Professor Gordon Marshall
Director

…. scholarships for such purposes of research and education…as my Trustees may in their discretion direct.

Annual expenditure of approximately £80* million across some 15 funding schemes, largely funding research in the UK higher education sector

* Plus 20-25% contribution to FEC via Charities Research Support Fund

William Hesketh Lever (1851-1925)

The Trust Board

➢ Comprises ten former members of Unilever senior management, from diverse international backgrounds
➢ Governs an independent and autonomous charity
➢ Meets four times each year for decisive discussion
➢ Has experience of identifying potential and quality
➢ Is resistant to academic fashion
➢ Makes awards competitively
➢ Relies on expert peer review (13,514 reviews received in 2015 from experts world-wide)
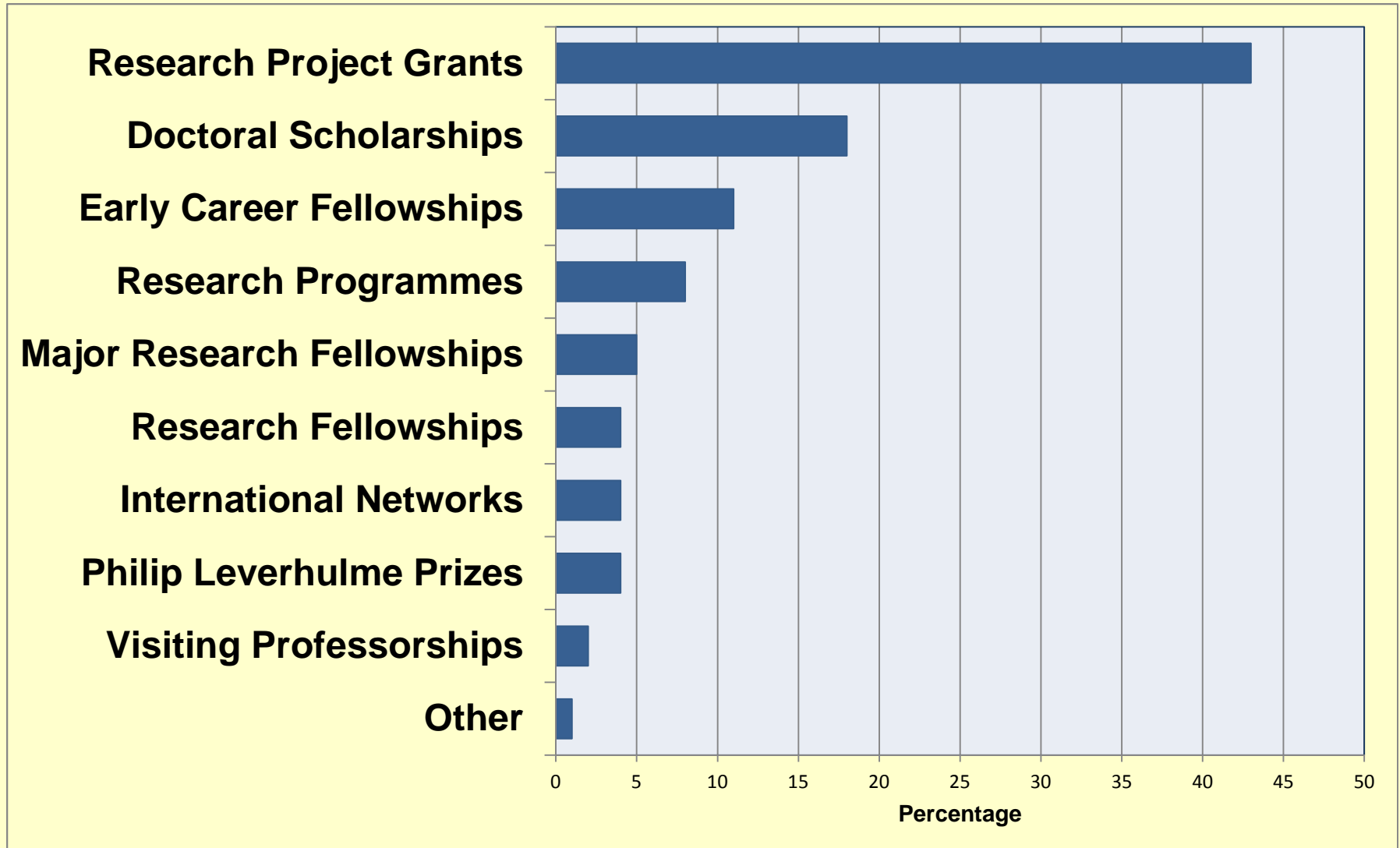
The resource

➢ £2.5 billion endowment (including Unilever shares)

➢ Approximately £80 million distributed as grants each year (£110 million in 2015)

➢ More than 4,000 applications received each year (4,330 in 2015)

➢ Approximately 2,500 live awards at any time (645 grants awarded in 2015)
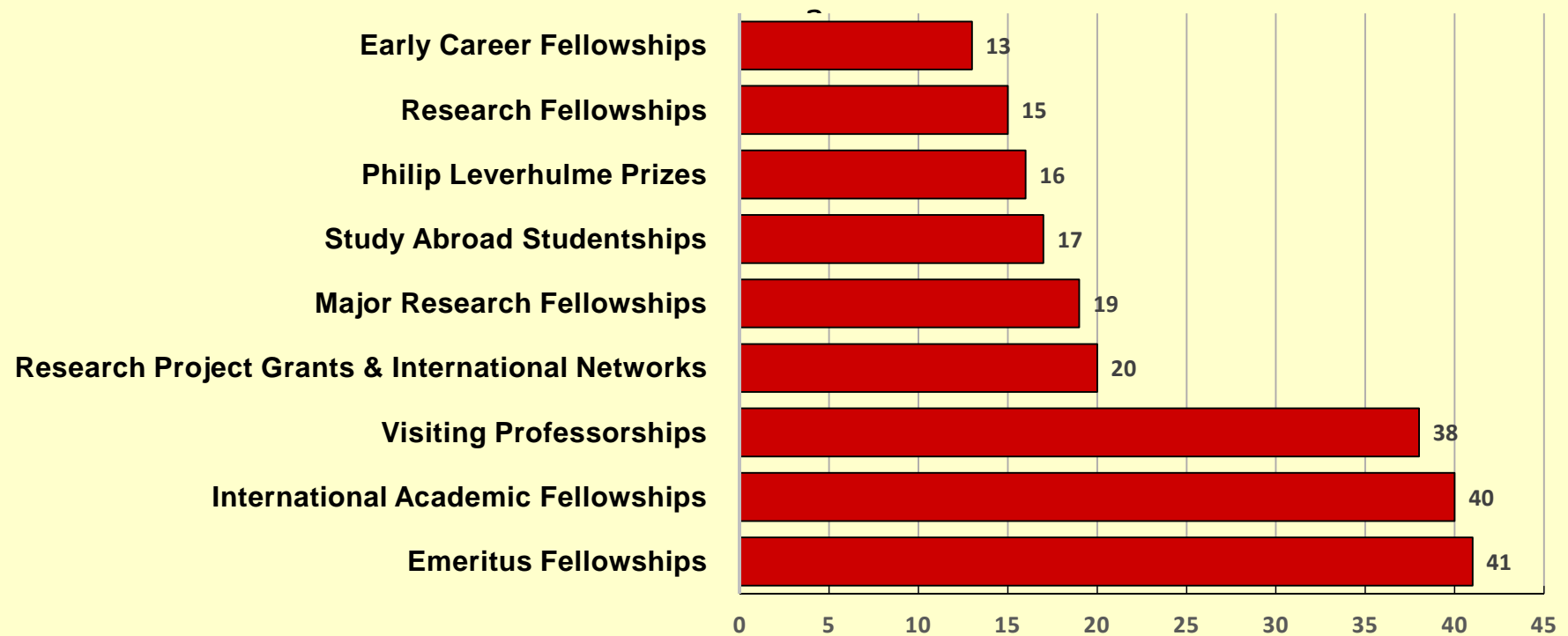
➢ Office staff of 14 persons

The awards

- **Research Project Grants:** up to £500k
- **Fellowships**: Early Career, Major Research, Research, Emeritus, and Academy
- **Collaborations**: Visiting Professorships, International Academic Fellowships and Study Abroad Studentships
- **Philip Leverhulme Prizes:** approximately 30 annually, spanning 18 rotating subject areas (6 in each of three years), each prize worth £100k
- **Arts Portfolio** (Fine and Performing Arts): Scholarships, Innovative Teaching, Artists in Residence
- **Research Leadership Awards**: up to £1m (over 5 years)
- **Doctoral Scholarship Scheme**: £1m (over 3 years)
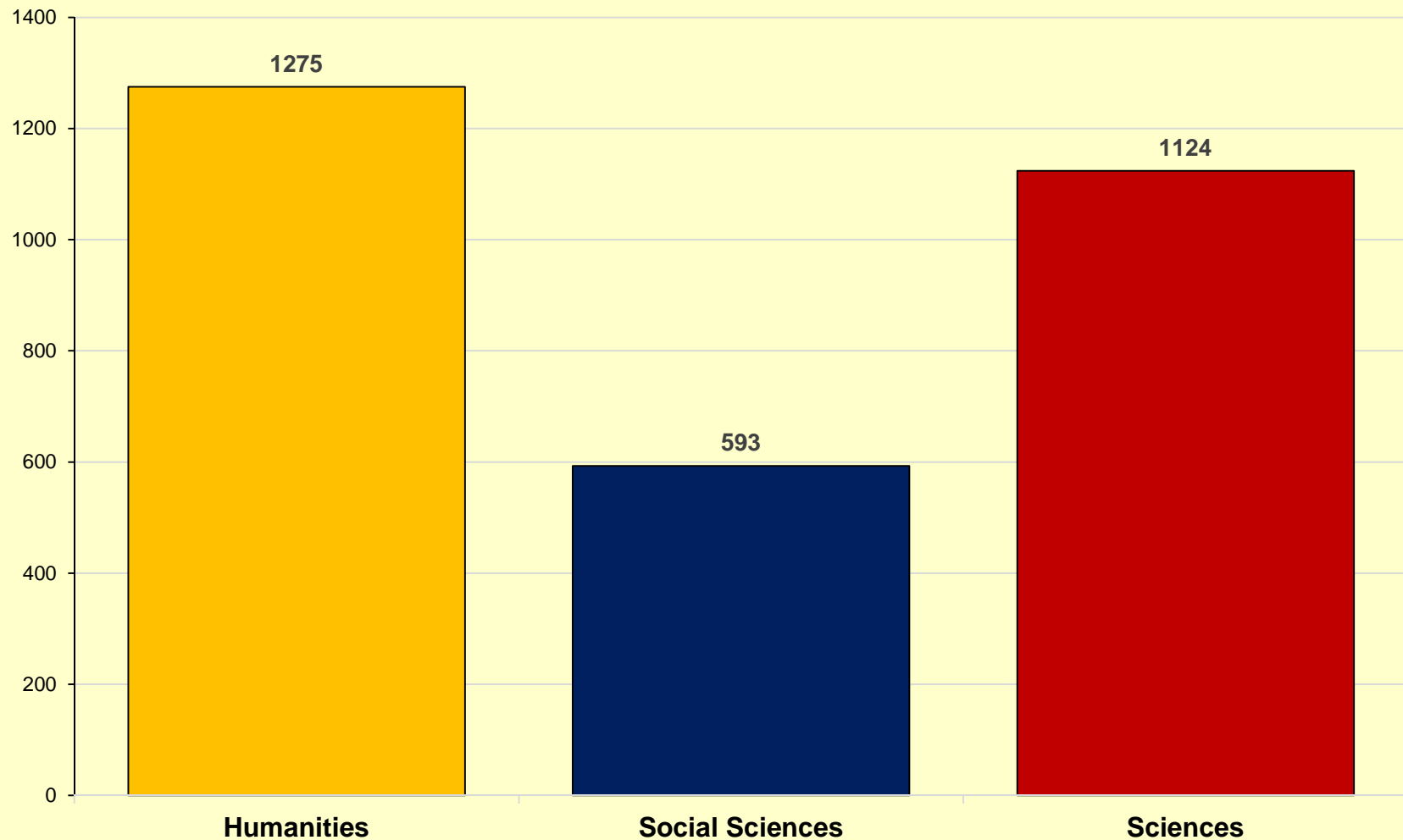- **Research Centres:** up to £10m (over 10 years)

Average percentage success rates in principal award schemes 2011-15

Scheme	Value
Early Career Fellowships	13
Research Fellowships	15
Philip Leverhulme Prizes	16
Study Abroad Studentships	17
Major Research Fellowships	19
Research Project Grants & International Networks	20
Visiting Professorships	38
International Academic Fellowships	40
Emeritus Fellowships	41

0 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45

How to apply for an award

➢ A two-stage process for Research Project Grants: approximately 1000 Outline Applications received annually; all taken to Stage 1 peer review (approx. 12 weeks)

➢ Positive recommendation (approximately 50%) leads to invitation to submit a Detailed Application (3 deadlines per annum)

➢ Detailed Applications then submitted to Stage 2 peer review and decision by Trust Board (success rate approximately 40%)

➢ Other schemes have a single-stage application process, normally annual call and deadline, with decisions delegated to expert panels and subject to due scrutiny by the Trust Board; success rates typically 15-35%)

The Trust supports…

➢ **High quality scholarship** (based on an original project, having a sound methodology, clearly expressed)

➢ **The responsive mode** (the choice of topic lies with the applicant in all our schemes)

➢ **Robust peer review** by the global academic community

➢ **All disciplines**, although the Trust avoids assuming the tasks of other specialist agencies such as Government (including Research Councils), the Wellcome Trust (medicine), and projects originating in countries with a well-developed research infrastructure

Particular weight is given to...

- The **originality** of the proposed work, beyond incremental development, and beyond the immediate subject

- The **removal of barriers** between traditional disciplines

- **Intellectual curiosity** and willingness to take appropriate risks

- **Fresh directions** and departures from existing approaches

- The justification offered for the **choice of the Trust** as the source of funds

We do not fund…

➢ **Medical research** into disease, illness and disabilities in humans and animals, or research that is intended to inform clinical practice or the development of medical applications

➢ Policy-driven research where the principal objective is to assemble **an evidence base for immediate policy initiatives**

➢ Research of which **advocacy** forms an explicit component

➢ Research which is aimed principally at **an immediate commercial application**

➢ Applications in which the **balance between assembling a data bank** or data base **and the related subsequent research** is heavily inclined to the former

➢ Applications in which the **main focus** is on **capacity building**, **networking**, or the **development of the skills** of those involved

Some examples of recent awards

- Veiled Voyagers: Muslim women travellers from Asia and the Middle East
- Fundamental physics from observations of white dwarf stars
- People and place: the making of the Kingdom of Northumbria AD300-800
- Exploring left-wing populism in an age of anti-politics
- Using DNA to understand bamboo and the complexity of giant panda diet
- Fading voices in Southern Italy: investigating language contact in Magna Graecia
- Time and Causality in Cognitive Development

Common errors in applications

➢ An overly-detailed review of the literature – accompanied by an under-specified research design (failure to state how the problem will be addressed and the work will be done)

➢ Claims to scholarship, quality or significance, measured purely in terms of metrics, impact, or institutional standing

➢ The supposition of a hidden agenda or quota system in Trust grant-making

➢ Failure to write in transparent terminology, where requested to do so

To sum up…

➢ The Board comprises private-sector business executives but does not encourage a utilitarian approach to the pursuit of knowledge

➢ The Trust has a distinctive and keen appetite for higher-risk research proposals

➢ A large proportion of our awards therefore support basic (fundamental or 'blue-skies') and cross-disciplinary (or multi-disciplinary) projects

➢ We have no capacity for generating onerous administrative or reporting requirements

➢ The Board respects expert peer review but derides obfuscation and the unnecessary use of jargon

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