

1. Purpose of policy

This policy is intended to provide the framework for establishing and operating university research centres and research institutes, with the goal of producing research of international repute in a strong and supportive research environment.

2. Policy scope and application

2.1 This policy applies to all staff, higher degree by research (HDR) candidates and members of university decision-making or advisory bodies.

2.2 This policy does not apply to School-based research units or groups that may be established to foster emerging research strengths and to meet strategic goals of a School or Schools. Such units or groups must be approved, funded and managed by the relevant Head of School and must not use the terms 'centre' or 'institute' in their name.

2.3 These procedures do not apply to research units or groups established as, or as part of, controlled-entities of the University.

3. Definitions

Please refer to the University's glossary of terms for policies and procedures.

Research centre is an established and focused cohort of researchers recognised as having a significant national impact and international relevance. Research centres have a prime focus to conduct research of strategic importance to the university in terms of national/international standing and peer esteem, commercial research and research training, as well as engage in consulting and extension activities.

Research institute is a large research concentration of excellence established through formal agreement(s) with other external organisations or entities, and may have additional governance requirements and operational characteristics associated with the external partners. This large body of researchers is funded predominantly by significant external funding.

4. Purpose of research centres and research institutes

4.1 USC is committed to supporting internationally competitive research. Research groupings in the form of research centres or research institutes demonstrate critical mass, academic excellence and end-user engagement, together with research translation in designated areas of research strength. With a view to continuing growth and the investment of the university's finite resources, USC will target its investment into designated areas of research strength.

4.2 Research centres and research institutes enable USC to:

- foster research strengths to progress towards achieving institutional goals in relation to international rankings
- facilitate the strategic utilisation of infrastructure and resources
- build research capacity while demonstrating a return on the university's investment
- attract private and public-sector funding
- market research capabilities through cohesive, formally recognised branding
- enrich HDR training
- provide a stimulating and supportive research environment for early career researchers.

5. Performance criteria

5.1 Research centres and research institutes shall be based on the coordinated and cooperative efforts of multiple researchers working in an allied field of investigation, and will be underpinned by individual and collective performance excellence sustained at a national and international level. Consideration will be given to discipline specific measures of research excellence in addition to prevailing sector measures of research quality, such as research impact, research income, publications and HDR completions.

APPROVAL AUTHORITY

Academic Board

RESPONSIBLE OFFICER

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

DESIGNATED OFFICER

Director, Office of Research

FIRST APPROVED

7 November 2017

LAST AMENDED

29 March 2019

EFFECTIVE START DATE

29 March 2019

REVIEW DATE

7 November 2022

STATUS

Active

RELATED DOCUMENTS

Compliance Management Framework - Governing Policy

Research Centres and Research Institutes - Procedures

Responsible Research Conduct - Governing Policy

University Consultancy Work - Managerial Policy

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

Research Concentrations - Academic Policy

5.2 The ability to meet and maintain specified performance criteria in relation to size, research productivity and alignment with fields of research (FoRs) designated by the university as strategically important will be required for approval to establish a research centre and to be eligible for discretionary funding from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

5.3 Research centres and research institutes must develop a research program that includes key performance indicators that incorporate a growth profile and annual performance targets.

5.4 Regarding specific discipline benchmarks and with the guidance of external expert assessment, the criteria and performance indicators may be applied flexibly by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) to facilitate strategic research performance outcomes.

5.5 The outputs of centre and institute members are used in evaluating the ability to meet performance criteria of a proposed or continuing centre or institute. Consideration may be given to adjunct staff who contribute to publications via by-line and USC based research income.

5.6 Where researchers are members of two centres or institutes, their publications output and research income will be allocated to both, while avoiding any duplication.

6. Establishment of a research centre or research institute

6.1 The overall number of centres or institutes within any category is based on the strategic needs of the university, the funding available and the quality of proposals submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

6.2 Research groups who demonstrate that they meet the specified performance criteria set out in Research Centres and Research Institutes – Procedures and related guidelines, together with a comprehensive, cogent and demonstrably achievable long-term research plan, may submit an expression of interest to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) to be designated as a research centre or research institute.

6.3 The name of each centre and institute will be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

7. Research centre and research institute membership

7.1 Core members

7.1.1 Core members will normally:

- be USC staff holding continuing or fixed-term appointments, who can commit a minimum of 20 percent of their time available for allocation to research
- exceed the definition of research active as stated in the research centres and research institutes guidelines.

7.1.2 Core members may only maintain core membership in one centre or institute; however, they may be associate members of more than one centre or institute.

7.2 Associate members

7.2.1 Associate membership includes HDR candidates and adjunct appointments, as well as members of academic staff who do not meet the core membership requirements.

7.2.2 Associate members can be members of more than one centre or institute.

7.2.3 HDR candidates will automatically be allocated associate membership of the centre or institute in which their principal supervisor is a core member.

8. Governance

8.1 Each centre and institute must have a director who will be endorsed by the relevant Head of School and Head, Research and appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

8.2 The director is accountable for the management of the centre or institute to the responsible Head of School.

8.3 The director is appointed for a period of five years subject to evidence of satisfactory performance provided as part of the three-year review.

8.4 The responsibilities of directors include strategic research leadership, development, promotion, support for collaboration, engagement and operational management.

8.5 Directors must ensure that the centre or institute builds capacity for and displays evidence of quality research.

8.6 A research institute's leadership team must be supported by an advisory board with external representation.

9. Annual reporting

9.1 Research centre and research institute directors must provide the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), the relevant Head of School and the Research Committee with an annual report using the approved annual report template.

10. Review

10.1 Research centres and research institutes are not permanently funded by the university and are subject to review.

10.2 A review panel may be convened by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) at any time in accordance with the Quality and Standards Framework.

10.3 Where the outcome of a review finds that a centre or institute is no longer functioning adequately, a recommendation for possible disestablishment may be made through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).

11. Disestablishment

11.1 All centres and institutes are required to articulate arrangements for disestablishment in their initial business plans. This may include arrangements for the transfer of any residual staff, assets and/or commitments.

11.2 Research centres and research institutes may propose that they be disestablished at any time to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) and the Research Committee.

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