

NRI SCIENTIST STAFF: PROCEDURE FOR REVIEW OF COMMISSIONING LEVELS

A. Background

1. Although NRI operates within the context of the wider University its financial performance is monitored independently and it is expected to function as a separate research, consultancy and teaching and training business on a break-even basis.
2. It is therefore necessary for NRI to keep its business performance under continuous review. The financial performance of each of the NRI departments is kept under review by the NRI Director and Commercial Director, together with the relevant Heads of Departments. Where any major structural or strategic changes are contemplated these are discussed and agreed at University level by the NRI Management Group and Executive Committee. If there were to be any significant changes involving staff restructuring these would only be made after consultation with recognised trade unions, including PROSPECT in particular.
3. As part of the process of monitoring and improving its business performance NRI also continuously reviews the commissioning levels of individual members of the scientific staff (including both natural and social scientists) to ensure that the Institute's staffing capacity is being effectively utilised. The source data for these reviews is accessible to all NRI staff via the PID database on the NRI intranet. Where low levels of individual commissioning are considered by line managers to result from factors such as sickness absence or poor performance and the impact on commissioning level is both serious and sustained, the University's agreed procedures for dealing with sickness absence and poor performance will be applied.
4. Circumstances may also arise where the commissioning level of individual members of the scientist staff are low over a sustained period of several months through no fault of the individual concerned but because the market demand for the special type of research, consultancy, teaching or training they have to offer has declined. Where this is the case the procedure set out in Section B below should be applied.
5. This procedure will not apply to staff in their first 6 months after appointment or within 6 months of returning from a long term overseas posting.

B. Procedure

6. When the commissioning level of a member of staff falls below acceptable levels (see annex) and there are no straightforward explanations arising from it, e.g. high level of management, administrative, marketing or bid writing responsibilities, the case will be discussed confidentially with the Director and the relevant Head of Department at the regular monthly meeting to establish whether there are any known special factors which suggest that the

occurrence is likely to be temporary or that other University staff procedures should be followed. Account will be taken of any teaching, training course or research activities which may not be reflected in the commissioning level data, as well as any wider contribution which may be made to the commissioning of business for other staff or the retention of key skills which may be required in the context of the Institute's strategic plans.

7. If, as a result of this preliminary discussion, it is concluded that there are no such special factors and that other procedures are not appropriate, the Director and Head of Department will together meet with the member of staff (accompanied by a trade union representative if he/she so wishes). The purpose of this meeting will be to identify whether there are any steps which may be taken to bring about an improvement in the commissioning level and to set a review period over which the improved commissioning level might materialise. This review period will normally be a minimum of three months and may be extended if there are good reasons for this, e.g. if there is a real prospect of winning a significant amount of new business. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to the member of staff concerned.
8. If, at the end of the review period (or extended review period), the commissioning level has not improved sufficiently (see annex) the meeting at 6 above will be reconvened. Following further consideration at the meeting it may be concluded that there is no prospect of sufficient new business coming in to enable the member of staff to improve the commissioning level in their present role. If this is the case the member of staff should be invited to a separate meeting with the NRI Director at which a member of the Human Resources Directorate should be present (the member of staff may be accompanied by a trade union representative if he/she so wishes).
9. The purpose of this further meeting will be to explore with the member of staff and establish their preferences on what options are available. Depending on the circumstances of the particular case these may include some or all of the alternatives set out in paragraphs 10 – 12 below.
10. Agreed redeployment to an alternative role either within NRI or in the wider University

This will depend on what opportunities are available and an assessment may need to be made of suitability for retraining, if appropriate.

11. Agreed reduction to a fractional appointment

In exceptional situations depending on the business case it may be possible to consider continuing employment in the present role on a less than full-time basis. In such cases a compensation payment (based on University voluntary severance terms) may be made to recognise the reduction in contract. Where the member of staff has a protected entitlement to Civil Service redundancy terms under TUPE, this will not prejudice their protected redundancy entitlement if they are subsequently made redundant (except that the terms would be payable pro rata to the reduced fraction).

12. Agreed full voluntary severance on University voluntary severance terms

Where this option is taken up by staff who do not have a protected entitlement to Civil Service redundancy terms, the voluntary severance terms applicable will be those under the University's Scheme. For staff with a protected entitlement to Civil Service redundancy terms it may be possible for the University to offer an enhanced voluntary severance package which is intermediate between the University's standard voluntary severance terms and the Civil Service terms. A judgement will be made in each case based on cost and affordability. A period of at least 2 weeks will be allowed in order for a member of staff to decide whether they wish to take up the voluntary severance option. The effective date of voluntary severances will in all cases be 3 months after the formal agreement date.

If none of the above options can be achieved the University may proceed with unilateral redeployment to an alternative role or compulsory redundancy (on full Civil Service terms for TUPE protected staff), after taking account of the cost to the University of each of these alternatives. Compulsory redeployment would be a post judged as "suitable" and on the same pay and conditions of service. In either case, the member of staff concerned will have the right of appeal with trade union representation to an independent Senior Manager who has no line management connection with NRI.

**YARD STICK FOR REVIEW OF COMMISSIONING LEVELS WHICH ARE
A CAUSE OF CONCERN**

It is recognised that levels of business won for any individual will vary from year to year and daily fee rates applied require a degree of flexibility depending on what the client will pay. However, for the Institute to be financially sustainable, on average high annual commissioning levels at good daily rates must be achieved. In assessing an individual's level of commissioning at any point in time, past achievements and future market demand will be considered. It will also be necessary to make an assessment of the level of corporate activity such as management, administration, marketing, bid writing, etc. This will set any one year's commissioning levels in a context which will allow judgements to be made on whether there is a positive or negative trend.

The yard stick to be used is as follows:-

Commissioned days per year at good daily rates

110 to 129	-	Below Expectations
80 to 109	-	Considerable Concern
79 and below	-	Unacceptable