

Research Institutes and Centres Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Scope

(1) This Policy provides the framework for establishing and operating University Research Institutes ('Institutes') and Faculty Research Centres ('Centres') at UNE, with the goal of producing research of international repute in a strong and supportive research environment. The framework regulates the establishment, management, governance, review and disestablishment of Centres and Institutes.

(2) This Policy applies to all University Representatives and students.

(3) This Policy applies to any existing or proposed organisational units within the University whose primary activity is research, including not for profit organisations.

(4) This Policy does not apply to:

- a. externally funded entities established with specific governance requirements (e.g., Cooperative Research Centres (CRC's), ARC Centres of Excellence, partnerships and joint ventures). Externally funded entities should have a formal reporting line to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.
- b. organisational units whose primary role is to support research, such as research infrastructure, facilities and governance support.

(5) Within this Policy:

- a. Part A – covers the principles of this Policy;
- b. Part B – outlines the responsibilities of institutes and centres;
- c. Part C – covers proposal for establishing institute or centre;
- d. Part D – covers management and reporting structures of institutes and centres;
- e. Part E – covers the governance structures including membership of institutes and centres; and
- f. Part F – outlines the annual report, performance review and actions after a performance review and disestablishment of institutes and centres.

Section 2 - Policy

Part A - Policy Principles

(6) Institutes and Centres form an integral part of the University research culture, and are established in areas of strategic priority that benefit industry and society more broadly. They are expected to evolve over time to remain relevant and be demonstrably adding value to the University.

(7) The purpose of Institutes and Centres is to

- a. align with the University's strategic goals.
- b. advance institutional objectives by fostering and showcasing research strengths.

- c. build research capacity while demonstrating a return on the university's investment.
- d. facilitate the strategic utilisation of infrastructure and resources, ensuring efficient allocation and maximising their impact on research outcomes.
- e. assist in attracting funding from both private and public sectors.
- f. market the university's research capabilities by creating cohesive and formally recognised branding, enhancing the institution's visibility and reputation in the academic and broader communities.
- g. enrich training programs, particularly for Higher Degree by Research candidates, offering them opportunities for hands-on research experience and mentorship.
- h. provide a stimulating and supportive research environment for early-career researchers, fostering their professional development and encouraging their contributions to the academic community.
- i. add value in a way which cannot be achieved through an existing structure.

(8) Institutes and Centres must remain under the control of the University, even if they have affiliations or relationships with external entities, and must comply with University of New England governing regulations, frameworks, policies and procedures.

(9) Institutes and Centres are encouraged to adopt agile research methodologies that prioritise flexibility, responsiveness and, where possible, interdisciplinary collaboration.

Part B - Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the University

(10) University Faculties and Schools are to engage collaboratively with the Institutes and Centres to deliver integrated multidisciplinary research and research training for the whole University.

(11) The relevant Executive Dean will ensure that Centres establish collaborative relationships with Schools in relation to their key activities.

(12) From time to time, the University will call for submissions to establish an Institute or Centre and Faculties will participate in the selection process.

Responsibilities of Institutes

(13) Institutes are major scale, multidisciplinary, single or multi-Faculty structures involved in research, education or enterprise activities. They are typically external facing and are highly engaged with their local, national and international research communities and should foster creation of reciprocal relationships between stakeholders.

(14) Institutes must have the ability to achieve significant national or international recognition for the excellence of their research outcomes and training, as well as for the service provided to their stakeholders. The research should be of benefit to end users e.g. to society in general or to particular cohorts and deliver impact on real world issues. Institutes are expected to have one or more formal affiliations with an external entity, such as a government, non-government organisation, industry, a university partner or funding body.

(15) Institutes are intended to pursue major UNE research initiatives. The precise funding arrangements for the flow of funding will be negotiated and agreed between relevant stakeholders as part of the process for formulating the proposal for establishing the Institute.

(16) Institutes must have governance arrangements and an operational structure that will improve the outcomes of the Institute. Where the proposal is to establish a joint venture with another organization, this should be described including the governance arrangements vis-à-vis the Institute, the approach to funding and intellectual property and other rights and benefits.

(17) It is expected that an Institute will demonstrate success against the following criteria, weighted as appropriate for the strategic objectives of the Institute in the context of the overall UNE Strategic Plan:

- a. a coherent body of ongoing research and consultancy work, that represents a strategically important program, in a cohesive area of interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work, that distinctively advances the UNE reputation and research income;
- b. interaction between the Institute's funded research and the University's teaching and learning enterprise focused on HDR students, but also undergraduate course initiatives where relevant, to help achieve UNE's vision and enhance its reputation with respect to research-informed teaching;
- c. provision of substantial collaborative opportunities for staff to be engaged in impactful and well-funded research;
- d. relationships with or the capacity to develop relations with national or international collaborators and with those in a position to adopt or drive adoption of the results of research;
- e. sufficient scale to allow UNE to enhance its brand and competitive capacity in the competitive research market; and
- f. ability to be fully or substantially self-funded through partner contributions or other external income streams.

(18) The above criteria, appropriately weighted, will form the basis of any Key Performance Indicators proposed for the Institute. The nature of the funding model to be applied in Criterion (f) can be negotiated with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, in consultation with other relevant stakeholders as well as members of the University Senior Executive.

Responsibilities of Centres

(19) Centres can be faculty or school-based, incorporating prominent expertise of University academic staff who are undertaking significant research, education or enterprise activities. Centres may be sector-focused, with single- or multi-faculty engagement that strive to meet the emerging needs of their discipline, or to be engaged in multi- and interdisciplinary teaching and research. Centres are not a business unit of the University.

(20) Centres focus on externally funded research conducted through Faculties or Schools and are managed and staffed within the School. Centres are the basis for researcher collaboration, with a particular emphasis on securing external resources for research activities and raising the profile of the university in a particular research field. They assist with providing research development opportunities for staff, and to provide a focus for strengthening the School's research reputation. Cross-disciplinary teams across Faculties and Schools are also encouraged with the reporting and other arrangements being agreed between the Faculties and Schools concerned.

(21) Centres provide leadership opportunities for the associated staff. Centres must aim to be major drivers of the University's research collaboration by fostering strong linkages across disciplines, Schools and Faculties and with external partners.

(22) Centres must have governance arrangements and an operational structure that is designed to enhance the University's strategic aspirations. Where the proposal is to establish a joint venture with another organisation, this should be described including the governance arrangements vis-à-vis the joint venture approach to funding and intellectual property and other rights and benefits.

(23) It is expected that a Centre will demonstrate success against the following criteria, weighted as appropriate for the strategic objectives of the Centre in the context of the overall UNE Strategic Plan and relevant Faculty or School strategic objectives:

- a. pursuit, by a number of staff, within and beyond the Faculty/ School, of a coordinated research and consultancy program which will enhance the Faculty/ School's reputation and research income in areas of strategic

importance to the Faculty/ School;

- b. support of the research program through external funding;
- c. interaction between the Centre's research program and the teaching and learning enterprise of the relevant Faculty/ School/s to help achieve UNE's vision and enhance its reputation with respect to research-informed teaching;
- d. contribute to the development of the research careers and reputation of the staff of the schools concerned; and
- e. active collaboration with other relevant institutions and users of the research.

(24) These criteria, appropriately weighted, will form the basis of any Key Performance Indicators proposed for the Centre.

Part C - Establishment

(25) An Institute or Centre will have the scale and capacity to bring expertise to bear on major research questions of strategic importance to the University and its stakeholders.

Proposals for Establishment

(26) The University, from time to time, will call for applications for the establishment of Institutes and Centres. Also, researchers may make application for the establishment of an Institute or Centre at any time by following the steps outlined below.

(27) The [Proposal to Establish an Institute/Centre proforma](#) as outlined in the Guidelines provides an outline of the format for a proposal to establish an Institute or Centre. The proposal must demonstrate the capacity to meet the criteria for an Institute or Centre within a nominated timeframe.

(28) Institute proposals should be sent to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research. The proposal will be reviewed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and considered by an Establishment Committee, the membership of which will be determined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research on a case-by-case basis. If the proposal is approved, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will advise the Research Committee of Academic Board of the establishment of the Institute.

(29) Centre proposals should be endorsed by the relevant Head(s) of School and approved by the Executive Dean of Faculty before being sent to the Faculty Research Committee and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for noting. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will advise the Research Committee of Academic Board of the establishment of the Centre.

(30) Once an Institute or Centre has been approved, the Institute/ Centre must develop a website in accordance with University web publishing policies. The Institute/Centre web link will be placed on the University's Research Centres and Institutes webpage.

Part D - Management

Management and staffing Directors

(31) Research Institutes and Centres will have a Director. The Director will have a distinguished track record in research and have responsibility for the management, development and leadership of the Research Institute or Centre. This includes identifying and establishing research opportunities and funding sources for the Research Institute or Centre, and the development of members.

(32) The Director of an Institute has the same status and administrative delegation as a Head of School on all matters except workload and performance review for UNE staff working into the Institute from Schools. Where the Institute is established as a joint venture of UNE and an external organisation, the Director should be an employee of UNE.

(33) A University Research Institute Director:

- a. reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for the period of time they are the Director with salary and on-costs transferring to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for the period of their Directorship;
- b. is responsible for the budget, research direction and resourcing of the institute;
- c. is responsible for the management of staff within the institute, subject to the reporting arrangements for academic staff; and
- d. negotiates with the relevant Head of School/s for;
 - i. the release of staff to work within the Institute, and
 - ii. the terms under which staff are released.

(34) The Director of a Faculty Research Centre is a senior researcher within a School and reports to their Head of School. Issues of funding, workload and other matters are determined at the School level. A Centre Director:

- a. is responsible for the centre's additional earnings, research direction and resourcing of the Centre;
- b. negotiates with Head of School for time allocation of staff to work within the Centre, and the terms under which staff are released.

Staff Reporting Structures

(35) Institutes are managed and evaluated at a University level, with any UNE academic staff reporting through the Director to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for the purpose of workload and performance review. Institute staff may be drawn from across Schools as well as appointed to the Institute for specific externally funded projects.

(36) Where an Institute or a Centre is established as a joint venture between UNE and external organisations, there may be variations to reporting structures for staff, projects and performance.

(37) Faculty Centres are managed at a School level, with any UNE academic staff reporting to their relevant Head of School for the purpose of workload and performance review. Centre staff may be drawn from one or more Schools.

(38) All academic staff at UNE Research Centres report through the Director to the Head of School at which the staff member is employed for the purposes of workload and performance reporting, to ensure coordination and the delivery of research-informed teaching.

(39) Research secondments from a School to an Institute or Centre do not automatically relieve an academic of their obligations of service, nor their obligations to support or engage in teaching roles for their School. The duration of any research secondment to a Research Institute or Centre for a staff member is subject to negotiation between the Institute or Centre Director and the relevant Head of School for the staff member.

Assistance and Support

(40) The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research or Research Services provides services to assist in the establishment, review and disestablishment of UNE Centres/Institutes.

Part E - Governance

Governance - Steering Committee

(41) Each Research Institute will have a steering committee. The steering committee will operate under terms of reference established through the Institute Proposal and updated by that committee and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

(42) The steering committee will provide strategic advice to the Institute through the Director on how to best achieve the Objectives set out in the approved Proposal and in line with the University's strategic directions. The Director will be a member of the committee.

(43) Members must be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

Governance - Management Committee

(44) Each research institute or centre will have a management committee focused on operational matters. This committee will operate under terms of reference established by the Director and approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (for University Institutes) and the Executive Dean of Faculty (Centres).

(45) Members of the Management Committee must be approved by the Centre Director or committee chair. Details on membership are outlined in the Guidelines.

Part F - Review

Annual Report

(46) Institutes and Centres will submit an [Annual Report](#) in accordance with the guidance set out in the accompanying Guidelines to facilitate on-going monitoring and recording of achievements, and to enable inclusion of relevant information for the University's Annual Report to NSW Parliament.

(47) An Institute's Annual Report will be submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

(48) A Centre's Annual Report will be submitted to the relevant Head of School with a copy to the Executive Dean of Faculty, the relevant Faculty Research Committee and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

Performance Review

(49) Centres and Institutes will be formally reviewed at least every five (5) years. The review will be informed by evidence of performance against research related performance indicators. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will lead the review of Institutes. The relevant Executive Dean of Faculty will lead the review of Centres.

(50) The Review Committee for an Institute will include:

- a. an external Professor who has experience as a director of a research institute at another university in a cognate field;
- b. Director, Research or Director of Enterprise;
- c. a Professor from within the University of New England, nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research.

(51) The Review Committee for a Centre will include:

- a. a professor who has experience as a director of a research centre or institute in a cognate field;
- b. Associate Dean, Research from the Faculty;
- c. a UNE Professor, nominated by the Executive Dean of Faculty.

(52) An Institute or Centre will undertake a [performance review](#) as outlined in the Guidelines to be considered by the Review Committee. This document will contain at least the following:

- a. all annual reports since the time of last performance review or establishment, as appropriate;
- b. a summary of all achievements and financial position since the time of last performance review, or

establishment, as applicable, linked clearly to the performance KPI's;

- c. the plans for the Centre/Institute over the next five (5) years, showing how this plan links to the University's overall strategic plan.

(53) The Review Committee will report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (for Institutes) or Executive Dean of Faculty (for Centres) providing recommendations as to continuation, disestablishment or change of focus, informed by evidence of performance against nominated performance indicators prior to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research or Executive Dean of Faculty making a decision about continuation, disestablishment or a change of focus.

(54) Centres may also be reviewed, as part of the reporting cycle and process for Schools under the [Academic Quality Assurance Policy](#) or other Internal Audit processes.

Actions after Performance Review

(55) The relevant Review Committee will recommend to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research or Executive Dean of Faculty that the Institute or Centre be:

- a. continued;
- b. continued, subject to modification and review recommended; or
- c. disestablished.

(56) If the recommendation is: be continued, the Review Committee may recommend expected or suggested modifications to the relevant Director.

(57) If the recommendation is: be continued subject to modification and review, the Committee shall specify modifications and shall also recommend the review process and timing to evaluate compliance.

(58) If the recommendation is: for disestablishment, the committee may recommend the timing and mechanism for disestablishment.

(59) The Executive Dean for the relevant Centre, or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research for the Institute, will make the decision on the future of the Centre or Institute, informed by recommendations of the Review Committee. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will report to the Research Committee of Academic Board on any decisions made with respect to establishment, continuance, modification or disestablishment of a Research Institute or Centre.

Disestablishment

(60) The disestablishment of a Institute or Centre may occur as an outcome of the five (5) year review, or may be initiated by the Executive Dean (for the Centre) or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research (for the Institute) if any of the below apply:

- a. it has fulfilled its purpose;
- b. there has been significant change in direction, leadership or funding of the Institute or Centre;
- c. it no longer satisfies the requirements for Institute or Centre status.

(61) All Institutes and Centres must include arrangements for disestablishment in their original business plan, including appropriate arrangements for any residual staff, assets and/or other commitments.

Section 3 - Authority & Compliance

(62) The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer (VC&CEO), consistent with the [Vice-Chancellor Functions Rule](#),

makes this Policy.

(63) The Policy Steward, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, is authorised to make processes, guidelines and procedures for the effective implementation and operation of this Policy, and to publish associated documents and any tool that will assist with compliance. The guidelines, procedures and associated documents must be compatible with the provisions of this Policy and any other policy documents.

(64) Notwithstanding other provisions of this policy, the VC&CEO may approve an exception to this policy where the VC&CEO determines the application of this policy would otherwise lead to an unfair, unreasonable or absurd outcome. Approvals under this clause must:

- a. be documented in writing;
- b. state the reason for the exception; and
- c. be registered in the approved UNE electronic Records Management System (RMS) in accordance with the [Records Management Rule](#).

Section 4 - Quality Assurance

(65) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research will regularly monitor and report to the VC&CEO on the operation of, and compliance with, this Policy.

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	4th December 2025
Review Date	4th December 2028
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer
Approval Date	4th December 2025
Expiry Date	Not applicable
Unit Head	Chris Armstrong Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research
Enquiries Contact	Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) +61 2 6773 3715

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"Student" - Is an admitted student or an enrolled student, at the relevant time: 1. an admitted student is a student who has been admitted to a UNE course of study and who is entitled to enrol in a unit of study or who has completed all of the units in the UNE course of study; 2. an enrolled student is a student who is enrolled in a unit of study at UNE.

"Senior Executive" - Means the Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research, Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Assistant Vice-Chancellor Transition and Executive Director Future Students, Engagement & Technologies.

"Research" - Is the creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative (defined by the Australian Research Council).

"Records Management System (RMS)" - The University of New England installation of TRIM (Content Manager), or equivalent replacement system, under the control of the Records Management Office.

"School" - Is an organisational unit comprising academic staff in related fields of study who are responsible for teaching and research in those academic fields together with support staff.

"University Representative" - means a University staff member, contractor, agent, affiliate, residential staff member, UNE Council member, Council committee member, employee of a controlled entity, director of a controlled entity and any other person engaged by the University to undertake some activity for or on behalf of the University. It includes corporations, affiliated organisations and other bodies falling into one or more of these categories.

"Institute" - An Institute is a prominent, large scale, multi-disciplinary research grouping that embodies research excellence, and undertakes world-leading research in support of its mission. Research Institutes will have strategic external relationships with international and domestic universities, industry, and government partners. Institutes will have their own cost-centre. The Director of an Institute will report directly to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

"Centre" - A narrower and generally smaller (relative to Institutes) entity, focusing on specialised and / or thematic research, education, and external engagement and impact activities. A Centre comprises a significant group of leading researchers working collaboratively in a clearly defined field of inquiry that is aligned to the University's strategic intent, and to the interests of governments, industry and/or communities. It enables the development of critical mass and promotes this focus and research strength externally. Research Centres are part of the Faculty and do not operate as a separate business unit.