

**Research Advisory Committee**

**Terms of Reference**

**Purpose**

The Research Advisory Committee (RAC) of the Royal Hospital for Neuro-disability (RHN) complies with the standards of the Association of Medical Research Charities (AMRC). It reviews all research and fellowship proposals that apply for funding and receive reports on progress of the projects throughout the year.

In line with the Research Governance Framework for Health & Social Care, it ensures that only studies which are scientifically and ethically sound, and relevant to the aims of the RHN, are funded and carried out. It satisfy the RHN that its grants are being applied properly, that the projects are progressing well, and that continued funding is appropriate.

**Membership**

AMRC requires

* A majority of external members
* Board level representation, or committee attendance at Board meetings
* Representation of the interests of the RHN’s patient group.

The RAC shall consist of a minimum of five full members with voting rights and the ex officio members set out below.

*Full members*

Full members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Board from people who are independent of the RHN and proposed by the RAC or the EMT. Members will be proposed on the basis of academic, research and/or clinical achievements and/or ability to represent the RHN patient group.

Appointments will be for three years which the Board may extend by a further two years. Any vacant position will be filled by the Board on a casual basis until the original term of office of the member being replaced has expired.

Appointments with be staggered to maintain continuity of knowledge.

Once the term of office has expired, the member will not be reconsidered for appointment until at least 3 years have elapsed.

The Chairman and Deputy Chairman will be elected from and by the full members of the committee.

*Ex-officio members*

Ex-officio members do not have the right to vote on any matter.

They are:

* Chief Executive
* Medical Director
* Director of Fundraising and Communication
* Associate Director of Research
* RHN Board member

The Secretary to the meeting will be provided by the Research Department

**Working methods**

The RAC will rely on a peer-review system as described in the Standard Operating Procedure of the Committee.

***The Peer Review System***

The RAC complies with the AMRC standards regarding the use of peer reviewers, according to the following principles:

* **Accountability:** Charities are open and transparent about their peer review procedures and publish details, including the names of members of scientific advisory panels
* **Balance:** Scientific advisory panels reflect a fair balance of experience and scientific disciplines.
* **Independent decision making:** The scientific advisory panel is independent of the charity's administrative staff and trustees.
* **Rotation of scientific advisers:** Scientific advisory panel members have a fixed term of office and do not have tenure.
* **Impartiality:** Scientific advisory panels include a significant number of non-beneficiaries. There is a conflict of interest policy and potential beneficiaries are not present when decisions are made.

*Selection of peer-reviewers*

External referees, from amongst academic and clinical professionals in relevant fields, shall be consulted to provide their opinions on research proposals. The anonymity of referees will be maintained with respect to the investigators submitting the proposals.

The external referees shall not attend meetings or have voting rights.

*Peer review process*

All proposals sent to the RAC should be reviewed by external peer-reviewers

The number of peer-reviewers per project should be:

* One for a project requesting less than £10,000
* Two for any project requesting more than £10,000.
* A third reviewer if the reviewers give opposing/conflicting recommendations - the third reviewer could be a member of the Committee. If that is the case, the member of the Committee retain the ability to attend the meeting and vote.

Peer reviewers’ recommendation will be sought using the peer review pro forma that include a disclosure of potential conflict of interest. The reviewers’ recommendations will be communicated to the researchers ahead of the RAC meeting to enable them to respond to the referees’ comments.

***Conflicts of Interest***

Committee members must comply with the RHN requirements regarding the declaration of conflicts of interest and the RAC’s own Standard Operating Procedures.

If a Committee member is either the principal applicant or a co-applicant in a research project under evaluation s/he will be asked to leave the room while the Committee is discussing the project.

**Quorum**

The quorum will be any 3 full members.

**Frequency**

The RAC will at least once a year and as required.

**Reporting**

The RAC will report as follows:

* It will prepare an annual report for the EMT covering the previous year (October to September) and the Chairman shall attend RHN Board Meeting on invitation to feedback on the progress of the funded projects.
* The RAC will make recommendations to the Executive Management Team who may approve or reject a proposal or refer the proposal to the Board

**Changes in terms of reference**

The RAC will refer all proposals for changes to its terms of reference to EMT for approval in the first instance. EMT will report all approved changes to the Board.

RAC membership 2025

Members

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| Committee Members | Field |
| Professor Jolanta Opacka-Juffry | Neurosciences |
| ‎Professor Wendy Magee  Temple University, Philadelphia | Music Therapy, Neuro-rehabilitation, Disorders of consciousness |
| Dr Michelle Ramsay | Respiratory and ventilation medicine -motor neurone disease. |
| Mike Smith- | Volunteer-representing family and patients |
| Dr Liliana Teixeira | Prolonged disorders of consciousness and bioethics |
| Vacant | Technology |
| Vacant | Active Neuro-rehabilitation |

Ex-Officio members:

* Chief Executive- Paul Allen
* Medical Director- Dr Steven Luttrell
* Director of Fundraising and Communication: Jane Beaven
* Associate Director of Research- Dr Sophie Duport
* RHN Board member-tbc