

## **MRCPS – University section : Statement of funding principles**

Updated 19 November 2020

### **Status**

1. This statement of funding principles was prepared by the Trustee on 19 November 2020 after obtaining the advice of the scheme actuary, Sue Vivian. It has been prepared in accordance with section 223 of the Pensions Act 2004 and associated regulations.

### **The statutory funding objective**

2. This statement sets out the Trustee's policy for securing that the statutory funding objective is met. The statutory funding objective is defined in section 222 of the Pensions Act 2004. Every scheme must have sufficient and appropriate assets to cover its technical provisions.

### **Funding objectives in addition to the statutory funding objective**

3. An alternative funding objective has been set for the Section. Under this objective the Trustee will, as far as possible, seek to maintain sufficient assets in the scheme to avoid section 75 debts arising in the future. Whilst the sponsor recognises it is not able to pay contributions at a level which would support an investment strategy to minimise the risk of such debts ever occurring the Trustee has set an objective to support the aim. Under the alternative objective liabilities will be assessed on a buy-out basis) and compared to existing assets before any consideration is given to offsetting future accrual costs in light of any surplus of assets against Technical Provisions.

### **The technical provisions**

4. The actuarial method to be used in the calculation of the technical provisions is the Projected Unit Method. The same method has also been used to calculate the Standard Contribution Rate (SCR) payable in respect of members' accruing benefits.
5. Full details of the assumptions used to calculate the technical provisions and the SCR are shown in the Annexes attached. The employer<sup>1</sup> was consulted on these assumptions and has agreed to their adoption. The assumptions, when considered as a whole, have been set to be prudent.

### **Policy on discretionary increases and funding strategy**

6. The Trustee has no powers to award discretionary benefits, except by the approval of the employer. No allowance for discretionary increases is included in the calculation of the technical provisions.

### **Employer Covenant**

7. It is a requirement of the legislation and of the guidance issued by the Pensions Regulator that the Trustee should take into account the strength of the employers' covenant when determining appropriate financing for the scheme. The Trustee is satisfied that collectively the employers have a strong covenant, with a very low

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<sup>1</sup> Under the terms by which other employers participate in the Scheme, UKRI (the Principal Employer) is empowered to act on behalf of all participating employers in all regards under Part 3 of the Pensions Act 2004.

probability that the employers would be unable or unwilling to pay reasonable contributions.

**Period within which and manner in which a failure to meet the statutory funding objective is to be rectified**

8. The Trustee and the employers have agreed that any funding shortfalls identified at an actuarial valuation should be eliminated as quickly as the employers can reasonably afford by the payment of additional contributions, which would normally be expressed as a percentage of total Salary. In determining the actual recovery period for any particular recovery plan, the Trustee's principles are to take into account the following factors:

the size of the funding shortfall;  
the business plans of the employers;  
the Trustee's assessment of the financial covenant of the employers; and  
any contingent security offered by the employers.

**Arrangements by a person other than an employer or a scheme member to contribute to the scheme**

9. There are no arrangements for a person other than the employers or members to contribute to the scheme.

**Policy on reduction of cash equivalent transfer values (CETVs)**

10. The Trustee will ask the actuary to advise them at each valuation of the extent to which the assets are sufficient to provide CETVs for all non-pensioners without adversely affecting the security of the benefits of other members and beneficiaries.
11. The Trustee is aware that, if coverage were to be less than 100%, they could reduce CETVs as permitted under legislation, after obtaining actuarial advice as to the appropriate extent. However, as the scheme is fully funded on the CETV basis, there is no policy on the reduction of CETVs currently in place.

**Payments to employers**

12. The Trust Deed of the scheme does not contain any provision for the payment of surplus monies to an employer, except on the winding up of the scheme.

**Frequency of valuations and circumstances for extra valuations**

13. The Section's last actuarial valuation under Part 3 (Scheme Funding) of the Pensions Act 2004 was carried out as at the effective date of 31 December 2016. Valuations will in normal circumstances be carried out every three years. An actuarial report on developments affecting the Section's funding level will be obtained as at each intermediate anniversary of that date.
14. The Trustee may call for a full actuarial valuation instead of an interim actuarial report when, after considering the actuary's advice, they are of the opinion that events have made it unsafe to continue to rely on the results of the previous valuation as the basis for future contributions. The consent of the employer would be sought if an accelerated valuation was being proposed.

MRC Pension Scheme - University section – Statement of Funding Principles: 19 November 2020

**This statement has been agreed by the principal employer:**

Signed on behalf of UKRI to signify agreement

*Hugh Dunlop*

Signature:

Name: Hugh Dunlop

Position: Chief Operating and Finance Officer

Date: 16 December 2020

**This statement was agreed by the Trustee at their meeting on 19 November 2020:**

Signed on behalf of the Trustee of the MRC Pension Scheme:

Signature:

*J. D. Preston*

Name:

J. D. PRESTON

Position:

DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR

Date:

16 December 2020.

Signature:

*James Clerk*

Name:

James Clerk

Position:

Corporate Secretary, MRC Pension Trust Ltd

Date:

16 December 2020

## Annex A to the Statement of Funding Principles for the MRCPS: University section

### Financial assumptions for determining the technical provisions

#### Discount rate (or, equivalently, the expected return on the assets)

1. The discount rate for the SFO is set equal to the CPI assumption. The rate is intended to represent a prudent measure of the return expected from the assets held now and in the future. The rate has been derived from the expected rates of return on the assets currently held by the scheme. The weightings applied to each of the different asset classes are as shown in Table 1 and are consistent with the benchmark allocation of assets held by the scheme as at 31 December 2019. The margins for prudence used to determine the initial discount rate are the same as those adopted for the 2016 valuation, with a deduction of 0.5% applied to growth assets and 0.1% to bonds

Table 1	Benchmark allocation 31 December 2019
<b>Growth assets</b>	
• Equities	20%
<b>Bonds</b>	80%
<b>Total</b>	100%

2. The discount rate under the AFO has been set by reference to gilt yields. The discount rate is intended to reflect insurers annuity pricing. The nominal discount rate is based on gilt yields less 0.25% for non-pensioners and plus 0.25% for pensioners.

#### Price inflation

3. The assumption for CPI inflation has been taken as the Bank of England long term inflation expectation, 2% per annum. For the 2016 valuation the CPI assumption was derived from the published Bank of England implied future RPI inflation figure. An alternative approach has been adopted for the current valuation since government are consulting on abolishing the RPI measure.

#### Pension increases

4. Increases to pensions in payment in the Scheme (except for some increases to Guaranteed Minimum Pension benefits) are in line with those announced by Government under the Pensions Increase Acts, and currently based on the Consumer Prices Index (CPI). As set out above the assumption for CPI has been taken as the Bank of England long term inflation expectation, 2% per annum.

#### Pay increases

5. The benefits accruing during service are linked to increases in members' pay, and it is therefore necessary to consider what increases in future pay levels might reasonably be anticipated. Salary inflation has been assumed to be 1.5% pa in excess of consumer price inflation i.e. 3.5% pa. This assumption is for general pay inflation only and is exclusive of any allowance for promotional increases.
6. For the purposes of determining the cost of future accrual the allowance for future pay increases has been set similarly as for the SFO but with allowance for a maximum period of 5 years' pay growth. This is consistent with the approach taken for pay growth in the 2016 valuation.

7. In addition to general increases in pay, the scheme experience indicates some increase in pay levels by age and/seniority. Accordingly, age-related salary scales, illustrated in Table 2, have also been incorporated into members' projected salaries. These scales are the same as adopted for the 2016 valuation.

**Table 2: Promotional salary scale in year after age stated**

Age	Male members	Female members
20	100	100
25	128	136
30	157	169
35	185	198
40	207	221
45	228	244
50	247	258
55	263	267

**Summary of financial assumptions for the actuarial valuation as at 31 December 2019**

8. A summary of the financial assumptions for the actuarial valuation of the MRC section of the MRCPS as at 31 December 2019 is given in Table 3 below. The corresponding assumptions made for the previous valuation at 31 December 2016 are also shown for comparison.

**Table 3: University section - summary of financial assumptions**

Main financial assumptions	31 December 2019		31 December 2016	
	%pa		%pa	
	SFO	AFO	SFO	AFO
Discount rate	2.0%	Gilt yield curve + 0.25% for pensioners; - 0.25% for non-pensioners	2.6%	1.9%
Earnings increases (long-term)	3.5% + promotional scale		4.1% + promotional scale	
CPI (pension increases)	2.0%		2.6%	
Discount rate net earnings increase	-1.5%	n/a	-1.5%	-3.1%
Discount rate net pension increases	0.0%	See comment below <sup>1</sup>	0.0%	-1.1%

<sup>1</sup> For future accrual cost only 5 years' of pay growth is allowed

