

## Annual Review Feedback – May 2024

*Please note the annual review feedback is there to give an independent external view of the NRF, which can help to identify the strengths of the facility and suggest areas to enhance. Please focus on the narrative feedback as the scores serve as an indication.*

### NMR

Overall Score: 8/10

#### Recommendations

1. Further clarification on the cost recovery and service demand is requested to better understand any problems and potential solutions.
2. The facility could consider how to broaden outreach and engagement activities to a wider userbase.

**Value Proposition (score 8.5/10):** The value proposition has been done very well and previous feedback has clearly been taken on board. What the facility can offer has been clearly articulated in terms of research areas, expertise, and plans for evolution. NMR supports research across a range of scientific fields as well as developing NMR methodology, maximises resolution and sensitivity across a range of nuclei, and offers the expertise of specialist staff. While there is good general breadth of areas, there could be some clearer definition of the unique research challenges the facility is able to address.

**Scientific Excellence and Impact (score 8.5/10):** There are three mini summaries on application areas which traverses the range of NMR's research applications, showing the breadth of areas, and clearly demonstrates impact and scientific excellence. The facility also develops methodologies which feed into the wider NMR community and are particularly valuable as more high field spectrometers come online. This was very informative and an extremely useful way to distil the activities that are currently ongoing. The research areas are broad, and the examples shown are a good justification of the unique capability of the NRF to tackle certain research questions.

**Publications (score 9/10):** A wide range of scientific areas are captured in the publications listed. The short summaries given for each publication are very useful and an example of good practice, especially where the need for/benefit of high-field instruments is clear. The mechanism for capturing publications works well and linking it to the TAP is a way of encouraging acknowledgement and informing the NRF of publications. There is a good blend of where the data from the NRF plays either a leading or supporting role and that is welcome to see.

The snapshot videos on the website are a fantastic thing to do.

**Case Studies (not scored):** The case studies provided were strong, covered different areas, and included some training activities. It was a very good selection to show the breadth of the facility.

**Training, Outreach, and Non-Scientific Impacts (score 7/10):** The facility offers great training and dissemination activities: the annual symposium's hybrid format allows broader participation but still with a significant number of in-person attendees, and the Connect-NMR workshops provided hands-on training for participants with little or no solid-state NMR experience. However, these are generally focused on the core userbase, and it might be valuable to the facility to broaden these to other

userbases (e.g., application-based). It would be fantastic to hear about the talks at large national conferences that link to the facility's research area so that the capabilities of the NRF are reaching the widest audience.

**Cost Recovery (score 6.5/10):** There are improvements in cost recovery, but it's difficult to understand why from the report. Further details regarding how costs are attributed to projects, what the plan is for dealing with the userbase, and what other academics are charged (i.e., academics not going through the TAP) would be useful here to gain further clarity.

A problem – access not being costed on grants – has been identified, and it's great to see that work is being done to better understand and explore how to achieve better financial sustainability and querying where grant holders don't include NRF access. The commissioned study to investigate how to become more financially sustainable is very welcome, and we look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the study and subsequent actions.

During the meeting it was noted that the cost recovery targets are specific to each NRF.

**Users (score 7.5/10):** The user information is very good, with helpful detail on the Research Area split and a good balance of new and existing users. It would be useful to have details on how the facility is promoting the user test bed.

**User Surveys/Satisfaction (score 8/10):** It's fantastic that the user satisfaction scores are very positive and there is a good response rate. It might be worth exploring having a more regular survey to get more current feedback and reflections.

**Service Demand (score 7/10):** It's unclear from the report how much of the available time is actually being used – especially by UKRI users. More detail in future reports would be useful here.

**Risks (score 7.5/10):** The risk register is very useful – it's particularly great that the facility can identify the cryogen security issue. Personnel insecurity, particularly due to timing of renewal, is a clear risk and has been noted by the HLG with the concern conveyed to EPSRC. Further detail on the current level of staffing would be helpful to understand the level of risk.

**Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Service Level (SLs) (score 8/10):** The KPIs are in order, however, there seems to be a disconnect between the KPIs, Service Demand, and Cost Recovery.

**Links (score 7.5/10):** It's clear that the facility has made progress from last year and broadened their links, which is great to see, although the links are generally inward facing. The NMR national and international communities' links are excellent.

**Improvements and Future Plans (score 8/10):** Thought has been put towards the future of the facility as a unit and any technical improvements providing a clear narrative – it would be interesting to understand any improvements and future plans beyond this. Additionally, is there any further report on what the impact was of hiding PI names and randomising the order of the proposals?

**Governance structure (not scored):** The governance structure is solid and it's clear the committee views the annual report and is engaged with the NRF governance.

**Website (not scored):** The website is functional and well-used, though it could be streamlined. The YouTube videos are a fantastic resource – could these be promoted more to further their impact and outreach?

### Score descriptions

Individual Assessment Criteria Score Indicators	Score
<b>Exceptional</b> – World leading or of exceptional strategic importance	<b>10</b>
<b>Excellent</b> – Leading edge and internationally competitive	<b>9</b>
<b>Very High Quality</b> – Leading edge and internationally competitive	<b>8</b>
<b>High Quality</b> – Leading edge nationally and internationally competitive in parts	<b>7</b>
<b>High Quality</b> – Leading edge nationally, potentially internationally competitive	<b>6</b>
<b>Good Quality</b> – Nationally competitive	<b>5</b>
<b>Potentially Useful</b> – Requires significant improvement	<b>4</b>
<b>Potentially Useful</b> – Requires major improvement	<b>3</b>
<b>Not of Sufficient Standard</b> – Requires major improvement & questions if the NRF is required	<b>2</b>
<b>Not of Sufficient Standard</b> – Requires major improvement & poor evidence that the NRF is required	<b>1</b>
<b>Not ranked</b>	<b>0</b>