
Science Policy News

United Kingdom: The Corporate Strategy for 1989 of the Medical Research Council (MRC)

The 'MRC Corporate Strategy' for 1989 is a public statement on how the Council intends to operate over the next five years and argues the case for the additional resources that should be provided to meet the national needs of medical research.

The main lines of the Strategy are to enlarge understanding of the causes of disease, provide better means of preventing, diagnosing and treating illness, and promote and maintain good health.

The Council's research portfolio will continue to: cover the whole spectrum of medical and related biological research; support basic, clinical and health services research and encourage the application and commercial exploitation of their results; balance long-term commitments and flexibility; recognize the special roles of MRC Units and the university sector; provide a wide range of forms of support and research training; fund a variety of speculative research, research aimed at delivering practical benefits, and research intended to increase knowledge through incremental steps.

In developing scientific strategy the Council will:

- maintain a substantial investment in fundamental biology;
- carry through major new programs, including those concerning clinical research initiatives, mapping the human genome, protein engineering, cognitive science, AIDS, toxicology, and cell biology;
- strengthen the portfolio of clinical research in such areas as cancer screening research, cardiovascular disease, health services research, nutrition, conditions affecting the elderly, and clinical research training;
- exploit new research opportunities in magnetic resonance imaging and spectroscopy, molecular biology of mental illness, clinical applications of molecular virology, cognitive development research, transgenic animals as models of human disease, and development of new vaccines;

- identify scientific areas in which growth should be encouraged or retrenchment sought, in collaboration with the Council's Research Boards and the scientific community.

In allocating resources the Council will:

- aim to increase non-Grant-in-aid income;
- seek major contributions from industry or charities towards a number of major building initiatives;
- maintain a substantial investment in MRC Units while continuing to encourage MRC Unit directors to operate with the most cost-effective staffing levels;
- develop the program of Interdisciplinary Research Centers;
- maintain a substantial investment in project grants while carrying out a fundamental review of the scope and cost of the scheme;
- increase the number of clinical research training awards;
- increase the number of research studentships;
- build up the MRC Collaborative Center at Mill Hill;
- develop assessment criteria, performance indicators, evaluation techniques and reviews of scientific fields.

The Council will remain responsive to the needs of many external agencies and active in developing scientific strategy and allocating resources. All the activities outlined in the Strategy are geared to the Council's overall aim to maintain and improve human health and to develop the understanding of mechanisms by which this may be achieved.

Copies of the Corporate Strategy 1989 are available from:

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