

The Lord Winston  
House of Lords  
London  
SW1A 0PW

18 November 2024

Dear Lord Winston,

I am writing to you following the debate on 31 October on the contribution of science and technology to the UK economy. I thank you for raising the reforms to the funding model for the Medical Research Council's (MRC) units and centres.

I wanted to provide further detail on the rationale for the funding reforms, which were developed in response to the 2020 MRC Unit and Centre Portfolio Review (<https://www.ukri.org/news/mrc-publishes-units-and-centres-portfolio-review/>). The review found that the current MRC Unit and Centre portfolio has enormous strengths and has made significant contributions, as you rightly highlighted in the Chamber. The review concluded that there were opportunities to improve the impact of the portfolio through enhanced agility and through increased collaboration with other UKRI councils, medical charities, the National Institute for Health and Care Research and industry.

The MRC Centres of Research Excellence (CoRE) will support multidisciplinary, team science approaches to tackle the most important biomedical challenges, with clear strategies for delivering transformational impact within their fourteen-year funding periods. Natural turnover within the portfolio will ensure that the MRC can continue to re-invest in the major challenges of the future.

The MRC CoRE model is aligned with standard grant funding practices, making it simpler for universities to host these centres and easier for other funders to establish partnerships with them. Staff in the centres will be employed through regular academic contracts at host universities. The move from the current five-year unit funding cycle to seven years, together with a lighter-touch mid-term review, will reduce bureaucracy and maximise the time that scientists can dedicate to research.

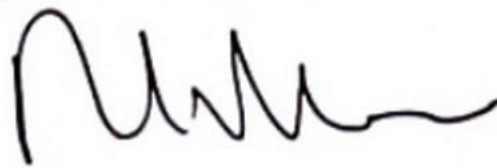
The MRC is supporting unit staff and host universities during this transitional period. As I mentioned in the Chamber on 28 October, all existing units can apply for MRC CoRE funding or transition to other modes of MRC grant funding. The MRC is

providing enhanced principal investigator salary costs on awards to researchers transitioning out of the current funding model to help host universities accommodate the additional salary demands.

I asked the MRC Executive Chair, Professor Patrick Chinnery to meet with you to discuss these reforms, and I gather that you have met and are content with the proposals.

I am copying this letter to Professor Dame Ottoline Leyser and Professor Patrick Chinnery, and I will place a copy in the libraries of both Houses.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'N. Vallance', written in a cursive style.

**LORD VALLANCE**  
**Minister of State**  
**Department for Science, Innovation & Technology**