We are pleased to announce that MRC management side and MRC National Trade Unions Side have come to an agreement on the onward running of the Special Award Scheme (SAS). Whilst the principles of SAS remain the same as the previous exercise run earlier this year, there are key changes to the practical running of the scheme. It is advisable for all employees to read the information below, including the FAQ. The key points:

- SAS awards are non-consolidated, non-pensionable, taxable, lump sum payments;
- There are two types of SAS: End of Year Awards and In Year Awards.

- In Year SAS:
  - can take place at any time of year;
  - will normally fall within the range of £200 - £500, and should not exceed a maximum of £1,000;
  - will be signed off by the local Director and HR Lead.

- End of Year SAS:
  - will take place only at the end of the appraisal year;
  - for this round, End of Year SAS relate to the period 1st January to 31st December 2012;
  - have set amounts depending on contribution and band (not a % of individual salary);
  - will be reviewed on a local and corporate basis before implementation

- We will start implementing the In Year SAS in January 2013 and the End of Year SAS following the forthcoming appraisal process;

- MRC Management side are fully committed to ensuring a spread of SAS across different bands, job functions and equality groups.

Links within the bulletin

1. Special Award Scheme (SAS)
   A. In Year Awards
   B. End of Year Awards

2. Frequently Asked Questions

3. SAS Nomination Form
1. **Special Award Scheme (SAS)**

The aim of the SAS is to reward our staff at all levels for exceptional contribution to the MRC beyond that normally expected. The SAS builds upon the existing Additional Salary Reward (ASR) process and is implemented in line with the requirements of the Civil Service Pay Guidance.

SAS awards take the form of non-consolidated, non-pensionable, taxable, lump sum payments (i.e. your basic pay will not be increased if you get one). They are awarded based on a range of criteria that reflect personal contribution to the MRC (further information below).

The MRC strongly endorses transparency, consistency and fairness in the SAS process and is committed to achieving a spread of SAS that reflects the diverse composition of the MRC.

**End of Year Awards and In Year Awards.**

There are two types of SAS - End of Year Awards and In Year Awards.

It is expected that the majority of SAS awards will be made at the end of the financial year following the PDR process (End of Year SAS), but awards can be made at the point that the achievement is formally recognised at any point during the year (In Year SAS).

You will find further information relating to both In Year and End of SAS further on in this Staff Bulletin.

**Scope**

The SAS applies to all MRC employees in Band 2 to Band 7. SAS also applies to agency workers as covered by the Agency Worker Regulations 2010.

Employees in Band 1 and Senior Contract Pay will be considered by the Remuneration Committee for non-consolidated payments.

**Budgets**

SAS are awarded from funds allocated to Unit budgets. Units are allowed to spend 0.8% of their total paybill from the previous financial year on SAS. This is overall rate that MRC is permitted to spend on SAS by the Government.

**Equalities**

As an equalities-aware organisation, the MRC is committed to achieving equality of treatment for all. Through the SAS scheme the MRC is committed to ensuring awards are spread evenly throughout the different equalities groups and bands. The Head of Reward and Recognition will monitor effectiveness of this throughout the year.

**Overall governance and monitoring**

Unit Directors (in conjunction with their Senior Unit Administrators and HR teams) will be responsible for ensuring the rigour of internal review mechanisms so that the SAS process is fair and consistent.

The scheme will be subject to central monitoring, evaluation and review to ensure that it continues to support business requirements; operates fairly and consistently across the bands and the organisation; and is responsive to employee aspirations and local management needs.
National TU Side will be advised each year of the funds available for the exercise and will also be provided with information relating to the distribution and allocation of both In-Year and End of Year awards at year end.

**Review**

The SAS scheme will be reviewed annually with the National Trade Union Side and any changes will be approved by the MRC Remuneration Committee.

**Complaints with the process**

In the first instance employees should discuss any sources of dissatisfaction with their line manager or HR team with a view to resolving the situation. If informal discussions cannot resolve the issue, then the MRC Grievance Policy and Procedure can be invoked.
A. **In Year SAS**

A1 **Purpose**

The purpose of the In Year SAS is to provide a timely reward to staff to recognise exceptional effort in relation to a particularly demanding piece of work, a key achievement or significant contribution to MRC/Unit objectives at or near the conclusion of the trigger event.

A2 **Criteria**

The contributions that might merit an In Year SAS include (not exhaustive):

- Completing a project or piece of work to exceptionally demanding deadlines;
- Performing a significant additional task outside of normal duties and completing it to a high standard;
- Demonstrating extra commitment above that normally expected which has positive work impacts;
- Innovation that leads to substantial time or cost savings

A3 **Process**

Nominations may be made at any time during the year. Employees can only receive one In Year SAS per appraisal year.

Your local Unit will have its own process for dealing with In Year SAS that incorporates local structures and needs. Nominations need to be made on the SAS Nomination form, and details of the proposed award and evidence of its merit need to be included.

Unit Directors (or nominated Deputies) will review In Year SAS nominations as part of the local process.

As a final step the HR Lead will review the form to ensure a fair spread across the bands, taking into account other equality characteristics, sufficient evidence to support the nomination.

A4 **In Year Award Amounts**

The level of In Year SAS recommended should normally fall within the range of £200 - £500, and should not exceed a maximum of £1,000.

The amount of the In-Year Awards is not fixed depending on band (as opposed to End of Year Awards). The amount of award given within the above range should reflect the achievement, regardless of band.

In the exceptional circumstance where a Director wishes to recommend a member of staff for an In Year SAS over £1,000 approval is required from the Head of Reward and Recognition and the Group HR Director.

A5 **Governance of In Year Awards**

Unit Directors (in conjunction with their Senior Unit Administrators and HR teams) are responsible for ensuring the rigour of internal review mechanisms so that the SAS process is fair and consistent.
In addition to this the Corporate HR team will carry out random sampling of local paperwork and processes to ensure the robustness of recommendations and the equivalence of award levels across the organisation.

In-Year awards will be monitored by Corporate HR on at least a twice yearly basis including a review of the SAS by grade, gender, ethnicity, age band and position (e.g. Science, Technical, Administration.)
B.  End of Year SAS

B1  Purpose

The purpose of the End of Year SAS is to recognise and reward exceptional performance throughout the appraisal year.

B2  Criteria

The contributions that merit an End of Year SAS include the exceptional/outstanding contribution of a member of staff (not exhaustive):

- following a short term, significant increase in responsibility (which did not attract an additional responsibility allowance.)
- towards the continued work or business of the unit/team
- to either the work, or corporate or scientific goals of the MRC, or the wider scientific community.
- following training undertaken or work related development (not recognised by promotion)
- in the innovation of work that contributes to the work of the Unit/team/MRC or cost controls.

B3  Process

As part of the annual appraisal/PDR process Units will be asked to identify a small proportion of employees whose contributions may qualify for an End of Year SAS. The manager will consider this in relation the SAS criteria listed above and in the context of any previous awards made to the employee.

The manager will submit their nominations to their senior manager/HR team where the nominations will be reviewed on a wider scale.

Employees who have not received an SAS after four years may submit a self-recommendation to their Director for consideration.

It may be appropriate, depending on the size and nature of the Unit, to convene local panels to decide on the distribution of the End of Year SAS. Panel membership should be such that the contributions of all members of the workforce can be considered fairly and membership should include an appropriate balance of management hierarchies and job functions (where appropriate). It should also include a senior member of the local or regional Human Resources team.

For smaller Units it may be more appropriate to carry out the End of Year SAS review in a different forum, e.g. a Senior Management Meeting.

In whatever context, the review must consider and ensure a fair spread of the SAS across the pay bands and different equalities groups.

B4  End of Year Award amounts

In the interests of fairness the MRC will provide agreed guideline award amounts for each band. This decreases the element of bias towards length of service that is caused if the award were to be based on a percentage of individuals’ salary.
The award amounts are based on percentages of the band section A maximum.

- **Basic SAS:** 2% of band section A maximum.
- **Standard SAS:** 3.5% of band section A maximum.
- **Maximum SAS:** 5% of band section A maximum.

The MRC expects the majority to receive the Standard SAS amount.

The Basic SAS may be appropriate where the employee has only been in their role for part of the year but performance during that part has been exceptional.

The Maximum SAS may be appropriate for truly exceptional performance, e.g. where this has been recognised outside of the employees work area.

For 2012-2013 these figures will be:

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<th>Band</th>
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**B5 Governance and Monitoring**

Unit Directors (in conjunction with their Senior Unit Administrators and HR teams) will be responsible for ensuring the rigour of internal review mechanisms so that the SAS process is fair and consistent.

The End of Year awards overall submission will be approved by the Head of Reward and Recognition and the Group HR Director, having reviewed the submissions from all and Institutes.

The local TUS side should be informed of the mechanisms for carrying out the End of Year SAS exercise. Following the End of Year exercise the local management should provide the local TUS side with a breakdown of outcomes from both the End of Year and the In Year SAS, including a review of the SAS by grade, gender, ethnicity, age band and position (e.g. Science, Technical, Administration.)
2. **Frequently Asked Questions**

1. **Are all employees eligible to be considered for a SAS?**

   All employees in bands 7 to 2 will be eligible, with the exception of Clinical Consultant employees on NHS payscales. This is because alternative mechanisms exist for rewarding exceptional contributions for those employees.

2. **Are Career Development Fellows (CDFs) eligible for Special Awards?**

   Yes, those in CDF positions are eligible to be considered for a Special Award.

3. **Who is responsible for deciding who will receive Special Awards?**

   The Unit Director has ultimate responsibility for decisions on Special Awards. The Director will work closely with the HR teams, Senior Management and line managers on deciding who receives an award.

   The MRC is committed to working with Directors and their teams to make sure that Special Awards are spread across the different bands and equality groups.

4. **Why are there two types of Special Awards – In Year and End of Year?**

   The MRC wants to be able to recognise both sustained excellent performance and the one-off achievement of staff. The In Year SAS allows managers to reward staff in a timely manner for achievements throughout the year. The amounts allowable under the In Year SAS are lower than the End of Year SAS. The End of Year SAS is aimed at rewarding those who have performed consistently well throughout the year and therefore has higher amounts attached to it.

5. **I received an A to B promotion earlier this year, am I still eligible?**

   Yes, you may still be eligible for an SAS although there may be others (who have not received an A to B promotion) who have priority above you. The MRC strongly advocates that these rewards should be spread across the MRC.

6. **Are staff in their probationary period eligible to be considered for an award?**

   Staff within their probationary period will not be eligible for an End of Year SAS. There may be limited circumstances where an employee in their probationary period may be recommended for an In Year SAS although this would not be expected to be the norm.

7. **Are part-time employees and home workers eligible to be considered for an award?**

   Yes, employees are eligible regardless of their contracted working hours or normal place of work. Employees who work part-time will receive a pro-rata award.

8. **When will I find out if I have been nominated for In Year SAS?**

   If you have been nominated for an In Year SAS (which can be at any time of year) you will be informed by your line manager when the recommendation has been accepted by your local Director and HR Lead. Your line manager will confirm when you should expect to see the SAS payment in your monthly salary.

   Please be aware that depending on when the payroll deadline is at the RCUK SSC Ltd that month you may not receive the SAS until the following month.
9. **When will I find out if I have been nominated for End of Year SAS?**

Your line manager will confirm to you following the appraisal exercise if they have put you forward for an End of Year SAS. It is important to note at this time that this is only a nomination and an SAS cannot be guaranteed.

Your Director and the senior management will then have responsibility for reviewing all recommendations across the Unit/Institute. They will be considering whether the recommendations are fairly spread across the Unit and accurately reflect excellent performance.

The final step is for the spreadsheets to be reviewed by Corporate HR to ensure consistency across the MRC Units/Institutes. Following this final approval will be given.

At this point your line manager will be informed of the outcome and will be able to confirm whether or not you will receive an End of Year SAS.

10. **Will I receive a letter confirming my In Year/End of Year SAS?**

No, you will not receive a letter from RCUK SSC Ltd confirming your SAS. Your line manager will provide a verbal confirmation and you will see the SAS appear on your payslip on Oracle Employee Self Service.

11. **When will In Year SAS payments be made?**

In Year SAS can be made at any time and will be paid through the monthly payroll, taking into account any payroll deadlines.

12. **When will End of Year SAS payments be made?**

End of Year SAS will be paid following the end of the appraisal process. Given that Corporate HR will be reviewing all Unit submissions, End of Year SAS will normally be paid in the April monthly salary.

13. **Can I appeal the Directors decision?**

Any employee who feels that they have been unfairly treated should raise this first with their line manager or HR team. If informal discussions cannot resolve the issue, a final resort may be to revert to raising a complaint under the MRC Grievance policy and procedure.

14. **Will the scheme continue in 2013/2014?**

The scheme will be reviewed by MRC Management and National Trade Unions Side on an annual basis against criteria such as efficacy and affordability. In principle it will now run each year.

15. **Can I nominate myself for an SAS?**

As with the preceding ASR scheme, if you have not received an SAS for four years you will be able to put yourself forward for an award. As we ran the SAS scheme in 2010/2011 and 2011/2012, the first time you will be able to self nominate will be 2014/2015.

16. **Can I be nominated for both an In Year and End of Year SAS?**
It is possible to receive an In Year and an End of Year Award although this would not be expected to be a common occurrence. The reasons for receiving both awards should be clearly stated on the SAS Nomination form by the line manager.

Corporate HR will monitor where employees are receiving both In Year and End of Year Awards in one year.

17. **Why is there a limit on the In Year SAS?**

We are keen to be able to reward our staff throughout the year and when they have achieved success. The majority of funds should be directed towards the End of Year process which recognises sustained excellence throughout the year.

18. **Why are there set amounts for the different bands for End of Year SAS?**

The MRC Management and Trade Unions Side want the distribution to be equitable. Using a percentage of an individual’s salary would lead to bias due to length of service. Therefore set amounts for each band for End of Year SAS have been agreed.

19. **What is happening with the pay award that was due in April 2012?**

We have not received any further update from BIS or Treasury since the last Staff Bulletin update. Our pay remit proposal is still awaiting approval from Treasury. Any increases allowed will be backdated to the 1st April 2012.
3. **SAS Nomination form**

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**Type of SAS**

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**In Year SAS only**

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**End of SAS only**

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**Supporting statement**

150-200 words are generally sufficient for a supporting statement. This should:

- make reference to specific contributions and achievements;
- should be backed up by examples, evidence or other relevant indicators.;
- justify the level of SAS proposed in relation to set MRC amounts.

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Has employee received an In Year SAS already this year?  Yes ☐  No ☐  If yes, confirm that the nomination form for that award is attached and the award is not being proposed for the same achievement.
Approvals

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**SAS amounts for 2012/2013**

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