

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN NUCLEAR SCIENCEGOVERNING BOARDN.I.R.N.S. Financial Agreements with Universities

by A. W. Merrison and T. G. Pickavance

1. The arrangements for meeting the cost of university experiments in Institute Laboratories were made in 1958 and 1959 (see paper NI/58/22) and Minute 5 of the Board meeting on 16th January, 1959). The Institute pay most of these expenses, except academic salaries, under agreements between the Director of the Institute Laboratory and the university concerned. Agreements in the same form are made to cover the cost of extra-mural research carried out at a university on behalf of the Institute. Until recently only the Rutherford Laboratory was involved, but similar agreements are now being made by the Director of the Daresbury Laboratory. Furthermore, in some cases the work is not related solely to one of the two Laboratories.
2. The scale of these payments is also increasing rapidly as the following figures indicate:-

Period ending	31.3.60	5,900	(from the published accounts)
Year "	31.3.61	39,500	" " " "
" "	31.3.62	54,800	" " " "
" "	31.3.63	107,700	" " " "
" "	31.3.64	132,000	(subject to audit)
" "	31.3.65	250,000	(forecast)
" "	31.3.66	414,000	(from draft Estimates)
3. Because of the increasing importance and complexity of the support to universities given under these agreements, we propose that the arrangements for making them should now be reviewed and we have been giving a good deal of thought to the recommendations which we might make to the Board.
4. In a letter to the Chairman, a copy of which is appended, Professor Cassels has now independently made the suggestion that the Institute should review their methods of making financial grants to universities, and it will be seen that he makes specific proposals.
5. We think that this matter is a most important one, which should be very thoroughly considered. At this stage we would prefer to seek the Board's general guidance, particularly on two of the main proposals made in Professor Cassels' letter:-
 - (a) That the Institute's financial support to universities should be recommended by an advisory panel, in a fashion somewhat similar to that adopted by the D.S.I.R.
 - (b) That the U.G.C. should be asked to take over, at the end of the quinquennium, recognisable programmes of work that have become established.

6. We would like to be allowed to consider the problem further, in the light of the Board's general guidance, before making recommendations about the division of the Institute's budget and about the exact nature of the proposed panel, and its relationship to the other Institute Committees.

COPY

From the Lyon Jones Professor of Physics,
The Chadwick Laboratory,
The University of Liverpool,
LIVERPOOL, 3.

31 July, 1964.

The Rt. Hon. Lord Bridges, GCB, GCVO, FRS.,
Goodmans Furze,
Headley,
Epsom.

Dear Bridges,

I am writing to suggest that the Board of NIRNS might take a new look at its methods of making financial grants to universities.

As you know, the present procedure is for the Director of either Laboratory to authorise grants for work that seems well calculated to advance the programme of his own Laboratory. This procedure has served us well in the early build-up days, but it seems to me that it has some defects that are becoming apparent, now that really large scale support is under way. On this point I see, from the papers for a recent Rutherford Laboratory Visiting Committee, that a total expenditure of £606,857 has been authorised in universities so far.

The first defect I would like to mention is that the grants are considered in a context that is too narrow, and too little related to a sustained and integrated programme. An obvious example concerns bubble chamber work, where NIRNS has become responsible for building two large chambers and for running three. At the same time a situation has grown up in which the related data handling facilities at universities have been allowed to get into a very poor state, a problem that is only now beginning to receive proper attention and financial priority. The whole bubble chamber programme has obviously been unbalanced, and I think our procedure rather than any individual person is to blame.

A second defect I would like to mention is that there is, so far as I know, no procedure for consolidating NIRNS grants into U.G.C. funds at the end of quinquennia. I need not tell you how valuable this administrative process has been in the past, when it has applied to Research Council expenditure in universities. Without it a professor has no chance of building up a university Departmental grant which meets at least part of his needs and which he can use according to his own personal judgement. Without this invaluable 'background funding' the administrative load of grant-seeking rapidly becomes unbearable.

My suggestion is that the Board might organise its budget under three headings rather than two, a 'Grants to Universities' item being added to those relating to the two Laboratories. The U.G.C. would be asked at the end of quinquennia to take over recognisable programmes of work that have become established. The grants could be recommended by an advisory panel, in a fashion somewhat similar to that adopted by D.S.I.R. The panel would be aware of its resources for some way ahead, and would be charged to produce a properly balanced programme. Of course the two Directors would have to be brought into the decisions, as now, to ensure that the programmes are properly related to the resources of the Laboratories.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) J. M. Cassels