

Board, Centre for Molecular Medicine Norway (NCMM)

### Minutes from Board Meeting November 2023

Time: Wednesday November 29, 2023 12:00-15:00

Place: NCMM meeting room KILO and on zoom

Executive officers: Ingrid Kjelsvik and Ragni Indahl

	Present	Absent
Professor Jens Petter Berg (UiO/OUS), Chair	X	
Professor Melinka Butenko (UiO), member	X	
Professor Hilde Nilsen (UiO), member	X	
Director Research & Diagnostics Lars Eikvar (HSØ), member	X	
Professor Magne Børset (NTNU), national deputy member		X
Dr. Torunn Berge (HSØ), member	X	
Professor Ola Myklebost (UiB), national member	X	
Senior Adviser Randi Vad (HSØ), deputy member		X
Professor Arnaldo Frigessi (UiO), deputy member		X
Group leader Anthony Mathelier (NCMM), Associate Director	X	
Professor Janna Saarela (NCMM), Director	X	

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

#### Case 39-23B Approval of minutes from last Board meeting

Draft minutes from the Board meeting on 23 October was attached.

**Decision:** The minutes were approved.

#### Case 40-23O NCMM follow up of SAB recommendations

NCMM Associate Director presented what has been implemented to follow up on the recommendations from the SAB. NCMM has (i) worked on a mission and vision document, (ii) implemented an adjunct mentorship program for PhDs, (iii) implemented a wiki (including authorship and contribution policies, and expectations), (iv) set up a NCMM trainee committee, (v) started chalk talk meetings for group leaders, (vi) implemented visits of NCMM Associate Director and Director to the groups, (vii) incorporated group leader presentations to the NCMM seminars. A welcome meeting is planned twice per year, where newcomers will be introduced to NCMMs strategy and mandate, be shown the wiki and meet staff with roles they need to know about (like the HSE-coordinator and the safety deputy). The NCMM trainee committee, represented by Vipin Kumar, postdoctoral fellow in the Mathelier group and Ladislav Hovan, postdoctoral fellow in the Kuijjer group, presented the committee, its mandate and its planned projects. The main aim of the NCMM trainee committee is to serve as an interface between trainees from all research groups and the NCMM leadership and admin. The member representing MN in the NCMM board asked the NCMM trainee committee if they were familiar with the MN faculty's events directed toward trainees. The committee told the board that they had been in contact with NCMM alumni and tried to connect to the community in Forskningsparken. However, the NCMM trainee's connection to the faculties and UiO as a whole is challenging – partly due to

NCMM PhD participating in different PhD-programs. There is a sense of detachment from the rest of UiO, but this committee will address this. They will be oriented on MedDocs, UiODoc and MNs events for early career researchers, while working out how to do good work as a NCMM trainee committee.

Here is link to the wiki (public wiki): [https://wiki.uio.no/med/ncmm/index.php/New\\_at\\_NCMM](https://wiki.uio.no/med/ncmm/index.php/New_at_NCMM)

**Decision:** The Board took note of the briefing.

### **Case 41-23B NCMM budget 2024**

The NCMM 2024 budget has been prepared in accordance with funding agreements with the RCN, UiO and HSØ. CAO Ingrid Kjelsvik presented the budget in the meeting. The long-term budget is already approved, this is the detailed 2024 budget.

Looking forward, the largest financial changes for the Centre is the announced termination in funding from the RCN after 2024, as well as the potential financial consequences of UiOs ongoing restructuring of the Centre.

Due to the temporary hiring freeze of permanent personnel and group leaders on basic funding decided by the faculty, NCMM needed to shift some planned allocations for hiring of new group leaders. Some of this is now set of for the joint postdoctoral program (jfr. case 42-23).

NCMM also asked the board what to do with the budgeted rent refund. The Faculty of Medicine (MED) disagrees that NCMM is entitled to a rent refund based on the argument that it is the faculty, which provides NCMM with necessary areas and space. NCMM claims that this was not the reality when a research group was forced to move out of Forskningsparken. MED had no solution for NCMM to resolve this acute situation. MED was not willing to pay for the highly necessary refurbishment (including removing asbestos) from areas localized at Kristine Bonnevie's house (KBH). NCMM agreed with the faculty director and the dean to pay the refurbishing costs provided a refund of the difference in rental costs between Forskningsparken and KBH. In a similar situation previously, when NCMM needed extra space in 2018, the increase in rental costs were not covered by the MED, but by NCMM. The NCMM Board is critical to MED's handling of rental costs for NCMM, which seems to imply that extra costs are covered by NCMM, whereas savings go the Faculty. The Board requests that the rental refund and principles for rental costs are brought up in the dialog meeting between the NCMM leadership and the faculty. The board wants NCMM to keep the refund of rent in the budget with a footnote explaining the background for the refund claim.

**Decision:** The Board approved of the budget for 2024.

### **Case 42-23B Recruitment of postdoctoral fellows, NCMM joint postdoctoral program**

NCMM opened a call for a joint Postdoctoral Program in Molecular Life Science, aimed at fostering new collaborations between NCMM group leaders (GLs) and partners from the Oslo arena with application deadline on November 12, 2023. The plan is to hire postdocs for 2 years with NCMM providing financial support for the first year, while the partner will support the remaining year. Each NCMM group leader can be awarded a maximum of one postdoctoral fellow. NCMM received 10 applications, which were attached. The applications were evaluated to assess scientific soundness, feasibility, and the establishment of new collaborations.

The chair of the board, and both the director and assistant director, left the meeting, before the board discussion and decision, as they have conflicts of interest in one of these applications each. The board was chaired by Hilde Nilsen in the discussion and decision in this case.

As a comment on the principles for the call, the Board suggest that the strategic role of these positions could have been spelled out more clearly. Now it is an open call, which gives the board few guidelines for sorting the applicants, apart from checking the criteria of being collaboration in the Oslo area and new collaboration, in addition to checking feasibility. There was also some discussion about if the UiO faculties had been approached to make sure that the faculties would and could allocate funding for their part, should some of the UiO faculty staff want to be part of this joint postdoctoral program. Several more at MN would have been interested, but the faculty would not promise funding for the second year.

The Board found that basic criteria was clearly met for 8 of the 10 applications. One application was considered as a continuation and extension of an ongoing project with a new partner and a new work package. The board therefore considered that this project cannot be considered to represent new collaboration. Hence, this project is not recommended for funding. For another application, it was unclear if both applicants are working in the Oslo area, or if one of them is based only abroad. Since one of the criteria is to support collaboration in the Oslo area, it has to be confirmed whether the activities are to be performed in the Oslo area before this particular application is accepted. All other applications were considered scientifically sound, feasible as well as meeting the criteria in the call, and therefore fundable. Three project proposals included collaborations with one NCMM group leader. While all three applications are considered scientifically sound, the board chose to prioritize a project aimed at a cancer type for which more research is needed.

**Decision:** The Board recommended funding seven proposed joint post doc projects

For the selected applications, the partner will be required to provide an official document committing for financing the second year to be provided by the partner, signed by an official Finance Officer by December 15, 2023<sup>i</sup>. Pending this confirmation, the board supports hiring of seven postdoctoral fellows at NCMM.

### Case 43-230 Strategy discussion on continuation of NCMM beyond 2024 - update

UiO has appointed a working group with the task to provide a proposal for structure and scientific profile of NCMM beyond 2024 when, the funding from The Research Council of Norway (RCN) ends. The mandate for the work group was attached. The working group was asked to deliver their proposal so that UiO will be able to decide on the future of the centre in spring 2024.

Articles in *Uniforum* and *Dagens Medisin* 24.10.23 claimed that two of the three NCMM consortium partners; The Research Council of Norway (RCN) and South-Eastern Norway Regional Health Authority (HSØ), had suddenly decided to pull out and stop funding NCMM. It has been known since 2018 that funding from RCN would stop at the end of 2024. HSØ has not yet decided on continuing NCMM funding and the consortium. Head of the Board and members from HSØ in the NCMM Board, contacted *Dagens medisin* immediately to correct information about NCMM. Head of the NCMM Board informed UiO's rector 24.10.23 about the articles and that the Board, formally representing the NCMM consortium, has not received information about HSØ withdrawal. Rector will contact HSØ CEO about continued NCMM collaboration.

**Decision:** The Board took note of the briefing.

#### **Case 44-230 NCMM move to the Life Science Building (LSB) and instrumentation**

NCMM will be one of the UiO units to move to the LSB. NCMM has had an active role in planning both the laboratories for the “general life science” (RG22) and NCMM dedicated areas (RG21) of the building and is participating in the committees planning the research infrastructure. Due to the recent plans by UiO to increase the number of units moving to the building, the previously made plans will need to be revisited. The NCMM Director gave an update in the meeting. NCMM welcomes the new units planned in the building as there will be more synergies and opportunities for collaboration, but needs to prepare for some changes to the space allocated for NCMM and update the instrumentation plans accordingly; some instruments that are critical for NCMM research will be moved to the NCMM area in the Eastern tower. There is no information yet, about office space allocated.

**Decision:** The Board took note of the briefing.

#### **Case 45-230 News updates**

- Funding from the Norwegian Cancer Society (NCS). All NCMM group leaders who applied for funding from NCS, got funded: \*\*\*\*\*, \*\*\*\*\* and \*\*\*\*\*. The Board congratulated NCMM with this good result.
- NCMM will host the next Nordic EMBL partnership meeting: Monday 16 – Thursday 19 September 2024. This year also the EMBL partnership node for marine life sciences in University of Bergen, the Michael Sars Centre, have been invited to participate in the meeting.
- Several of NCMM PhDs are part of arranging this year’s Oslo Bioinformatics Workshop <https://www.mn.uio.no/sbi/english/events/oslo-bioinformatics-workshop-week-2023/index.html>, which will take place on December 11-15.

#### **Case 46-230 Miscellaneous**

No cases for miscellaneous.

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<sup>i</sup> Due to illness in the NCMM admin staff, the follow up on the Board meeting decisions has been delayed. This deadline must therefore be extended. New deadline is January 10, 2024.