

Minutes from NCMBM Board Meeting

Time: Thursday 23rd April 2026, 10.15 – 13.00

Place: Room Kilo, Forskningsparken

Board Secretary: Hanna Ekeli, Medical Faculty Director

Executive officer: Elizabeth Smethurst

	Present	Apologies
Professor Jan Bjålie , Faculty of Medicine, Chair	X	
Professor Øystein Prytz , Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	X	
Professor Janne E. Reseland , Faculty of Dentistry	X	
Professor Melinka Butenko , Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences	X	
Professor Philippe Collas , Faculty of Medicine	X	
Dr Lars Eikvar , South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority (HSØ)	X	
Dr Plamena Markova , EMBL	X	
Professor Janna Saarela , Director, NCMBM	X	
Hanna Ekeli , Faculty Director, Faculty of Medicine	X	
In attendance:		
Anthony Mathelier , Associate Director, NCMBM	X	
Ingrid Kjelsvik , Head of Office, NCMBM	X	
NCMBM Trainee Committee (for Case 12– 26D)	X	

Agenda: (O = information item, D = discussion item B = decision item)

Declaration of conflict of interest No conflicts were declared.	
Case 11 – 26D	Recruitment of new NCMBM Group Leader and next steps The Director provided an update on the recruitment process for the two Group Leader positions approved by the Board at its previous meeting. It was noted that three candidates had declined offers to join the Centre due to competing offers from other organisations, reflecting the highly competitive international environment for recruiting early-career group leaders. One remaining candidate had not responded by the stated deadline, and the Centre therefore anticipated that the current recruitment round would not result in appointments. The Board discussed potential adjustments to the recruitment process in preparation for reopening the call. Several members emphasised that the quality and number of applicants demonstrated that the call text and scientific framing had been successful. The challenge was considered to lie primarily in securing the most competitive candidates in an increasingly competitive international market, rather than in attracting applications. Discussion focused on whether modifications to the recruitment strategy could improve outcomes. Suggestions included inviting a larger number of candidates to interview, maintaining a broader reserve pool of shortlisted candidates throughout the process, and introducing an initial online pre-screening stage before formal interviews. It

was also noted that candidates based in the United States appeared less likely to relocate to Europe despite strong interest in the positions, reflecting wider recruitment trends observed at comparable international institutions.

The Board also discussed whether the recruitment should continue as a single advertisement covering two positions, or whether the positions should instead be separated into distinct calls. Members noted that clearer differentiation between the positions could simplify both evaluation and ranking processes. Following discussion, the Board agreed that the recruitment should proceed through one advertisement covering two clearly defined positions, with applicants required to indicate which position they were applying for.

Several members emphasised the importance of maintaining a coherent scientific profile and centre identity within the recruitment process. It was noted that newly recruited Group Leaders should align with the Centre's scientific environment and existing research strengths in order to ensure strong integration, collaboration, and long-term success. At the same time, members highlighted the importance of ensuring continued alignment with the university faculties and hospital environment, as well as remaining within the revised mandate of the Centre.

The Board considered whether the scientific focus areas and wording of the call should be revisited. While some members questioned whether changes to the call text could generate a different applicant pool given the recent advertisement, others noted the Board's responsibility to review the scope and framing of the positions. There was broad agreement that any revisions should avoid delaying the recruitment timeline unnecessarily.

The proposed recruitment timeline was reviewed, including Board input on the draft call text in May 2026, final approval of the revised call text at the June 2026 Board meeting, advertisement of the positions from July to September 2026, interviews in November 2026, and Board ratification of recruitment decisions in December 2026. The Board agreed that comments and proposed revisions to the draft call text should be provided within the following month to allow preparation of a revised version for approval at the June meeting.

Decision:

The Board approved the Centre's request to reopen recruitment for two Group Leader positions following the EMBL recruitment model previously approved by the Board. The Board agreed to review and provide input on the draft call text ahead of final approval at the June 2026 Board meeting.

Case 12– 26D

Presentation from the NCMBM Trainee Committee, Ladislav Hovan

The Board welcomed representatives of the NCMBM Trainee Committee to present the Committee's activities. Ladislav Hovan delivered the presentation on behalf of the Committee, together with Committee representatives Cantin Ortiz and Damla Övek Baydar.

The presentation provided an overview of the Committee's aims and mission, membership structure, and recent activities and initiatives. The Committee outlined its role in supporting the trainee community at the Centre through both academic and social activities designed to strengthen collaboration, networking, and community-building across research groups. Planned future initiatives and events were also presented.

During the discussion, the Board asked about opportunities to engage with trainees and early-career researchers beyond the Centre. The Committee explained that some activities were intentionally internal in focus in order to strengthen the NCMBM trainee community and connections between groups, while broader events could be advertised and organised in collaboration with external groups and institutions where appropriate.

The Board noted that similar trainee and postdoctoral initiatives exist at other institutions, including at IMB, and encouraged the Committee to establish contact with comparable organisations such as POSTforsk to explore opportunities for networking and collaboration.

Decision:

The Board thanked the Trainee Committee for their presentation.

Action:

NCMBM will reach out to relevant Board members to get contact details of relevant, similar groups or initiatives within their areas.

Case 13 - 26B

Approval of the minutes from the last meeting

The minutes from the meeting 25th February 2026 were available for review. No amendments were requested.

Decision:

The Board approves the minutes.

Case 14 – 26O

Updates on actions from previous meeting

1. Senior presence at NCMBM:

The Director informed the Board that all academics approached as part of the agreed initiative to strengthen senior scientific presence at the Centre had accepted the invitation to participate. The Centre is currently identifying a suitable date for the first meeting, and the invited participants have also been invited to attend the Centre retreat in June. The Board noted the positive progress of the initiative.

2. The Aquatic Comparative Medicine Facility at NCMBM

The Director updated the Board on discussions regarding the financial model for the Aquatic Comparative Medicine Facility (AKM), including a separate meeting held with Øystein Prytz.

It was noted that the principal challenge remains the financial sustainability of the facility, particularly the rental costs associated with the space. The Board discussed the current size and capacity of the facility relative to projected usage levels. Concerns were raised that the planned footprint and number of tanks appeared significantly larger than current user demand would justify.

The Director explained that the planning of the facility had largely taken place prior to the Centre's involvement, and that the current design had also absorbed capacity originally intended for a proposed rodent facility that was not realised. It was further noted that, although the number of tanks contributed to operating costs, rental expenses represented the most significant financial challenge. Given that the facility has now been constructed, substantial modifications would require considerable additional work and investment.

The Board discussed possible approaches to improving sustainability, including potential engagement with industry and broader national collaboration. However, it was noted that other Norwegian institutions already possess fish facility capacity and often prioritise maintaining facilities locally.

The Board agreed that the Centre should work with the Faculty of Medicine to prepare a formal letter to the University Director outlining the current situation and challenges associated with the facility.

3. Update on the SAB Review of the research of the groups of XXXX and XXXX.

The Director informed the Board that the review process was progressing as planned. Reviewers had now been contacted, and four reviewers had been secured for each Group Leader review.

4. Update on the NCMBM SAB visit 2026.

The Director informed the Board that Ewan Birney will join the Scientific Advisory Board. The dates for the 2026 SAB visit have now been confirmed for 16th – 17th November 2026. The Board discussed the possibility of reviewing the proposed SAB agenda at a future Board meeting.

Decision:

The Board noted the update.

Case 15 – 260

NCMBM financial report, 2025

The Director and the Head of Office presented an overview of the Centre's financial status and management assessment for 2025.

The Board was informed that 2025 represented the final year of funding from the Research Council of Norway (NFR) grant. While the closure of this funding had resulted in several accounting entries that appeared unusual compared to previous years, it was noted that these developments were expected and remained in line with the Centre's financial planning. Additional income lines in the accounts were also linked to the closure of a project in collaboration with the Department of Chemistry.

The Board noted that income from results-based funding (RBO) was slightly higher than budgeted, and that the Centre had also secured a somewhat larger number of smaller research awards than in previous years. In addition, the Centre's core facilities had been transferred to a different financial system during the reporting period.

It was further reported that the Centre's underspend had increased and would be carried forward to support research group activities in the coming years. At the same time, several financial uncertainties remain, particularly relating to long-term rental costs, although rental levels for 2026 have now been determined. The Board was informed that start-up packages allocated for new Group Leaders would continue to accumulate until recruitment is completed.

During the discussion, the Board considered whether the size of the Group Leader start-up package could influence recruitment outcomes and whether adjustments or additional incentives should be explored. The Director noted that the recent recruitment challenges should not necessarily be interpreted as reflecting the competitiveness of the package itself.

The Board also received an update on external funding activity. In addition to the Centre's regular grant portfolio, two applications for Centres of Excellence (SFF) funding had been submitted. The Director emphasised the importance of maintaining sufficient critical mass within the Centre in order to sustain external funding activity and competitiveness over time, noting that this would become increasingly challenging if the number of Group Leaders were reduced.

Decision:

The Board noted the update.

Case 16– 26D

MN PhD programme charges

The Director informed the Board that institutes within the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN) have introduced a charge for NCMBM PhD candidates enrolled in MN PhD programmes, as the Centre is considered an external entity in relation to the programme.

The Board discussed the matter in relation to NCMBM's mandate to strengthen collaboration across faculties at the University of Oslo. Members highlighted joint supervision arrangements, shared research projects, and co-affiliated PhD candidates as key mechanisms for strengthening integration across the university environment. Members also noted the importance of ensuring that administrative frameworks support NCMBM's role in fostering cross-faculty collaboration. The Board discussed the potential implications of the policy, including that additional costs and the need to assess arrangements on a case-by-case basis could create uncertainty for researchers planning collaborative projects.

It was noted that implementation of the policy is determined at departmental level within MN, and that departments may consider exemptions where appropriate. The Board acknowledged the importance of continued dialogue with relevant faculties and departments.

Decision:

The Board noted the discussion.

Case 17 – 26O

HSØ research funding eligibility criteria

Lars Eikvar provided the Board with an update on ongoing discussions within Helse Sør-Øst (HSØ) regarding possible revisions to the eligibility criteria for regional research funding schemes.

The Board was informed that the discussions are currently limited to HSØ and are being driven in part by the high volume of applications received. As part of this, caps have been introduced on the number of applications that institutions may submit. It was noted that the cap for Oslo University Hospital (OUS) this year is 306 applications, representing a reduction compared to previous years, while the cap for Ahus is 50 applications.

The Board was further informed that, for certain priority funding areas, a requirement for 50% formal hospital affiliation is being introduced. It was noted that NCMBM has not historically applied within these specific schemes. The eligibility criteria and related policies are expected to be reviewed further in 2027, and additional changes may be introduced at that stage.

The Board discussed the importance of maintaining close dialogue with collaborating hospital clinics in light of the revised application caps and funding framework. NCMBM will follow up with relevant clinical partners regarding the practical implications of the changes.

Decision:

The Board noted the discussion.

Case 18 – 260

NCMBM in the Life Science Building

The Director provided the Board with an update on preparations for NCMBM's relocation to the Life Science Building, scheduled for mid-2026.

The Board discussed practical issues identified during visits to the building, including several adjustments required to ensure that spaces are fully functional for research activities. It was noted that some issues require immediate attention, while others are more general building-wide matters. The Board emphasised that costs associated with correcting design solutions that are not fit for purpose should not fall on individual centres or research groups. Members also noted the importance of reporting issues within the building's warranty period to ensure that they can be addressed appropriately.

The Board was informed that the Centre is also developing a code of conduct to support shared working practices within the new environment. Input has been gathered through a survey conducted across the Centre, and the resulting guidelines are intended to support collaboration and expectations for both office spaces and shared laboratory facilities.

The Director further noted that feedback from visits to the building had generally been positive. In addition, the Board discussed the value of building-wide induction and networking activities within the Life Science Building environment. A proposal was highlighted for regular welcome sessions, tours, or introductory seminars aimed at supporting interaction and collaboration across the different research environments housed within the building.

Decision:

The Board noted the update.

Case 19 – 260

Any other business

The next NCMBM Board will be 18th June 2026.

Sincerely,

Jan Bjålie
 Chair NCMBM Board

Janna Saarela
 NCMBM Director