HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education

Department of Research Evaluation

report on research unit:

Institute of Viral and Liver Disease

IVLD

under the supervision of the following institutions and research bodies:

Institut National de la Santé Et de la Recherche Médicale - INSERM

Université de Strasbourg

Evaluation Campaign 2016-2017 (Group C)

HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research and Higher Education

Department of Research Evaluation

In the name of HCERES,[1]

Michel Cosnard, president

In the name of the experts committee,[2]

John McLauchlan, chairman of the committee

Under the decree N°.2014-1365 dated 14 november 2014,

[1] The president of HCERES "countersigns the evaluation reports set up by the experts committees and signed by their chairman." (Article 8, paragraph 5)

[2] The evaluation reports "are signed by the chairman of the expert committee". (Article 11, paragraph 2)

Evaluation report

This report is the sole result of evaluation by the expert committee, the composition of which is specified below.

The assessments contained herein are the expression of an independent and collegial reviewing by the committee.

Unit name:	Institute of Viral and Liver Disease
Unit acronym:	IVLD
Label requested:	UMR_S
Current number:	1110
Name of Director (2016-2017):	Mr Thomas BAUMERT
Name of Project Leader (2018-2022):	Mr Thomas BAUMERT

Expert committee members

Chair:	Mr John MCLAUCHLAN, University of Glasgow, Scotland
Experts:	Mr Tarik ASSELAH, Université Paris Diderot
	Ms Birke BARTOSCH, CRCL, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1
	Ms Nathalie CALLENS, CIIL, Institut Pasteur de Lille and Université de Lille (representative of supporting personnel)
	Ms Jamila FAIVRE, Inserm, Université Paris-Sud
Scientific delegate representing the HCERES:	
	Mr Théophile OHLMANN
Representatives of supervising institutions and bodies:	
	Ms Catherine FLORENTZ, Université de Strasbourg
	Ms Marie-Ange LUC, Inserm
	Ms Meriem MAROUF, Inserm
Head of Doctoral School:	
	Mr Serge POTIER, Doctoral School n°414, “Sciences de la vie et de la santé”

1 • Introduction

History and geographical location of the unit

The Institute of Viral and Liver Disease (IVLD) is a mixed Inserm-University of Strasbourg research unit (UMR_S1110) located in Strasbourg. It was created in 2007 under the directorship of Mr Thomas BAUMERT as a PU-PH.

Management team

The management team consists of Mr Thomas BAUMERT (director) and Ms Catherine SCHUSTER (deputy head).

HCERES nomenclature

SVE5 Physiologie, Physiopathologie, Cardiologie, Pharmacologie, Endocrinologie, Cancer, Technologies Médicales.

Scientific domains

The unit works on liver disease that are caused by viral infections (HBV and HCV mainly) and on aspects of virus-host interactions.

Unit workforce

Unit workforce	Number on 30/06/2016	Number on 01/01/2018
N1: Permanent professors and similar positions	3 (1.2)	3 (1.2)
N2: Permanent researchers from Institutions and similar positions	3 (2.6)	3 (2.6)
N3: Other permanent staff (technicians and administrative personnel)	16	16
N4: Other researchers (Postdoctoral students, visitors, etc.)	11	
N5: Emeritus	0	
N6: Other contractual staff (technicians and administrative personnel)	3	
N7: PhD students	5	
TOTAL N1 to N7	**41**	
Qualified research supervisors (HDR) or similar positions	6	

Unit record	From 01/01/2011 to 30/06/2016
PhD theses defended	14
Postdoctoral scientists having spent at least 12 months in the unit	13
Number of Research Supervisor Qualifications (HDR) obtained during the period	2

2 • Assessment of the unit

Global assessment of the unit

The main scientific interests of the unit have been firmly embedded in HCV infection and now expand to HBV. The key topics have focussed on: i) HCV entry; ii) the neutralization antibody response to infection, as this may influence development of a HCV vaccine; and iii) virus-host interactions that are critical for productive infection. The unit also has a strong translational element to transfer basic research findings for practical impact in the clinical arena. As would be expected during a 5-year programme, the unit's strategy has evolved to build on stronger elements from the technical expertise encompassed within the unit (for example, siRNA screens and mouse models) as well as opportunities arising from recruitment of younger programme leaders to refresh and develop the future scientific potential of the unit.

UMR_S1110 was previously reviewed in 2012 by AERES with an overall excellent grading assessment and more recently in 2015 assessed as excellent by an international review committee who evaluated the LabEx component of the unit. The current review committee unanimously found the unit outstanding.

Over the past 5 years, the unit has cemented its international standing on studies on HCV infection with consistent outputs of outstanding quality in high-ranking journals (*Nature Medicine, Cell Host & Microbe, Cell and Nature Biotechnology*). In addition, it has engaged in a number of collaborative projects, and successfully obtained funding to support US and European collaborations. The international centres involved in these collaborations are internationally renowned for excellence in their own fields. This demonstrates the recognition of UMR_S1110 as a leading international institution in its own right and therefore the joint, collaborative studies should yield significant outputs in terms of publications. The unit should be commended for making the decision to broaden its scope outside of HCV for the next 5-year period, building on initial work on HBV and HDV that has already started and extending its interests to liver disease in general, whether of viral or non-viral origin. Finally, the unit has trained an impressive number of post-doctoral fellows and postgraduate students, and clearly offers a supportive environment for developing the next generation of young scientists.

The unit has identified possible issues with lack of space, delayed renovation and possible reduced funding for the biocontainment BioSafety Level 3 (BSL3) laboratory, which incorporates an animal facility, as areas that would affect its ability to attract new recruits. Such infrastructure support would be essential for the unit to retain its international standing as a centre of excellence. In addition, the plans suggested for the next funding period, although necessary for the unit to develop its scientific strategy in light of the success of new therapies to cure HCV infection, do present a risk. To expand the scientific portfolio and meet the proposed objectives, it is necessary that the unit has the ability to replace any key members of staff to maintain their competitiveness.