

Research Advisory Board Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The Research Advisory Board makes decisions within the remit outlined in this document. Its purpose is to advise the Board of Trustees of Sight Research UK (SRUK) on research funding matters and to ensure that the information used by the Board of Trustees in any funding decision taken is based on the best available expertise and an independent, fair, and unbiased approach.
- 1.2 The Research Advisory Board reports to the SRUK Board of Trustees (via its Chair) but is independent of it. No serving Trustee of SRUK may be elected to the Research Advisory Board as a voting member, but the members of the SRUK Research Subcommittee are allowed to attend meetings ex officio.

2. Membership

Chair	A capable committee lead with expertise in clinical research, basic science research, or translational research in ophthalmology.	Term of office - 3 years (with the possibility of extension for a further 3-year term). The Chair may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least one year has passed since his or her retirement. The Chair of the Research Advisory Board is appointed by the SRUK Board of Trustees. When the incumbent Chair's term is due to expire, their successor should be identified and should serve for at least
-------	---	--

		twelve months on the Research Advisory Board as Chair elect.
Other members	A minimum of 8 individuals sought nationally and internationally and comprising a mixture of clinical and basic scientists, translational researchers, clinicians, and industry experts.	Term of office – 3 years (with the possibility of re-election for a further 3-year term). Research Advisory Board members may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least one year has passed since his or her retirement. Research Advisory Board members are appointed by the SRUK Research Subcommittee, in consultation with the Chair of the Research Advisory Board. Members will be invited for re-election for a second 3-year term so long as contribution/attendance has fallen within accepted parameters set out in this document.
Vice-Chair	To be appointed from amongst the Research Advisory Board members.	Term of office – 3 years (with the possibility of extension for a further 3-year term). The Vice-Chair may not be appointed for a third consecutive term unless an interval of at least one year has passed since his or her retirement.

		The Vice-Chair of the Research Advisory Board is appointed by the SRUK Research Subcommittee, in consultation with the Chair of the Research Advisory Board. The Vice-Chair serves for the duration of their membership of the Research Advisory Board.
Co-opted members (with voting rights)	Additional external members may be co-opted for specific items or meetings to ensure that the Research Advisory Board has expertise pertinent to all applications under its remit and to ensure that meetings are quorate.	
Ex officio (without voting rights or standing for quorum)	SRUK Chief Executive, SRUK Research Subcommittee members	
In attendance:	SRUK Grants Team representative Attendance by other non-members (e.g., observers) shall be at the discretion of the Chair of the Research Advisory Board.	

3. Confidentiality

- 3.1 Details of research applications and related correspondence, Research Advisory Board meeting papers, and the identity of external referees are strictly confidential and must be kept secure and not disseminated to, or discussed with, anyone outside the review process.
- 3.2 The comments of committee members and external referees will be treated in confidence by charity staff.
- 3.3 The identities of external peer reviewers will be treated in confidence by charity staff, and not disclosed to applicants or Research Advisory Board members.
- 3.4 Charity staff will not disclose details of applicants or their applications to those outside the review process.
- 3.5 When we inform applicants of the outcome of their applications, we provide anonymous versions of referees' comments, and will summarise the conclusion reached by the Research Advisory Board. Information that might identify the comments of individual Research Advisory Board members or referees is redacted.
- 3.6 It is our policy to let external referees know the outcome of applications they have reviewed after we have communicated decisions to the applicants. Referees agree to treat all details of applications and their outcomes as confidential.

4. [Quorum](#)

- 4.1. A meeting is quorate when at least six members are available to discuss and review each research application. This number includes the Chair and co-opted members but excludes ex-officio members and those in attendance. Therefore, for the avoidance of doubt, no research application may be reviewed, recommended for funding, or dismissed by fewer than six members. In these circumstances the meeting will have to be reconvened to ensure that all research applications receive a fair review.

5. [Attendance and Conflicts of Interest](#)

- 5.1. All members of the Research Advisory Board shall sign the Conflicts of Interest Declaration annually throughout their term and disclose any and all connections and associations with relevant research and academic institutions prior to being appointed as a member. Throughout their term, members shall update the SRUK Grants Team in a timely manner of any change to such connections and associations during the year.

- 5.2. All members of the Research Advisory Board are expected to declare any additional (or potential) conflicts of interest relevant to items on the Research Advisory Board's agenda.
- 5.3. Any voting member with conflicted interests will be excluded from all communications and discussions relating to said conflicted applicant or application. They will need to absent themselves for the part of the meeting during which deliberations are made concerning that member's own application, or an application from an institution with which that member is associated either directly or indirectly and any minutes of this meeting would need to be redacted accordingly for that member. Where the Chair is conflicted, the Vice-Chair will lead deliberations of that application, and if the Chair is an applicant on any application in that round, they will need to absent themselves from the whole meeting. If both the Chair and the Vice-Chair are conflicted, the SRUK Research Subcommittee will appoint another member of the Research Advisory Board to lead deliberations for that meeting.
- 5.4 A conflicted voting member will recuse themselves from discussion of and voting on a conflicted application:
 - If the voting member works or has worked at the same institution as the applicant or co-applicant in the last year they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
 - If the voting member has collaborated/published with the principal applicant and/or co-applicant(s) in the last 3 years they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
 - If the voting member is an applicant on that application they cannot be involved in review of that application (but can still review other applications).
 - If the RAB Chair is an applicant in that grant round (they must be excluded from the whole review process that year and Vice-Chair take over).
- 5.5 Where there is any uncertainty related to a potential conflict of interest, the Chair (or Vice-Chair should the Chair be conflicted) will decide on the course of action to be taken, which will be minuted.
- 5.6 RAB members, including the Chair and Vice- Chair, on joining the Research Advisory Board, commit to attending 1 meeting per year. In the event that a member is unable to attend, they will be invited to submit comments to the RAB Chair.
- 5.7 At the end of their 3-year term, members may be eligible for re-election. Members will be invited for re-election should they have met the following contribution parameters:

- The member has attended all 3 meetings during their first term
- One meeting may have been missed but written comments/contribution must have been submitted in their absence.

5.8 Re-election of Members will be conducted by the Chair and Vice-Chair of RAB. The member in question will be asked to complete a re-election form which will be submitted to the Chair and Vice-Chair for consideration.

5.9 Should the RAB Chair or Vice-Chair be invited for re-election, the decision would sit with the Research Subcommittee.

6. Meetings

6.1. The Research Advisory Board shall usually meet once a year.

6.2. The Research Advisory Board shall be administered by the SRUK Grants Team in collaboration with the SRUK Chief Executive and on the advice of the SRUK Research Subcommittee.

6.3. Once approved by the Chair, minutes of each meeting shall be kept and circulated to all members and to the SRUK Board of Trustees. The minutes will be appropriately redacted in relation to conflicts of interest.

7. Decision making

7.1. Funding decisions are the ultimate responsibility of the SRUK Board of Trustees which acts considering the recommendations of the Research Advisory Board.

7.2 Each application is discussed by the Research Advisory Board at its annual meeting, is individually scored by each member, and the aggregated scoring is considered by the Research Advisory Board as a whole. This final deliberation agrees the order in which the applications will be recommended to the SRUK Board of Trustees which will decide which applications will be awarded a grant. It is expected that all Research Advisory Board decisions are reached by consensus, with the Chair having authority to resolve conflicting opinions to reach a decision.

7.3. SRUK does not usually approve requests for costed extensions to or additional funding for an existing grant. In the exceptional circumstances that this may be required, the SRUK

Grants Team will consult with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Research Advisory Board to assess the validity of the request before submitting it to the SRUK Board of Trustees.

- 7.4 No-cost extensions to existing grants are administered by the SRUK Grants Team in consultation with the SRUK Chief Executive. Any exceptionally delayed projects will be considered in consultation with the SRUK Research Subcommittee.

8. Authority

- 8.1. The Research Advisory Board is authorised by the SRUK Board of Trustees to undertake any activity within its Terms of Reference but budgetary decisions rest with the SRUK Board of Trustees.

9. Lines of Reporting

- 9.1. The Research Advisory Board reports its deliberations to the SRUK Board of Trustees via the Chair who attends the Trustees' annual meeting at which grant making decisions are made.
- 9.2. The Research Advisory Board shall bring to the SRUK Board of Trustees, normally via the Chair, specific attention to any significant matters under consideration by the Research Advisory Board and any urgent/critical matters that may affect the operation and/or reputation of SRUK.

10. Responsibilities

- 10.1. Within the overall strategy of SRUK, the Research Advisory Board is responsible for all recommendations to the SRUK Board of Trustees relating to Translational Award applications for funding.
- 10.2. The Research Advisory Board shall:
- a. Assess and recommend applications for funding.
 - b. Assess and review Milestone Progress Reports and continuation of funding for awards.

- c. Via the Chair, make recommendations to the SRUK Grants Team and the SRUK Research Subcommittee regarding changes to overall grant making policy, or the processes and procedures used to assess applications for funding.
- d. Delegate the responsibility for implementing any decisions made by the Research Advisory Board to the SRUK Board of Trustees.

11. The SRUK Board of Trustees retained responsibilities

11.1. The Board of Trustees shall retain responsibility for:

- a. Setting the charity's overall strategy in relation to research funding.
- b. Setting the charity's overall research funding budget.