

Imaging Advisory Group (IAG)

27/09/2021

Minutes

Present:

Angeliki Asimaki AA	Senior Lecturer in Cardiac Morphology and Sudden Death
Alexis Bailey AB	Reader in Neuropharmacology - IMBE
Anna Dulic-Sills ADS	Director of Research Operations
Atticus Hainsworth AH	Reader in Cerebrovascular Disease
Carlos Bueno-Beti CB	Postdoctoral Research Assistant
Daniel Osborn DO	Senior Lecturer in Genetics
Deborah Chong DC	Lecturer in Infection and Immunity
Florencia Cavodeassi FC	Senior Lecturer in Developmental Biology
Guy Whitley GW	Professor of Cell Biology
Greg Perry GP	Microscopy Manager - IRF
Isabelle Crevel IC	Senior Technician - Research Support -IRF
Sandra Ashton SA	Head of Facility - IRF (Chair)
Susanna Cooper SC	PhD student - PhD Student Forum Representative
Tom Carter TC	Professor of Endothelial Cell Biology
Paris Ataliotis PA	Reader in Developmental Genetics
Billy Zeqiri BZ	Finance Business Partner (Research)
Mary Sheppard MS	Professor of Cardiac Pathology

Apologies were received from:

Jennifer Smith JS	Research Publications Librarian
Daniel Meijles DM	Senior Lecturer in Cardiovascular Biology
Ferran Valderrama FV	Reader in Cancer Cell Biology
Kazim Ogden KO	Postdoctoral Research Assistant
Silvia Martin Almedina SMA	Research Fellow - Postdoctoral Forum Representative
Yvette Bland YB	Laboratory Manager - IMBE
Danielle Russo DR	Head of Outreach and Widening Participation

Item 1: Minutes

Received and approved: meeting 28.06.2021 – no further amendments
Amendments made prior to meeting regarding Billy Zeqiri's name as requested

Item 2: Updates on research, teaching or student support requirements

Reported:

- a) Lecturers:

IMBE

FC – No general update from IMBE but question by FC regarding number of academics who will incorporate into the new way of using the imaging facility now that BSc projects have been allocated.
SA – Two-three academics have agreed including Bridget Bax and Alexis Bailey. Daniel Meijles also intends to incorporate into the new way of using the imaging facility. SA will circulate information again to FC.

FC – Commented that this information will be circulated and highlighted at a senior lecturers' group soon.
SA – If lecturers don't have the bundle, they will be charged the regular prices.

I&I

DC – nothing to report from I&I.

SA – Commented that IRF is currently considering problems that could arise regarding transition of live imaging into the CL3 suite.

Action:

- i. GP to give an update in the next IAG meeting regarding transition of live imaging into the CL3 suite.

MCS

No update from MCS

- b) Postdoctoral Scientists

CB – Nothing to report but going forward, CB and KO will be covering for SMA during her absence on maternity leave.

- c) PhD students

SC -Nothing to report for the PhD students.

- d) Professional Services – Library, JRES, Finance, Comms

Outreach and Widening Participation:

SA – Email will be sent out to IAG members regarding activities that IRF facility will participate in next year.

Library:

No representative therefore the discussions about publications and credit will be postponed at a later date.

JRES:

No representation.

- e) Academic Lead

No representation in this meeting

Item 3: Report from IRF staff

Reported:

Fluorescence Activated Cell Sorting (FACS):

IC – No update on the flow user group.

Action:

- ii. IC to update on renewals of service contracts

Light Microscopy (LM):

GP - Work on the LiveCyte microscope has functionally finished and testing period is now closed. Anyone who wants to make use of it to get in touch with GP.
IRF will be having a site visit from the team at Cairn research to do some updates to the TSPIM light-sheet microscope.

Cairn Research will be putting a package together for researchers working with Zebra fish heart development or blood flow in vessels.

GP – Commented that there will be a promotional video for Livecyte

Action:

- iii. Researchers working in the two areas mentioned above to get in touch with IRF staff

Histology (Hist.): No update given

Item 4: New Pricing for Equipment and Services

BZ – Presentation

BZ – Works closely with the research institutes including research operations. Also involved in recharging costs or grants.

BZ - gave an overview of the cost of using the services, how and why it was done and how the prices compare to how they were before and to other universities and other commercial entities.

The process took place to ensure that when recharging grants, the costs were fully auditable.

BZ – commented that IRF was not fully auditable on some occasions, so having fully auditable rates increases the likelihood that IRF can get that money back from grants and also generate as much income for the IRF as possible.

BZ – highlighted that pricing is key and the amount that is costing to run the service must be reclaimed back whether it's from a grant or commercial service.

BZ – commented that costings have been handed over to him and prices will be updated accordingly in the next year.

Three years' worth of costs are split into two different types of service; (1) service that is done on a sample based hourly type and (2) Different types of services being provided by the IRF. Costs are made up of capital costs, service costs, equipment support, consumables and cost of researcher or costs of IRF staff.

Costs are then allocated to the different types of services which then gives a total cost of running the service. This then creates a price accordingly as to how much IRF charges and that is split into the service.

Costs are different if researcher requires IRF staff to run an experiment compared to when a researcher can run it themselves. There are different costs for different projects i.e., if a grant doesn't allow overheads or recharges, the cost will be lower because some of the costs IRF would have taken won't be directly allocated to them. The costs for grants that allow overheads will be slightly higher.

The prices have stayed quite stable compared to what they were before in general. Some of the costs for a few of the services have decreased, refer to Ms Excel spreadsheet and some of the costs seem lower than the benchmark commercial price.

ADS – commented that the cost is what it costs to run a service whereas the profit margin is added to the price. IRF cannot make a profit from grants. Price includes the commercial or external rights where the full economic cost is taken into account and multiplied by as much as possible to recover the costs.

ADS - commented that IRF will never recover costs as it's impossible. When taking into account staffing costs and basic consumables and maintenance, it costs over a quarter million excluding estates etc. IRF is not looking to make profit or recovering full costs, but IRF needs to maximise their grant income and ensure they are claiming everything they can as well as be auditable as previously mentioned by BZ. IRF charges were not fully auditable by auditors and the cost was passed on to the Institutes as grant adjustment.

Overheads can be apportioned to the Institute because they include the academic time. IRF and research operations do not receive any overheads, but IRF does contribute to overheads.

SA – agrees that there should be something in place that will enable reinvestment of equipment as an equipment ends its lifetime.

ADS – commented that depreciation of equipment cannot be included onto UKRI grants as this will be part of the overheads.

SA – added that researchers will be charged partial economic costing and commercial and externals will be charged full costing.

Table showing price where funders pay overheads and table showing price where funders do not pay overheads – SA to circulate spreadsheet

SA – Commented that the price is focused on being able to cover the full cost whilst also not being uncompetitive. The intention is for these new prices to go live in January and JRES has to fully approve this. The researcher will then transition into these new prices depending on the category of grant.

SA – commented that BZ will analyse full economic costings and provide a full cost list that should be used in grant applications for the following annual calendar year.

ADS – Costs incorporated for a specific year in which the grant was awarded will remain the same for the duration of that grant however long that grant is.

SA – The old system was charging technician time as an add-on to the actual service or use of equipment hence people were not charged as appropriate. The new system ensures that prices for services and equipment are costed appropriately for e.g., if a user doesn't require any help using confocal microscopy, he/she will be charged as a reduced price compared to a user who requires the confocal to be done by IRF staff. GP will still be able to help if something goes wrong. For e.g., 10 hours of confocal will cost SGUL user £310 but the same thing will cost £1000 for commercial. Details can be found in the paperwork that has been circulated around after the meeting.

GW – Asked whether 10 hours of confocal for LiveCyte Microscope will be charged at an hourly rate and whether the user will have to pay 10 times the hourly rate.

SA – Agrees that the length in time may be capped and that the system can be re-evaluated every year.

ADS – Commented that the income needs to be maximised, and if it's a grant costing, the funding body will not reject the application because of perceived extortionate costs of the LiveCyte microscope. If it is non-grant funding, Research Operations can look into the fairest way to handle it.

GW – commented that non-grant funded research comes before grant-funded research for a lot of researchers and most grant awarding bodies will accept a certain amount.

GW – added that grant awarding bodies will be a lot more stringent as to what they spend their money on.

ADS – Cost list is awaiting approval from JRES and the Research Committee.

SA – Commented that one of the aims of the IRF Research Excellence Fund is to obtain data for publishing or to obtain pilot study. The other aim is to maximise the potential of an equipment for the benefit of the users i.e., charge researcher the basic consumables costs per hour or the basic consumables cost per sample. Researcher can request for multiple services including immunohistochemistry, histology and slide scanning in their applications and will be charged for the basic consumables rate. The prices for the basic consumables rate are affordable and auditable so will be allowed on grant applications.

SA – Proposed process for IRF Research Excellence fund as follows; (i) Call to applicants in October and application deadline in December, (ii) Advisory group oversees decision-making on applications, (iii) research committee will be update regarding successful applicants of the fund, (iv) successful applicants to be given access to services and equipment at basic consumables rates per hour/ per sample rate for 12 months for the work they have applied for and (v) Researchers to submit a follow-up report to IAG at the end of award.

IAG – All members agreed that the application should be open to everyone and should cover pilot studies, publications and feasibility studies.

ADS – Commented that clinical research is not necessarily as new as much as fundamental basic research and the fund does not necessarily need to cover clinical research activities.

TC – Agreed that the fund is a good idea.

All IAG members voted for the IRF Research Excellence Fund.

SA – Commented that the implementation of this excellence fund is to allow researchers to access IRF equipment and services and keep the research moving.

FC – Asked how a researcher would get the funding if they have been successful for the IRF Research Excellence Fund but their funding has finished.

SA – Suggested that researcher could be find other funding sources. Possibly leftover funds from student projects (internal money or institute small grants funding)

SC – Asked if researchers will be capped for how much they can request.

SC – Suggested that there should be a certain allowance for the year the application is open that indicates a limit researchers can apply for and at what cost they will be charged.

SA – Suggested that once the offering for that year is published a researcher can only have access to one of that service.

IC – Asked who should be on the subgroup to decide on successful applications.

SA – Commented that the subgroup will consist of volunteers with a duty of care and due diligence to select successful applications. Important to identify if the work applied for would be better suited for a grant application.

SA – Also commented that BZ will be working with JRES on a monthly basis to know which researcher already has active grant applications and suggested for BZ to be on the subgroup.

SA – Suggested for IAG members to take this request to the institutes so that other researchers can be on the subgroup, and this will not limit IAG members to apply for the Excellence Fund.

FC – Suggested that the subgroup could be similar to funding bodies whereby if a researcher is directly interested in what is being reviewed, they can sit out of the subgroup.

SA – Agreed but also commented that a decision needs to be made on what the subgroup will look like and how many people will be involved in it.

GP – Suggested that if a researcher doesn't have enough funding and there is funding allocated as a bridging fund, such as what the MCS does, this could be an option.

ADS – Commented that II&I and MCS have bridging funds and researchers can apply for consumables.

Action:

- iv. SA to email questions regarding IRF Research Excellence Fund to IAG members for feedback.

GW – Agrees with the Excellence fund idea but also commented that researchers will have ideas throughout the year and will need to get the research moving and if there is no funding and the Excellence fund is only once a year, it may be difficult as to how this will be implemented.

GW – also commented that it is unclear as to how researchers will know how much unused time of an equipment they have.

SA – Suggested that IRF will only take 5% a year.

GW – Commented that there should be more flexibility that will allow a researcher to react quickly to a grant proposal.

ADS – suggested to have the Excellence Fund a couple times a year.

SA – Summarised that IAG should be very clear as to what should be on the application form, what evidence will inform who is successful for this fund and what the subgroup will look like.

SA – Suggested that decision-making to take a week especially if there will be two calls every year and award should be capped at a certain number of successful candidates.

SA – Wanted feedback regarding the following questions; how decision-making process should be made? Scoring process or opinion-based? And how this would be reported? What should the content of the report be; prescriptive or can the individual write their own report? How the award should be advertised – By the institutes through their discretionary funds/ via the institute meetings or through COMMS? Will the award come with the expectation that researcher will collaborate with the IRF on social media platforms?

SA – Needs volunteers for the subgroup, volunteers to work on application form and volunteers to put together a term of reference for the IRF Excellence fund.

SA – As many applicants can apply for the fund but each applicant will only receive 5% of an equipment.

Action:

- v. SA to do a follow-up email to include the document describing in full the full economic costing review, the presentation, and the questions regarding the Excellence Fund application form.

Item 5: Any other Business

Nothing to report

Meeting Closed

Dates of Meetings in 2022

All meetings commence at 11:00 am in Microsoft Teams unless otherwise specified.

24.01.2022
28.03.2022
27.06.2022
26.09.2022

DRAFT