

Research Institutes and Centres Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This policy sets out expectations for the establishment, management and termination of research centres and research institutes at Charles Sturt University (the University), to create critical mass and visibility of certain activities aligned with the University's strategic plan.

(2) The purpose of this policy is to establish the expectations and approach to risk management at the University as part of the University's governance responsibilities and obligations under Section 19 (1B) of the [Charles Sturt University Act 1989](#).

(3) The conduct and operation of an institute or centre must be consistent with the object and function of the University as set out in the [Charles Sturt University Act](#).

Scope

(4) This policy applies to existing and proposed research centres and institutes established as an activity of the University, which may or may not include associated partnership agreements. It does not apply to research centres or institutes established as entities externally, which the University may join as a member or otherwise partner with.

Section 2 - Policy

Research institutes

(5) Research institutes are flagship entities that are designed to be nationally and globally recognised for their impact. Institutes are comprised of a base of full-time research-focused fellows, as well as a broad membership of academic and technical staff from the faculties and adjuncts.

Approval and establishment

(6) The University Council approves the strategic plan and the related establishment of a research institute for an initial five-year period on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor. Only the Council has the power to approve the establishment of a research institute.

(7) In approving the establishment of a research institute, the Council must be satisfied that the strategic plan for the institute clearly sets out the benefits to the University, and that these benefits outweigh the costs of development and any ongoing investment required for the proposed institute. The institute must:

- a. be focused on an area of research or teaching discipline of long-term strategic importance to the University, including that:
 - i. the area of research links to a Field(s) of Research (FOR) targeted by the Council as an area of strategic importance, including in terms of meeting ERA imperatives
 - ii. the Field(s) of Education (FOE) is/are one with high student load or teaching excellence and therefore areas of strategic importance, including in terms of meeting Australian University Provider Category Standards, and

- iii. it supports the University to advance in global rankings
- b. have or can appoint research leaders who meet criteria for world standing research
- c. comprise a group of researchers that is of sufficient scale to have impact on real world issues such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the Australian Government National Science and Research Priority Areas
- d. contribute to inter/multi-disciplinarity and the potential to have broad influence and engagement across the University
- e. impact society at large including through engagement with end-users and/or industry-linked research collaboration
- f. there is alignment with the University's strategic and operational plans
- g. have the ability to achieve the academic purposes and objectives within the existing University organisational structure(s), and
- h. achieve financial sustainability or have a sufficiently attractive value proposition for its initial operational term of five years.

Structure

(8) Research institutes are established within the research portfolio and are independent, but aligned to, the faculties, their staff and infrastructure.

(9) Each institute has an Executive Director, who bears primary responsibility for day to day operational management of the institute, including delivery of the institute's milestones and outcomes, as set out in the strategic plan.

(10) Each year, the Executive Director prepares an annual operational plan aligned with the strategic plan, which is approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) (DVC (R)).

Governance

(11) All research institutes are governed within an organisational structure led by an Executive Director reporting to the DVC (R).

(12) All research institutes are required to establish an advisory board to provide advice to the Executive Director and DVC (R) on matters relating to the strategic development of a research institute, and provide advice to the Vice-Chancellor on the progress of the institute and its operating environment. The University's standard advisory board terms of reference is to be adopted and tailored to any specific requirements of the institute. Membership of the advisory board is to be drawn from relevant expertise in academic, government and professional sectors and should comprise a majority of external members.

(13) Research institutes are subject to bi-annual performance monitoring and cyclical review by the Executive Leadership Team and Council, as described in the 'Review' heading below.

Research centres

(14) Research centres are a smaller scale and lower-cost model compared to institutes but with similar remit, alignment and strategic intention. Research centres are resourced largely through the research fractions of existing faculty academics.

Approval and establishment

(15) The Vice-Chancellor approves the business case and the related establishment of a research centre on advice from the DVC (R) and the Executive Deans of the relevant academic faculty/faculties. Only the Vice-Chancellor has the power to approve the establishment of a research centre.

(16) In approving the establishment of a research centre, the Vice-Chancellor must be satisfied that the business case for the centre clearly sets out the benefits to the University, and that these outweigh the development and any ongoing investment required for the proposed centre. The centre must:

- a. be focused on an area of research or teaching discipline of long-term strategic importance to the University, including that:
 - i. the area of research links to a Field(s) of Research (FOR) targeted by the University Council as an area of strategic importance, including in terms of meeting ERA imperatives
 - ii. the Field(s) of Education (FOE) is/are one with high student load and therefore area of strategic importance, including in terms of meeting Australian University Provider Category Standards, and
 - iii. it supports (or has potential to support in future) the University to advance in global rankings
- b. the current or desired profile of a substantial group of researchers and its research leaders meet criteria for national standing and where the output of a research centre is likely to become international in standing (currently ERA levels 3, 4, or 5)
- c. contribute to inter/multi-disciplinarity and the potential to have broad influence and engagement across the University
- d. impact society at large including through engagement with end-users and/or industry-linked research collaboration
- e. have alignment with the University's and faculty's respective strategic and operational plans
- f. have the ability to achieve the academic purposes and objectives within existing University organisational structure(s)
- g. have a sufficiently attractive value proposition for its initial operational term of three years, and
- h. have evidence of a cash and/or in-kind co-investment by participating faculties and schools, which at a minimum must include part or all of the research fractions of participating faculty staff.

Structure

(17) Research centres may be established within faculties or within the research portfolio and aligned to the faculties, their staff and infrastructure. This decision will be taken by the Vice-Chancellor with regard to the fit with a single faculty, or the inter-disciplinary nature of the centre which may fit better within the broader scope of the research portfolio.

(18) The Centre Director reports to the DVC (R) or their delegate and bears primary responsibility for day to day operational management of the centre, including delivery of the centre's milestones and outcomes, as set out in the business case.

(19) Each year, the Centre Director prepares an annual operational plan aligned with the business case, which is approved by the DVC (R).

Governance

(20) The management and governance structure is to be detailed in a business case including a budget, KPIs and intended outcomes, and risk management prepared as part of establishment.

(21) Research centres are subject to bi-annual performance monitoring and cyclical review by the DVC (R) and the Executive Leadership Team, as described in the 'Review' heading below.

Section 3 - Procedure

(22) Nil.

Section 4 - Guidelines

Membership

(23) A member of a research institute or research centre is a member of academic staff whose primary research interest aligns with and contributes to the research efforts of a research institute or research centre, as assessed by the following criteria: research output and quality, competitive grants, higher degree by research (HDR) student load and HDR timely completions and where relevant, numbers of honours students.

(24) Members of a research institute will hold a primary appointment in the institute and assume responsibilities consistent with membership of the institute, including compliance with all university policies and processes.

(25) Members of a research centre will hold a primary appointment in a faculty or the centre and assume responsibilities consistent with membership of the relevant academic faculty, including compliance with all university policies and processes.

(26) A research institute should have a minimum of 20 academic staff members engaged in research, mostly research-focused fellows. Research centres must have at least 10 academic staff actively contributing to research by dedicating all or some of their research fraction to the centre.

(27) An academic staff member as well as an individual external to the University (including adjunct appointments) may be an associate member of a research institute or centre. Associate member status provides access to research activities and events only and not to formal resources.

(28) Membership may be initially held for five years for institutes and three years for centres and is renewable subject to a favourable review of contributions and performance assessment by a review panel established by the Institute/Centre Director and including the DVC (R) or delegate. Note this clause relates only to membership and should not be read as impacting on employment with the University, which is the subject of other university policies and consistent with the [Enterprise Agreement](#).

(29) Membership is subject to the approval of the institute or centre executive management group of an application submitted on the standard template provided, taking into consideration the level of achievement in obtaining external research grants and research output. These standard expectations align with the [Academic Staff Qualifications and Expectations Procedure](#).

(30) It is expected that members of research institutes and centres will be research leaders and may also participate in teaching.

(31) Members may expect material support and resources from the research institute or research centre including access to infrastructure, conference funding and publication fees. The provision of these resources is determined by the respective directors of the research institute or centre.

(32) Membership of a research institute or research centre by a staff member must be approved by the staff member's supervisor, Head of School and the Centre Director following appropriate discussion about the potential impact of membership on other obligations such as teaching, research project delivery and service engagements. Note, Heads of School should not unreasonably limit access to membership.

(33) All equipment purchased and obtained by a research institute or research centre are the property of the University and are maintained and managed by the relevant faculty or institute. The faculty or institute will be responsible for providing the necessary resources in consultation between the Centre Director of the research centre and the Executive Dean of the relevant faculty or, in the case of an institute, the Executive Director of the institute and the DVC (R). Such resources include office space, research laboratories, storage facilities and space for HDR students and research staff.

(34) Academic staff within institutes or centres remain subject to any University academic workload procedures and the [Charles Sturt University Enterprise Agreement](#).

Reporting

(35) Research institutes are to be oversighted by Council as to their achievement against the strategic plan. Institutes must submit an annual report detailing progress against the approved strategic plan (including agreed KPIs, budget, and advisory board attendance) to Council and the Vice-Chancellor through the DVC (R). Research institutes are required to report to the Audit and Risk Committee through the Risk and Compliance Unit when agreed risk tolerances are exceeded.

(36) Research centres are to be oversighted by the Vice-Chancellor as to their achievement against the business case. Centres must submit an annual report detailing progress against the approved business case (including agreed KPIs and budget) to the Vice-Chancellor through the DVC (R) and responsible area.

Review

(37) An annual review of a research centre must be completed by the DVC (R) based on KPIs and budget achievement to enable intervention if the objectives are not being achieved. The review will be reported to the University Research Committee.

(38) A formal review of a research institute or research centre must be completed in the third year after establishment or in addition at any other time, as requested by the Executive Leadership Team or Council. The review will include the assessment of a report prepared by the Executive Director/Director on a standard template providing a comprehensive description of achievements against all areas of the strategic plan/business case.

(39) The formal review is conducted by a panel that:

- a. is to be chaired by a person who is independent of the research institute or research centre, and
- b. includes at least one member who is both external to the University and independent of the research institute or research centre.

(40) The DVC (R), in consultation with the Executive Dean of the faculty and Director of the research institute or research centre, must approve the review terms of reference, the nominees and selection of the review panel.

(41) Where a change in review date is required, the Executive Director/Centre Director of a research institute or research centre must submit a request to the DVC (R) for approval.

Termination

(42) The Council may disestablish or change the status of a research institute (e.g. to a research centre) on advice from the Vice-Chancellor after an appropriate formal review in consultation with the DVC (R) and Executive Director of the research institute.

(43) The Vice-Chancellor may disestablish a research centre on advice from the DVC (R), Executive Dean(s) and Division of People and Culture after an appropriate formal review in consultation with the Centre Director.

(44) In determining whether to approve the continuation or disestablishment of a research institute or research centre under this policy, the Council and Vice-Chancellor take advice from the DVC (R), and relevant Executive Dean(s) of the faculty/faculties.

Naming conventions

(45) Any new centre or institute with 'National' or 'Australian' in the title must be nationally distinctive or prominent and must justify the name based on the activities and focus of the centre. Any new centre or institute with 'centre of excellence' in the title must be used in line with the criteria determined by the Australian Research Council.

(46) The following terms should not be used in the title of a University research centre or institute: 'network', 'hub', 'initiative', 'project', 'unit', 'team'. These words are typically used to describe more informal projects and initiatives that are not governed by this policy and do not require registration.

(47) New proposals must follow the [Protocols Procedure - Naming Facilities and Memorials](#).

(48) For clarity, the naming conventions above do not apply to units or other entities that were established prior to the effective date of this policy.

Section 5 - Glossary

(49) For the purpose of this policy, the following terms have the definitions stated:

- a. Affiliates - means those who have been given emeritus or honorary (including adjunct, professional associate and visitor) appointments in accordance with the relevant University policies and procedures.
- b. ERA - means Excellence in Research for Australia evaluation.
- c. Research centre - means a formal academic grouping focused on a specific issue or disciplinary area with academic staff as members, including research-teaching staff and may include a small number of research-only staff.
- d. Research institute - means a multi-disciplinary entity with research-only academic staff as members. The research institute will have all the qualities defined for research centres above and engage in research activities and may have external collaborators. Research institutes have an initial establishment period of five years.
- e. Researcher - means staff, students, and affiliates who undertake research for the University.

Section 6 - Document context

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