University Research Centres (URC) Policy

Policy Code: RS978

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Purpose

The purposes of research centres are to:

• Promote existing and emerging areas of research strength;
• Assist in enriching our research culture;
• Enhance the University’s national and international reputation;
• Promote research partnerships and engagement with external partners;
• Assist in developing, and attracting and retaining outstanding staff;
• Assist in attracting external research funding; and
• Attract higher degree by research students, and enhance research performance.

Scope

This policy applies to all staff involved, or applying to be involved, in research centres of which there are two types: Research Groups, and University Research Centres.

This policy refers specifically to Research Groups and University Research Centres with Federation University, and does not include externally funded, collaborative research centres such as Cooperative Research Centres (CRCs).
Legislative Context

Federation University Australia Act 2010

Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Group</td>
<td>Area of research significance within and/or across Schools/Faculties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University Research Centre</td>
<td>Area of research strength located within a School/Faculty, across Schools/Faculties, or outside Schools/Faculties</td>
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Policy Statement

This Policy defines the classification criteria and procedures for the establishment, operating, monitoring and termination of approved research centres at Federation University.

Relationship of research centres with other groupings of research activity within the University

Research centres under this Policy denote formal groupings of academics and researchers that share common research interests and can successfully demonstrate that their collective activities will be of benefit to the university’s ongoing research performance, e.g., by fostering the development of early career researchers, and by enriching the university’s research culture.

Although often aligned, research centres differ from the Research Priority Areas (RPAs): research centres provide a social framework for the conduct of research, whereas RPAs provide a thematic framework identifying the strategic research priorities for the University.

A close alignment between the University’s research centres and the University’s RPAs would normally be expected. However individual researchers who do not wish to be within the social organizational framework that research centres provide can contribute strongly and independently to the advancement of the University’s RPAs.

Individual researchers (working within and/or across Schools)

The adoption of this policy does not preclude productive research undertaken by individual researchers.

Designation as a Research Centre of the University

To be formally recognised as a research centre designation, all research centres will need to receive approval as a research centre within three months of the date of approval of this Policy in accordance with this new policy framework.

If such an application is not received within that period and/or approval as a research centre is not granted, then that research centre will cease to be recognised as a research centre by the University.

To be recognised as a Federation University research centre, all centres must comply with this Policy.
Research Group

Research Groups involve research active staff sharing a common research interest and past research performance that align with at least one of either the University’s or School/Faculty’s RPAs.

Criteria for Research Group Designation

The Research Group must meet the definition of a Research Group as described in this Policy.

Research Groups must have a collective capability and capacity in an area of research expertise with at least 3 research active staff committed and identified under the Research Group.

Research active staff within a Research Group would need to collectively demonstrate a good track record over the most recent 3 year period (or lesser period of time for Early Career Researchers who have had academic appointment(s) totaling less than 3 years duration). This record would include:

1. External Research Income from Categories 1 – 4 in the order of at least $0.5 million p.a. collectively by the proposed staff over the past 3 years.
2. Regularly publishing in high quality academic journals and a strong level of overall publication output.
3. A record of HDR completions each year, and with demonstrable growth in HDR completions.
4. Evidence of significant impact and/or engagement arising from research activities.
5. The balance of these activities may vary, however the research outputs must be considered as being of national standard and consistent with discipline expectations.

A Research Group would be established to better utilise a School’s/Faculty’s resources and to present and market capabilities with identified potential for attracting industry and external grant funding.

A Research Group would be located within a single School/Faculty and would operate as a part of that School/Faculty with a demonstrable commitment of the School’s/Faculty’s resources.

Although a Research Group may be multi-disciplinary drawing capability and researchers from multiple Schools/Faculty’s etc, each Research Group will need to be located within a single School/Faculty.

A Research Group may have involvement with external institutions.

Application for Designation as a Research Group

An application for designation as a University Research Group can be submitted for consideration at any time. The application process outlined in the University Research Centres (URC) Procedure (RS1346) must be followed, in consultation with the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

Annual reporting requirements for Research Groups

Each Research Group must provide an annual report reviewing their activities in the past 12 months including their performance against the proposed targets in their approved application. The process outlined in the University Research Centres (URC) Procedure (RS1346) must be followed.

University Research Centre

Criteria for University Research Centre Designation
A University Research Centre must be able to demonstrate a collective capability and capacity in an area of research expertise aligned at least one of the Faculty’s or University’s strategic research priority areas with at least 5 research active staff committed and identified under the University Research Centre.

Research active staff associated with a University Research Centre would need to collectively demonstrate an outstanding track record over the most recent five (5) year period (or lesser period of time for Early Career Researchers). This record would include:

a. Total External Research Income (including Categories 1 – 4) of at least $1.0 million p.a. collectively by the proposed staff over the past 3 years.

b. Regularly publishing in high quality academic journals, and a high level of overall publication output. Publication outputs would need to collectively exceed average thresholds for the discipline.

c. A record of HDR completions each year, and with demonstrable growth in HDR completions.

d. Evidence of considerable impact and/or engagement arising from research activities.

e. The balance of these activities may vary, however the research outputs must be considered as being of high national standard and consistent with discipline expectations.

A University Research Centre would be established to better utilise the University’s resources and to present and market capabilities with identified potential for attracting industry and external grant funding.

A University Research Centre may be multi-disciplinary, drawing capability and researchers from multiple Schools/Faculty’s etc. A University Research Centre may be located within a single School/Faculty or it may reside across, or outside of Schools/Faculties.

A University Research Centre would normally be expected to have considerable external institutional involvement and to maintain an independent Advisory Board.

**Application for Designation as a University Research Centre**

An application for designation as a University Research Centre can be submitted for consideration at any time. The application process outlined in the University Research Centres (URC) Procedure (RS1346) must be followed, in consultation with the office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation).

**Annual reporting requirements for University Research Centres**

Each University Research Centre must provide an annual report reviewing their activities in the past 12 months including their performance against the proposed targets in their approved application. The process outlined in the University Research Centres (URC) Procedure (RS1346) must be followed.

**Selection Process**

**Establishment and renewal**

**Research Groups**

The decision to establish or renew Research Groups will be made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) after consideration of an application for establishment or renewal and acting on advice from:
Research Groups will normally be established for a period of 3 years.

University Research Centres

The decision to establish or renew University Research Centres will be made by the Vice Chancellor after consideration of an application for establishment or renewal and acting on advice from:

- Academic Board.
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation).
- Relevant Executive Deans
- Ad hoc advisory group(s), as appropriate.

University Research Centres will normally be established for a period of 5 years.

Review, renewal and disestablishment

Research Groups

The decision to continue or close a Research Group may be made at any time by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) acting on advice from the relevant Executive Dean(s) who will include with their recommendation(s) the recommendations of the Faculty Board(s).

A Research Group will be considered terminated at the end of the 3 year term unless the Research Group has an application to be renewed as a Research Group approved within that period.

University Research Centres

The decision to continue or close a University Research Centre may be made at any time by the Vice Chancellor acting on advice from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation) who will include with his/her recommendation the recommendations of the Academic Board.

A University Research Centre will be considered terminated at the end of the 5 year term unless the University Research Centre has had an application for renewal as a University Research Centre approved within that period.

Supporting Documents

University Research Centres (URC) Procedure – RS1346

Responsibility

- The Approval Authority responsible for monitoring the implementation, outcomes and scheduled review of this policy and its accompanying procedure/s – Professor Leigh Sullivan, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation)
- The Policy Sponsor responsible for maintaining the content of this policy as delegated by the DVC (R&I) – Ms Sharon Kitt, Director – Research Services
• The person responsible for the administration support for the maintenance of this policy as directed by the Director - Research Services – Ms Lauren Quinlan, Research Integrity & Policy Coordinator

Promulgation

The University Research Centres (URC) Policy will be communicated throughout the University community in the form of:

1. an Announcement Notice via FedNews website and on the ‘Recently Approved Documents’ page on the ‘Policies, Procedures and Forms @ the University’ website to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. distribution of e-mails to Heads of School / Heads of Department / University staff; and/or
3. Notification to Faculties

Implementation

The University Research Centres (URC) Policy will be implemented throughout the University via:

1. an Announcement Notice via FedNews website and on the ‘Recently Approved Documents’ page on the ‘Policies, Procedures and Forms @ the University’ website to alert the University-wide community of the approved Policy;
2. inclusion on the University Policy, Procedure and Forms website;
3. targeted emails to Executive Deans, Head of Schools, Associate Deans of Research and Directors of Research Centres; and
4. information sessions;