 22 July 2024 at 12 noon; further details: <https://newn.cam.ac.uk/vacancy/information-support-manager/>

EXTERNAL NOTICES

Oxford Notices

Faculty of Music and Wadham College: Heather Professorship of Music; tenure: from 1 October 2025; closing date: 9 September 2024 at 12 noon; further details: <https://www.recruit.ox.ac.uk>, vacancy ID: 173861

Merton College: Stipendiary Lectureship in English Literature, 1830–present (four hours per week); tenure: two years from 1 October 2024; salary: £11,322; closing date: 22 July 2024 at 9 a.m.; further details: <https://www.merton.ox.ac.uk/vacancies>