Research Centres Policy

Section 1 - Background and Purpose

(1) This Policy regulates the establishment, management, reporting, review and disestablishment of La Trobe University Research Centres in line with the Research Centres Strategic Framework and principles.

(2) The establishment of a Research Centre can only be justified where the proposed research activities will represent academic endeavour at a high level and be likely to enhance the national and international standing of the University, over and above what would be achieved in the normal course of the conduct of research by teams or laboratory-based groups.

(3) These Procedures implement the Research Centres Policy and provide clear processes for the establishment, governance, management and disestablishment of Research Centres, as well as annual reporting and review requirements.

Section 2 - Scope

(4) This Policy applies to:

  a. all campuses;
  b. all colleges and schools;
  c. all existing and new Research Centres.

(5) This Policy does not apply to joint research ventures for which the underlying governance and management arrangements are determined via bespoke contractual arrangements:

  a. research centre co-owned with another party and established as a separate entity;
  b. external legal entities created as virtual schools.

(6) Unless otherwise stated, the processes for the establishment, continuation and disestablishment of Research Centres are outlined in these Procedures.

(7) 'Research Centres' for the purposes of these procedures includes Centres whose main purpose is research.

Section 3 - Policy Statement

(8) Research Centres are one of the major structural drivers of the University's research performance. Whether their research activity is single-disciplinary or multi-disciplinary based, Research Centres have an important role to play in supporting the University's research priorities and strategic goals.

(9) La Trobe is committed to providing the support necessary for Research Centres to contribute effectively to the University's goals for research.

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(10) This Policy aims to ensure that Research Centres are established, managed and disestablished strategically and are provided with an efficient overarching governance and management structure.

(11) A Research Centre is eligible for establishment if it adds significant value in terms of University research quality, performance and profile in a manner that cannot be achieved if the researchers involved in the Research Centre operated individually or in small groups at School or Department level.

(12) Research Centres are established for a period of three (3) years and approved by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee.

(13) Research Centres are normally associated with a School and governance structures must reflect this. The primary reporting line from the Centre Director is normally to the Head of School.

Annual Reporting

(14) Annual reporting is a mandatory requirement of all Research Centres established under this Policy. Annual reports should be prepared using the relevant template and submitted in accordance with these Procedures.

Review

(15) All Research Centres, whether they are established under or prior to the enactment of this Policy, will be reviewed every three (3) years by providing a report to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee.

(16) Achievements will be measured against Key Performance Indicators set at the time of establishment. Details of the review process are outlined in this Procedure.

Disestablishment

(17) Recommendation by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee that a Research Centre close shall be referred to the Academic Board for review and decision. Details of the disestablishment process are outlined in this Procedure.

(18) The University reserves the right to disestablish a Research Centre at any time, where a Research Centre can no longer justify its continuing existence in terms of the requirements of this Policy. In these cases, it will be disestablished, usually upon the recommendation of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee. The final decision on disestablishment rests with the Academic Board.

(19) Research Centres are governed by all other University policies related to their activities, e.g. Ethics, Intellectual Property, Graduate Research, Research Data Management, Research Integrity, Research Contracts, and Consulting.

Section 4 - Procedure

Part A - Establishment and Approval

(20) Research Centres are established for a period of three (3) years and approved by the Academic Board on the recommendation of the Research and Graduate Studies Committee upon a proposal supported by the Head of School, the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the relevant College and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement).

(21) Proposals to establish Research Centres will be made using the Proposal to establish a Research Centre Template and should outline the Research Centre's alignment with the University's research priorities and strategic goals.

(22) Research Centres are required to establish a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) by which its performance can be measured annually. KPIs are determined by each Research Centre Management Committee in context of the

relevant School based targets for income, publications, HDR completions, the School business plan and the Research Centre's strategy.

(23) Joint Venture partnerships may have additional criteria for performance based on contractual obligations.

(24) The date of establishment will be the date that the Academic Board approves the Research Centre.

Part B - Naming

(25) All Research Centres must have "Research" and "Centre" in title.

(26) The use of the name "Research Centre" in relation to University academic activities is only permitted for organisational units that have been formally approved as a Research Centre under the Research Centres Policy.

(27) Existing Research Centres will be given a period of time to satisfy the relevant criteria or to change their name. For these Centres, the word "research" can be included in the Centre's name or as a tag, e.g. "A Research Centre of La Trobe University".

(28) The use of the word "Institute", "Australia" or "National" are only to be used upon approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) with criteria for scale.

(29) When justified (e.g. change in the original focus of the Research Centre's activities), name changes may be requested and recommended to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee for approval by the Academic Board.

Part C - Governance and Management

(30) Research Centres are required to develop a three (3) year strategic plan to be endorsed by their Advisory Committee and an annual operational plan to be approved by their Management Committee and Head of School. Research Centres must be included in the School business planning process.

Research Centre Advisory Committee

(31) Research Centres must establish an Advisory Committee (or when relevant, an Advisory and Scientific Committee).

(32) An Advisory Committee will normally consist of Centre Director, one other member of the Centre, Head of School or School nominee, Pro Vice-Chancellor College or nominee, plus at least 3 external expertise-based appointed people.

(33) Advisory Committees are expected to meet at least twice a year (in person, or by teleconference) and be reviewed every 3 years.

(34) The Advisory Committee's role is to:

   a. facilitate industry, government and non-profit sector engagement and partnerships; and
   b. facilitate the provision of independent input and guidance on the external environment.

Research Centre Management Committee

(35) Research Centres must have a Research Centre Management Committee comprising of Centre Director, Centre Manager (if applicable) or other Senior Administrator, Head of School, School Manager and one other staff member from the Research Centre. Management Committees are expected to meet quarterly (in person, or by teleconference).

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Relationships with Schools

(36) Research Centres contribute in identifiable and measurable ways to School seminar programs and research culture, and have representation at School Research Committees.

(37) The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development) is the first point of contact for Research Centre Directors and Head of Schools for advice outside of the School environment.

(38) All members of a Research Centre must comply with all other University policies related to research, e.g. Ethics, Intellectual Property, Graduate Research, Research Data Management, Research Integrity, Research Contracts, Consulting.

Part D - Director

(39) Research Centre Directors have continuing appointments within a specific School, in budget and therefore subject to standard La Trobe human resource management policies including AWPS, Career Success and Promotion processes and the conditions of the Collective Agreement.

(40) The Centre Director reports to the Head of School for Career Success, AWPS allocations and Centre operations.

(41) Professional development for Research Centre Directors is provided by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development) and the Research Education & Development (RED) unit covering leadership, partnership development, tender bidding, culture development, and financial management.

(42) Regular Research Centre Director Forums will be hosted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development) with key guest speakers to inform professional development programs and provide regular opportunities to share good practice.

Part E - Funding and Support

Administrative Support

(43) Schools provide appropriately skilled and experienced administrative staff familiar with Research Centres who support one or more centres. Administrative staff employed by the School report to the School Manager for Career Success and to the Research Centre Director for operational workload.

(44) Schools also provide support in terms of accommodation and facilities.

Block Grant

(45) Block grant nominally "earned" by Research Centres is not returned directly to Research Centres. Block grant is distributed by the University to Schools to be used to fund core Research Centre academic staff and administrative support from Schools. Resources required to support the Centre will be discussed as part of the annual budget process via agreement between the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement), the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the relevant College, the Head of School and the Research Centre Director.

Additional Funding

(46) Large Research Centres with substantial research funding will be eligible to apply for additional support to cater for the complexity associated with large numbers of contracts and diverse revenue streams. Eligible Research Centres will be provided with support from the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) on a case-by-case basis, but with a view to the need for assistance with complex income and staffing arrangements.

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(47) Research Centres will not automatically attract funding from the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) and this should not be considered an entitlement. Support for management will be made available subject to a detailed justification on the requirement to manage complexity and will be tied to clear KPIs around publications and income.

Part F - Graduate Research Training

(48) Higher Degree by Research candidates are enrolled in Schools and are under the responsibility of the Schools; Research Centre staff workloads contribute to supervision load.

(49) Since Centres are an integral part of their host School, the allocation of HDR scholarships will be through the respective School. Local Research Centre contact(s) will work with the Director of Graduate Research.

(50) Research Centres and Schools are expected to provide a high quality HDR training environment, and HDR candidates should be encouraged to participate in both Research Centre and School activities.

Part G - Annual Report

(51) All Research Centres are required to submit an annual report on research and related activities against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

(52) Annual reports are prepared using the Research Centres Annual Report Template and submitted by 1 July each year to Head of School, Pro Vice-Chancellor of relevant College, then to the Research and Graduate Studies Committee for governance oversight.

(53) Research Centres are encouraged to publish their annual reports, after removal of any confidential information, on their website.

Part H - Three Year Review

(54) All Research Centres are subject to a three year review cycle by the Research and Graduate Studies Committee and Academic Board with a standard format and schedule from 2017.

(55) The Research and Graduate Studies Committee and the Academic Board will consider the review recommendations and make a determination that the Centre:

   a. continue, in its current form; or
   b. continue, with changes (actions, milestones and timeframe to be specified); or
   c. be closed (reasons to be specified).

(56) The review will take into consideration the past performance of the Research Centre, its contribution towards the achievement of the University strategic goals and its Strategic Plan for the next three years. Achievements will be measured against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) set at the time of establishment. If the KPIs have not been met substantially, then the three yearly report must include explanations and plans for remedy.

(57) The scope of the review will cover the aspects contained in the Research Centre three year Review Template.

Part I - Disestablishment

(58) Disestablishment of a Research Centre is subject to approval from the Research and Graduate Studies Committee upon evidence of the benefits being provided by the Head of School and the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the relevant College and informed by the most recent annual and/or 3 year review reports provided to the Research and Graduate

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Studies Committee.

(59) Recommendation to or from the Research and Graduate Studies Committee that a Research Centre be disestablished shall be referred to the Academic Board for review and decision.

(60) The decision to disestablish a Research Centre will require a clear plan for the orderly winding down of the Research Centre operations including:

   a. communication with Advisory Committee, funding agencies, and internal University stakeholders;
   b. provisions for adequate storage and treatment of data associated with research projects; and
   c. removal of Research Centre websites (or parts of) where appropriate.

Section 5 - Definitions

(61) For the purpose of this Policy and Procedure:

   a. Research Centres – Research Centres whose main purpose is research;
   b. Director – the Director of the Research Centre;
   c. RGSC – the Research and Graduate Studies Committee;
   d. DVC R – the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement);
   e. ODVCR – Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research);
   f. PVC C – the College Pro Vice-Chancellors;
   g. PVC RD – the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development);

Section 6 - Stakeholders

Responsibility for implementation – Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development)

Responsibility for monitoring implementation and compliance – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement); Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Development); College Pro Vice-Chancellors and Head of Schools.

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