

Research Institute Policy

Section 1 - Purpose and Context

(1) Over the last decade, Western Sydney University has developed and consolidated its distinctive research strengths. The University has pursued a strategy of research concentration and selectivity, building its capacity and the sustainability of its research. The model of selectivity and concentration structures research growth through themes, programs, and groupings of researchers.

(2) The University has established a system of research concentrations with a small number of University Research Centres and Groups - see [Research Centres](#) and [Research Groups](#) policies. In the context of [Excellence in Research for Australia \(ERA\)](#), this approach has been extended to increase the scale of the University's research in areas of priority and established research strength, through the staged designation of University Research Institutes. Each of these forms of institutional recognition and definition allows the University to focus funding and support for research in order to achieve its goals as set out in the University Research Plan.

(3) This policy affirms the role of University Research Institutes in the strategic plan and development of research at the University and provides guidance on the implementation of this strategy. It sets out the processes for the establishment, review, and dissolution of University Research Institutes.

(4) University Research Institutes provide a research-intensive environment that supports the productivity of researchers by facilitating improved success in receiving competitive grant income, improving the international quality and quantity of research outputs, and attracting and completing quality Higher Degree Research (HDR) students.

(5) University Research Institutes undertake major programs of research, attract external research funding, produce high-quality research outputs, collaborate extensively with external agencies, both national and international, and promote interdisciplinary collaboration within the University. These activities support the development of a high-quality research training environment.

(6) Not all research and not all nationally and internationally significant researchers will be located within Research Institutes. Research centres, groups and individual researchers in schools will continue to make an important contribution to the University's research.

(7) This policy does not apply to any group that has as its prime focus the teaching of undergraduate courses, or the provision of research support services such as mathematics and statistics consulting services.

Section 2 - Definitions

(8) Nil.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

University Research Institute

(9) A University Research Institute is an area of international and national excellence in research and development

within the University. University Research Institutes are established to facilitate, extend and enable the promotion and conduct of research, development and related activities in well-defined areas of research strength that advance the achievement of the University's mission, vision and goals.

(10) The structure of a University Research Institute may vary depending on its context. A University Research Institute may be based on a single research area or discipline, or it may include a number of research areas and be cross-disciplinary in nature. As the research intensity of the University increases, new areas of research strength may coalesce into significant concentrations that are worthy of designation as a University Research Institute.

(11) Each University Research Institute will be led by a director, and its researchers will carry out world-leading research in their nominated research area/s, linked by a common focus and vision.

Establishment of a University Research Institutes

(12) University Research Institutes will be designated as premier areas of research activity and excellence within the University. University Research Institutes are established by the Board of Trustees based on a recommendation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International to the Vice-Chancellor and President. University Research Institutes have a term of five years, subject to annual reporting on performance to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International and are subject to external review at year five. Assessment of performance at review may result in recommendation for renewal for a further period of up to five years.

(13) A University Research Institute will be monitored for the purposes of accountability and compliance with this policy and its procedures by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International.

Characteristics of a University Research Institute

(14) University Research Institutes will foster research collaboration on a larger scale both within the University and externally, and have clear objectives against performance indicators outlined in the establishment documentation for the Institute. An Institute will:

- a. Accelerate the research productivity of the University and increase the University's external research funding base and its share of the nationally available Research Block Grant funding pool.
- b. Be a core contributor to fields of research rated above world standard in [Excellence in Research for Australia \(ERA\)](#) assessments.
- c. Extend and enable the promotion and conduct of research, development and related activities in cross-disciplinary fields of study.
- d. Demonstrate intellectual cohesion around well-articulated research problems and research programs addressing those problems.
- e. Have a critical mass of researchers operating within a number of research concentrations including a leading, visionary, and productive researcher as the director.
- f. Articulate succession plans, demonstrating the development of future generations of researchers via support of postdoctoral fellows and research candidate training.
- g. Provide a supportive research culture for HDR candidates, and have a major role in providing support and supervision of research candidates at master and doctoral levels. Institutes will have clearly defined relationships to the University's academic programs, including undergraduate, honours, postgraduate coursework and research degrees.
- h. Demonstrate organisational cohesion and leadership, together with strong governance processes and external guidance through an external advisory board.
- i. Demonstrate collaborative and/or engaged research partnerships within and outside the University, particularly internationally.

- j. Demonstrate that its program has impact, as measured by its influence on other research and teaching programs, and external agencies, including government, industry, business, community and the professions.
- k. Demonstrate a return on the University's investment in terms of external income generation, benchmarked by discipline. This external income should have an upward trajectory.
- l. Demonstrate high quality in research publications, including but not limited to field-specific citations, impact factors and other bibliometric/impact indicators, appropriate to the discipline/s underpinning the work of the Institute.
- m. Have broad types of dissemination of results, appropriate to its community, industry, and scholarly linkages.
- n. Have achievements exceeding the Australian higher education sector average in each performance measure. Performance will be benchmarked against relevant national and international concentrations of research.
- o. Maintain a well-articulated research plan that links to the University research plan and strategy, with clear performance indicators that will be reported on annually.

Section 4 - Procedures

Director, University Research Institute

(15) A University Research Institute is led by a Director, Research Institute who will be a highly productive and distinguished researcher of international standing. The Director, Research Institute will develop and enhance the Institute's research profile, performance and reputation through competitive grant applications, publications and attraction of research candidates to the Institute. The Director, Research Institute leads all aspects of the research direction including external relationship management and strategic functions of the Institute.

(16) The Director, Research Institute reports to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International is responsible for steering the development of the Institute and for providing intellectual leadership and overall management at the level of the established performance benchmarks.

(17) The Director, Research Institute will have line management responsibility for staff within the Institute, and will normally hold office for an initial period of three to five years. The Director, Research Institute will normally have 100% time commitment to the Institute, including his or her own research.

External Advisory Board

(18) Each University Research Institute will receive external guidance through the constitution of an external advisory board. The advisory board will comprise representatives of relevant academic, government and professional areas and associated organisations to provide advice to the future directions of the Institute and its place in the Australian research community.

(19) The appointment of the Chair and members of the advisory board will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President based on nominations from the Director, Research Institute and a recommendation from Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International. The external advisory board will normally meet face to face at least once per calendar year and will be required to consider the Annual Report before submission to the University Research Committee.

(20) The Vice-Chancellor and President will approve terms of reference for the external advisory board.

Management Committee

(21) Each University Research Institute will convene a management committee to provide expert advice on program areas and to oversee administrative functions and operations, particularly in research education, quality of grant applications and the broader research culture alongside the Director, Research Institute.

(22) The management committee will normally consist of Institute members, including senior Institute administrative and technical staff, and a member or members nominated by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International. The management committee will meet regularly throughout the year.

(23) The Director, Research Institute may also establish operational sub-committees, which will report to the Management Committee.

Membership of University Research Institutes

(24) All academic staff employed in a University Research Institute are members of the Institute.

(25) Academic staff employed 0.4 FTE or more in another University academic organisational unit may become a school based researcher of a University Research Institute.

(26) A potential member employed outside the Institute - as outlined above - must demonstrate that his or her research contributes to a research program in the Institute, thus enabling the member to contribute to the Institute's community of scholars and its benchmarked performance, as follows:

- a. Research to be conducted offers an appropriate fit with the research programs of the Institute, to the satisfaction of the Director, Research Institute.
- b. Minimum levels of achievement in external research income and research publication and quality, detailed by the applicant to the satisfaction of the Director, Research Institute and as endorsed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International. A lower level of achievement may be set for early career researchers.
- c. Deans are expected to facilitate this collaboration in negotiation with the Director, Research Institute, and the staff member involved.

(27) University Research Institute membership may be held for three years, and is renewable subject to assessment of contribution and performance by the Director, Research Institute.

(28) The research performance of University Research Institutes will be reported in two ways:

- a. based on University Research Institute membership; and
- b. on University Research Institute membership and the performance of school-based researchers involved with the University Research Institute.

(29) Each University Research Institute will have specific discipline-based performance targets over a three-year period. All Institute staff will have an expectation that they will contribute to these targets, based on each member's academic level.

(30) It is expected that all Institute members will have a collegial relationship with at least one University school, ensuring that productive links between schools, centres, groups and Institutes are nurtured.

Principles for Financial Support

(31) The University has articulated an establishment package for University Research Institutes highlighting the importance of funding new research-intensive staff, core research management support, and postgraduate scholarships.

(32) The Director, Research Institute is responsible for the financial management of his/her University Research Institute. University support is not guaranteed beyond the first five years of funding of a University Research Institute nor during any period of agreed extension.

(33) Designation and ongoing University support will be subject to satisfactory research performance as reported in the required annual reports.

Annual Reports

(34) University Research Institutes will submit an annual report to the Research Services who will submit to the Research Committee for review by 31st March each year.

(35) The annual report will provide analysis and assessment of performance relative to the performance measures reported in the Institute research plan (see Clause 15) and will propose suitable changes to the plan for the following year.

Review and Discontinuation of University Research Institutes

(36) At least once in every five years each University Research Institute will undergo an external review, using performance data and led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International. Reviews will be conducted in accordance with the [University Reviews Policy](#), and their outcomes will be reported to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International and Academic Senate's Research Committee.

(37) A University Research Institute may be discontinued by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Vice-Chancellor and President, following a recommendation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International.

(38) The normal process for discontinuation follows a request from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International to formally review the performance of an existing Institute. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research will lead a review, using performance data and normally including external assessment, and provide a recommendation to the Vice-Chancellor and President. The annual report process may also trigger the conduct of such a review, which may result in the discontinuation of an Institute. A recommendation for discontinuation of an Institute may also arise from a cyclical review.

Part A - Operation

Cost Centre

(39) University Research Institutes will be allocated a discrete cost centre. All research projects associated with Institute members will operate through that cost centre.

(40) In the event of a review of a University Research Institute, financial performance data will be collected and measured only through the allocated cost centre.

Relationships with Schools

(41) University Research Institutes will collaborate with University schools, research centres and research groups.

(42) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International will ensure that University Research Institutes establish appropriate relationships with schools in relation to their key activities, including contributions to appropriate school committees. University Research Institute and their members are required to contribute to and enrich the undergraduate program through some teaching and other interactions.

(43) University Research Institutes are represented in the membership of Academic Senate and relevant Standing Committees, and will contribute to the academic governance of Higher Degree Research and other relevant award courses.

Research Training

(44) University Research Institutes will:

- a. promote their research training activity both nationally and internationally and recruit high quality candidates aligned with the Institutes' research programs.
- b. will provide high-level research infrastructure and resources to attract and secure high-quality HDR candidates.
- c. will involve their HDR candidates and Bachelor (Honours) students supervised by Institute staff in research seminars, conferences and workshops as appropriate. It is expected that all research candidates will present their work on campus at least once per year, at School or Institute conferences or colloquia or as part of the annual progress review.

External Research Agreements

(45) University Research Institutes are not independent legal entities. Any research agreements with external bodies must be approved and executed on behalf of the University by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International or those persons with delegated authority.

(46) The term University Research Institute is reserved for use by University Research Institutes Institute, in all documents produced by University staff, including web pages. Groups not approved in accordance with this policy are not permitted to use the phrase Research Institute in their title.

(47) In describing a University Research Institute and its staff on the web, business cards, and brochures or in presentation material, the University policies on visual representation and corporate identity must be observed - see [Web Policy](#) and [Brand and Visual Identity Management Policy](#).

(48) A University Research Institute must clearly promote its relationship to the University in its title, web sub-site or any other form, e.g. X is a University Research Institute in the disciplines of X Y Z in the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International, Western Sydney University.

(49) University Research Institutes will not develop or use logos or visual identities different or separate from the University's [Brand and Visual Identity Management Policy](#) without the formal approval of the Vice-Chancellor and President. The design of all visual material for University Research Institutes will be approved by the Vice-Chancellor and President on the recommendation of the Director, Corporate Communications.

(50) A University Research Institute will develop and maintain a subsite of the University's website in accordance with the [Web Policy](#) and associated guidelines.

Section 5 - University Guidelines

(51) Nil.

Status and Details

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Unit Head	Deborah Sweeney Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President, Research, Enterprise and International 96787417
Author	Tanya Barclay
Enquiries Contact	Sandra Lawrence Research Executive Officer 96787418