

Rules for International Advisory Board at MCB JU

EXTERNAL RESEARCH EVALUATION AT MCB JU*

OVERVIEW

The International Advisory Board (IAB) is responsible for performing external evaluations of research at the MCB JU laboratories and of their leadership. Committees of Scientific Reviewers (CSR) can be established, when needed, to take part in the process. CSRs consist of scientists, external to MCB and JU, who assist the IAB and the MCB Director in evaluating the quality of ongoing research programs at MCB JU.

Orientation Guidelines for IAB and CSR responsibilities.

(This orientation guide describes the goals of the review process, the different responsibilities of the IAB and CSRs and of the review process).

1. Background
2. Goal of the Review Process
3. Responsibilities of CSR Participants
4. Review Procedures
5. Criteria for Review of Research
6. Reporting of Results of Reviews
7. Follow-up
8. Information prepared by Lab Leaders for CSRs
9. CSR Report Form to be submitted by a CSR Secretary

1. BACKGROUND

Research at MCB JU is subjected to external peer-review to fulfil one of its major aims – that of research excellence, which is enshrined in the Centre's Statutes that were approved by the JU Senate in December 2015. All laboratory leaders are reviewed three years after appointment. If the review is positive, and the team augurs well for the future, contracts will be extended. Subsequently, a team will be reviewed every four years. In exceptional circumstances, The MCB Director in consultation with the IAB chair, can organize an interim review of any group or group leadership

In the case of a negative team assessment, dissolution will occur over the course of the following year. However, MCB will make arrangements for the completion of any work related to active grants held by MCB affiliated group members should such a grant last longer than a year.

Such decisions will be taken by the MCB Director and will be based on formal assessment by the IAB with or without CSR help as described in section 4. In all cases when such decisions result in changes in personal employment contracts, they will need to be approved by the appropriate JU authorities.

2. GOAL OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

The goal of the review process is to assist the MCB Director in decision-making with regard to the future of reviewed teams. Reviews should evaluate research programs in terms of their scientific leadership, overall goals, long-term objectives, quality of research, scientific accomplishments and the quality of training and mentoring within each laboratory.

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3. RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARTICIPANTS OF CSR

Reviewers should not communicate directly with investigators but should direct all communications through either the MCB Director, the IAB chair or CSR secretary, as appropriate. All IAB/CSR members will be asked to disclose potential conflicts of interest to the MCB Director prior to the start of a review.

4. REVIEW PROCEDURES

The Time Schedule of Evaluations

1. An initial evaluation is performed 3 years after the establishment of a unit, with the assistance of a CSR
2. Subsequently, four year evaluations will be carried out by the IAB with a CSR appointed if the IAB finds it necessary.
3. At 7-year review a CSR will again be involved. This review will make recommendations about promotions to senior and/or tenured positions and advise on whether a laboratory should be made permanent.
4. Further IAB evaluations will occur every four years with a CSR appointed if the IAB finds it necessary.
5. In exceptional circumstances, which may include outstanding as well as unsatisfactory performance, interim reviews of individuals or groups can be arranged. In each such case, IAB recommendations for acceleration or termination of tenure track or for discretionary additional remuneration, will need concrete arguments backed up by supporting evidence.

CSR Composition

A CSR consists of at least 3 members: 2 reviewers or more, with scientific qualifications to serve as authorities in the field under review and a member of the MCB's IAB who acts as a secretary. CSR members are selected by the IAB Chair if needed again; novelty or continuity of membership will be considered case by case. An evaluated laboratory leader can also suggest names of potential CSR members.

The Review Procedure

Each review consists of two parts: 1) a review of written material provided by the laboratory leader, and 2) an exchange of opinions between IAB/CSR members, eventually following a site visit requested by the IAB and/or CSR, and/or laboratory leader if deemed necessary. IAB members can visit laboratories during annual IAB meetings, or at any other time as needed.

Information Supplied to Reviewers

Each IAB member/CSR reviewer will be supplied with written information prepared by the laboratory leader based on the list in section 8.

The Evaluation of Researchers and Assistants

Laboratory leaders will organize internal annual performance evaluation meetings with their researchers and assistants in the presence of a senior colleague or IAB member. Forms documenting such evaluations should be completed by April 1 every year and submitted to the MCB vice-director for scientific affairs. If applicable, these evaluations should be supplemented by the individual research reports, prepared on regular basis by every JU employee.

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5. CRITERIA FOR THE REVIEW OF RESEARCH

The IAB/CSR will provide evaluations and advice on the scientific direction of a laboratory, including i) tenure or promotion recommendations for the laboratory leader under review, ii) resource allocations with respect to specific projects, including new areas of development, and iii) other administrative matters. Specifically, laboratory evaluations must address six criteria:

1. Significance

Do the laboratory's projects address important problems? Have the aims of the project(s) been achieved? Have there been advances in scientific knowledge? Have the results influenced concepts or developed methods that drive the field? Does the laboratory leader reach a level of national or international excellence in his/her field? Does the scientific profile and performance of the group fit the MCB's general developmental strategy?

2. Approach

In general, is the scientific strategy well-conceived? If problems arise, are reasonable alternative approaches or strategies proposed or pursued? Is the long-term strategy and its alignment with the MCB's general strategy followed? How effective is intra-MCB, intra-JU and inter-institutional cooperation and what are the future plans for cooperation and collaboration?

3. Innovation

Do the projects propose novel concepts, approaches or methods? Are the aims original and innovative? Do the projects challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies or technologies?

4. Support

What type of funding does the investigator receive and is it sufficient for the scientific aims to be achieved? What is the leader's track record in obtaining extramural funding?

5. Productivity

What has been the impact of the laboratory's overall research productivity?

6. Mentoring

Does the laboratory head provide an appropriate training environment and mentoring scheme for junior investigators? Specifically, statistics on junior researcher recruitment, retention and doctoral completion should be provided as well as research achievements.

6. REPORTING THE RESULTS OF A REVIEW

When a CSR is engaged in the review process, a written report of its deliberations is prepared by the CSR secretary, approved by a majority of its members and submitted to the IAB chair within a month of the review. The report is to consist of a narrative critique of the laboratory leader and of the research program. Any recommendations about resources should be as explicit as possible, with a clear indication of which resources (budget, space, staff) should remain the same, be increased, or be decreased. A CSR recommendation regarding laboratory leadership also should be provided. The CSR recommendations should be discussed and integrated by the IAB into its reflections and opinions, generated using the same criteria, during their annual meetings. The discussions should be documented in the minutes. The end result is to provide a formal IAB report to the MCB Director and with a clear list of final recommendations.

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A reviewed laboratory leader will receive this consolidated evaluation and will be given an opportunity to provide any comments to the MCB Director and IAB chair.

7. FOLLOW UP

The MCB Director forwards the consolidated formal IAB review to the JU Rector, with comments and a narrative explaining any resulting undertaken or planned actions. After discussion with the appropriate JU authorities, the MCB Director will respond to any IAB recommendations, indicating areas of agreement and disagreement with reference to any comments made by the reviewed laboratory leader. The MCB Director will announce any resultant actions and any final decision regarding the laboratory under review to all members of the MCB without delay.

8. INFORMATION TO BE PREPARED BY A LABORATORY LEADER FOR REVIEW

1. The names of the leader and laboratory, a listing of all personnel including their positions and dates of appointment.
2. The dates covered by the review.
3. A summary of work done, up to 10 pages with abstract up to 1 page (Times N. R. 12, 1+1/2 interline).
4. A current CV of the laboratory leader.
5. The laboratory leader's bibliography and a consolidated laboratory bibliography.
6. Copies or links to all manuscripts or publications relative to the period under review (for the first review at 3 years to be accompanied by up to 5 previous important papers).
7. A vision for the future that is based on current research aims and overall accomplishments since the previous review, with a discussion of future research plans and an assessment of their potential significance or impact on research development or the acquisition of new knowledge in general (up to 2 pages).
8. Operating budget with all sources of funds detailed.
9. Current space usage, with expected future requirements.
10. Details of any collaborative research, other agreements and external contracts both within JU and outside.
11. A copy of previous consolidated final IAB reviews, if applicable (to be provided by the MCB administration).
12. Other matters considered of significance by the laboratory leader or reviewers.

9. A CSR REPORT FORM FILLED OUT BY ITS SECRETARY

1. The names of the leader and laboratory, with the dates covered by the review.
2. A CSR report based on "Criteria for review of research" (section 5).
3. Recommendations regarding performance of the laboratory leader's tenure track.
4. Other comments.

* based on the rules of IAB functioning at the International Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology in Warsaw