

Research Centre Policy

Section 1 - Key Information

Policy Type and Approval Body	Academic - Academic Board
Accountable Executive - Policy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement)
Responsible Manager - Policy	Executive Director, Research Office
Review Date	10 December 2027

Section 2 - Purpose

(1) This Policy describes the framework for the proposal of new Research Centres and their governance, management, resourcing, reporting, renewal and disestablishment.

Section 3 - Scope

(2) This Policy applies to:

- a. all campuses
- b. all Schools and Departments
- c. all Research Centres

(3) Part K applies to external or joint research ventures for which the underlying governance and management arrangements are determined via bespoke contractual arrangements, such as:

- a. Research Centres co-operated with another party and established as a separate entity;
- b. external legal entities affiliated with the University;
- c. Centres specifically funded as a Centre by external granting bodies such as the ARC and NHMRC, Government or philanthropic partners.

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

Section 4 - Key Decisions

Key Decisions	Role
Approve the establishment, renewal and disestablishment of all Research Centres	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) (DVC(R&IE))

Section 5 - Policy Statement

(5) Research Centres make an important contribution to the performance and impact of research carried out in Schools and to the University's strategic research goals and reputation. This includes through the development of a strong research culture, by undertaking impactful research which is engaged with industry and broader communities, attracting research income, driving growth in research outputs, development of researchers and supervising undergraduate (Hons) and Higher Degree by Research candidates.

(6) Research Centres contribute in identifiable ways to the research culture of the School, including leading and participating in leading School research activities and events. When located at a regional campus, Research Centres also contribute to the research culture of the host campus.

(7) The establishment of a Research Centre will be considered when the proposed research activities represent sustainable academic endeavour at a high level and the formation of the Centre will enhance the national and international reputation of the University over and above what would be achieved in the normal course of conduct of research by research groups or teams. A proposed Research Centre is expected to meet a minimum requirement (e.g. annual grant income, output and impact targets) as agreed at the time of establishment or renewal.

(8) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) will approve the establishment, renewal and disestablishment of all Research Centres following endorsement by the Dean of the host School and recommendation by the Research Strategy Committee.

(9) Research Centres will normally be associated with a School and with a governance structure that reflects this. The primary reporting line from the Centre Director is normally to the Dean (or delegate), with their academic line manager often being a Head of Department (or similar).

(10) Annual reporting is a mandatory requirement of all Research Centres established under this Policy (in accordance with the process outlined in 'Part E - Annual Reporting').

(11) Research Centres will adhere to all University policies, including policies governing research ethics and integrity, intellectual property, graduate research, research data management, research integrity, conflict of interest, research clinical trials, research contracts, pricing and consulting.

Section 6 - Procedures

Part A - Establishment

(12) Proposals to establish a Research Centre will be completed by the proposed Research Centre Director in consultation with, and submitted with endorsement by, the Dean to the Research Strategy Committee. Proposers will consult key stakeholders in developing a proposal, including the School research leadership team.

(13) Research Centres will be established for a maximum period of five (5) years with the possibility to seek renewal for a further period in accordance with the process outlined in 'Part F - Renewal' of this policy.

(14) All proposals for Research Centre establishment must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. the Research Strategy Committee for consideration and recommendation; and
- b. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) for approval.

(15) Proposals to establish Research Centres will be made using the Proposal to establish a Research Centre template and should outline:

- a. the purpose, value and future goals of the Research Centre, along with its alignment to the School's and University's strategic research goals;
- b. the proposed term for which the Research Centre will operate;
- c. membership of the Research Centre and plans for development of its members;
- d. measures through which performance of the Research Centre for the proposed term will be monitored;
- e. model for financial sustainability of the Research Centre;
- f. benchmarking against similar external Research Centres and other entities.

(16) The date of establishment of the Research Centre will be the date of approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement).

Part B - Naming

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

(18) 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 this Policy.

(19) 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.

(20) Changes to the name of a Research Centre as a result of a change in focus of Centre activities may be proposed to the Research Strategy Committee for recommendation, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) for approval.

Part C - Membership

(21) A member of a Research Centre is an individual who actively participates in and contributes to the Research Centre's research program and objectives. Active contribution includes but is not limited to participation in research projects, the development and submission of proposals for research funding and production of research outputs.

(22) Research Centre Directors determine membership of their Research Centre. There is no expectation that La Trobe staff who work in the same disciplinary field(s) will automatically become a member of a Research Centre.

(23) Research Centre membership comprises of Core Members and Affiliate Members.

(24) Core Members include:

- a. Continuing and fixed-term academic and professional staff employed specifically by the Research Centre;
- b. Continuing and fixed-term academic and professional staff employed by La Trobe;
- c. Graduate research candidates admitted to a higher degree by research at La Trobe.

(25) Affiliate Members include:

- a. La Trobe staff and graduate research candidates who elect to be affiliated members only;
- b. Casual, honorary or adjunct La Trobe staff;
- c. Students enrolled in a coursework degree who are undertaking research activities in the Research Centre;
- d. National or international research collaborators based at external higher education providers or research organisations;
- e. External stakeholders from relevant industry and community groups, such as the government, for profit and not-for-profit organisations.

(26) Staff fully funded by a Research Centre (i.e. 1 FTE) can only be a Core Member of the Research Centre which provides funding for their position/s; they are able to be an Affiliate Member of other Research Centres. Staff employed in fixed-term and continuing roles by multiple Research Centres can be Core Members of these Research Centres and Affiliate Members of other Research Centres.

(27) Unless employed specifically by a Research Centre (25a & 26), individuals may be a Core Member of a Research Centre that does not sit within their academic school.

(28) Membership of the Research Centre will be monitored and maintained annually by the Research Centre Director who will be kept informed by staff of their membership of other Research Centres.

(29) For T&R staff, membership of a Research Centre does not qualify for workload assignments in the Academic Workload Planning System except for Research Centre Directors, Co-Directors and Deputy-Directors in consultation with the staff members' Dean or line manager.

Part D - Governance and Management of the Research Centre

(30) Research Centres are required to develop a five (5) year strategic plan to be endorsed by their Advisory Committee and an annual operational plan to be approved by their Management Committee and Dean (or delegate).

Research Centre Management Committee

(31) Research Centres must have a Research Centre Management Committee comprising of the Centre Director (Chair), the Centre Manager (or similar professional role) if one exists and other members from the Research Centre. The Management Committee may also contain School representatives. Management Committees are expected to meet quarterly (in person, or online).

(32) The purpose of the Research Centre Management Committee is to oversee the centres activities, operation and implementation of strategic guidance from the Research Centre Advisory Committee.

Research Centre Advisory Committee

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

(34) An Advisory Committee will normally consist of the Centre Director, one other member of the Centre, the Dean (or delegate), plus at least 3 external expertise-based members, one of whom will be Chair. The Centre Director will propose the committee membership with approval from the Dean.

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

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

- a. facilitate industry, government and not-for-profit sector engagement and partnerships;
- b. facilitate the provision of independent input and guidance on the external environment; and
- c. endorse and regularly review progress in the implementation of the Research Centre's five-year strategic plan;
- d. externally promote the Centre; and
- e. report Advisory Committee outcomes and decisions to the Dean (or delegate) after each meeting.

Part E - Annual Reporting

(37) Research Centres will contribute to the research performance of the host School as monitored by the Research Strategy Committee.

(38) All Research Centres are required to submit a short annual report to the Dean (or delegate) for the purposes of monitoring performance against agreed goals.

(39) Annual reports will include a summary of the Centres performance against Key Performance Indicators as approved at establishment or renewal, such as research income (administered by La Trobe), publications, and other outcomes of the Research Centre to which Core Members have made a contribution.

(40) Research Centres may additionally prepare and publish more extensive annual reports for the purposes of external promotion and engagement, and as required by external funding bodies.

(41) At the request of the Dean, the Provost or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement), a more substantial review of the performance and operations of a Research Centre may be undertaken at any time. Any substantial recommendations to alter, or disestablish, a Research Centre will be referred for to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) for approval following consultation with the Provost, Dean and the Research Strategy Committee as required.

Part F - Renewal

(42) A Research Centre may seek renewal towards the end of its term. Proposals to renew a Research Centre will be completed by the Research Centre Director in consultation with, and submitted with endorsement by, the Dean (or delegate). Proposers will consult key stakeholders prior to submitting the proposal for review.

(43) The Research Centre may seek renewal for a further period of up to five (5) years.

(44) All proposals for Research Centre renewal must be submitted for review as follows:

- a. the Research Strategy Committee for consideration and recommendation; and
- b. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) for approval.

(45) Externally funded centres (such as ARC or NHMRC Centres) or joint research ventures that seek to continue beyond the term of external funding as a La Trobe Research Centre will undergo the same process of renewal.

(46) Proposals to renew a Research Centre will include:

- a. report of performance against original performance measures and return on investment;
- b. reflection on the continued purpose, value and future of the Research Centre, and its alignment to the University's strategic research goals;
- c. the impact of the research undertaken by the Research Centre;
- d. consideration of any feedback received from stakeholders and changes to the operation of the Research Centre;
- e. intended performance goals for the proposed next term;
- f. ongoing membership of the Research Centre and achievements in research development of its members;
- g. for achieving financial sustainability, if not already achieved, and expectations for any funding contributions from the School, as agreed with by the Dean (or delegate).

(47) Proposals for the renewal of a Research Centre should be prepared in a timely manner so that the outcome of the proposal can be advised at least four to six months prior to the original cessation date.

Part G - Disestablishment

(48) The disestablishment of a Research Centre will be considered if:

- a. the Research Centre does not seek renewal;
- b. a proposal to renew the Research Centre is not approved;
- c. a review of a Research Centre recommends that it ceases operation.
- d. A recommendation to disestablish a Research Centre is made by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement).

(49) A recommendation to disestablish a Research Centre must be submitted by the Research Centre Director and/or Dean (or delegate) for review as follows:

- a. the Research Strategy Committee for consideration and recommendation; and
- b. the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) for approval.

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

- a. management of Centre Staff within the School;
- b. communication with the Advisory Committee, funding agencies, and internal University stakeholders;
- c. provisions for adequate storage and treatment of data associated with research projects; and
- d. removal of Research Centre marketing materials including signage, websites and social media accounts.

Part H - Director

(51) Research Centre Directors normally have appointments within a specific School.

(52) The Research Centre Director normally reports to the Dean (or delegate) for the purpose of Career Success, Academic Workload Planning System allocations (when applicable) and Centre operations. If located on a regional campus, the Research Centre Director maintains an ongoing relationship with the Head of the Campus.

(53) Research Centre Directors are research leaders within their School and, for centres which make a significant contribution to the research performance of the School, will be member of the School Research and Industry Engagement Committee (or similar) and contribute to School research and industry engagement strategic planning processes. The Centre Director is responsible for the development of the Centre research program, development of Centre culture, developing and maintaining internal and external research networks, administration of the Centre, monitoring of success against Key Performance Indicators as well as providing mentorship to Centre Members.

(54) Regular Research and Innovation Forums will be organised by the Research and Industry Engagement Portfolio to inform research development programs and opportunities, and to provide regular opportunities to network and share good practice with other La Trobe research leaders. Researcher professional development programs will also be facilitated by the Research and Industry Engagement team.

Part I - Funding and Support

Administrative Support and computer equipment

(55) Schools may provide or employ appropriately skilled administrative staff to support the activities of one or more centres within their School. It is not a requirement for Schools to provide administrative support, including a dedicated Research Centre Manager.

(56) Any professional staff employed by a School to support centre operations will report to the School Senior Manager (or delegate), providing appropriate line management for career success purposes and reporting through the Office of the Provost. This reporting line may be supported via a matrix reporting line with the Research Centre Director.

(57) Schools also provide support in terms of office space and other infrastructure. On a regional campus, office space and infrastructure will additionally be negotiated with the Head of Campus.

(58) Computer equipment will be provided to Research Centre staff as per the University's [Desktop Equipment Policy](#).

Additional Funding

(59) High-performing Research Centres with substantial research funding may wish to seek additional support to cater for the complexity associated with large numbers of contracts and diverse revenue streams, or to attract significant new external revenue streams, beyond the workforce, research and partnership development programs normally facilitated through the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) portfolio. The allocation of any additional resources or funding 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 Provost, the Dean and the Research Centre Director.

(60) Government funding which is derived as a result of Research Centre activities, including block grant funding under schemes such as RSP and RTP, will not be distributed automatically to the Research Centre but allocated in part to Schools for the purpose of supporting research and research training activities, which at the discretion of the School may include funding support for one or more Research Centres. .

Part J - Graduate Research Training

(61) Graduate research candidates are enrolled in Schools and are under the responsibility of the Schools including through the assessment of applications for candidature and scholarships and the allocation of graduate research scholarships within the School.

(62) Eligible and qualified Research Centre members will provide graduate research supervision and may work with the School Director of Graduate Research, for example, in the role of Graduate Research Coordinator. Such activities will be allocated workload in the Academic Workload Planning System.

(63) Research Centres and Schools are expected to provide a high quality HDR training environment for graduate researchers who will also be encouraged to participate in both Research Centre and School activities.

Part K - Externally funded Centres

(64) As described in Clause 3, external or joint research ventures may be hosted by the university for which the governance and management arrangements are determined via bespoke contractual arrangements, referred to as 'Externally funded Centres' in this Policy.

(65) Externally funded Centres may have their own establishment, renewal, and disestablishment processes, depending on the Centre's contractual arrangements.

(66) The naming convention for externally funded Centres will be determined by the arrangement that is entered, it is preferred that "La Trobe" is in the Centre name.

(67) Externally funded Centres will normally be associated with a School, in which case the Director will report to the Dean (or delegate).

(68) The governance and management of externally funded Centres will be determined by the contractual instrument

through which the Centre was established. Contracts are normally managed by the relevant team in the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Industry Engagement) portfolio, and Legal Services, through consultation with the proposed Centre Director and Dean.

(69) Externally funded Centres are not required to provide an annual report but must meet all reporting requirements of their funding agreements.

(70) Support, such as space and equipment, for externally funded Centres must be agreed upon with the relevant stakeholders before the establishment of the centre.

(71) At the end of their term, externally funded Centres may apply to become a La Trobe Research Centre, as per the renewal process outlined in Part F of this Policy. If an externally funded Centre does not renew, the Centre Director must develop a clear plan for the orderly winding down of the Centre, as per Part G, item 50 in this Policy.

Section 7 - Definitions

(72) Nil.

Section 8 - Authority and Associated Information

(73) This Policy is made under the [La Trobe University Act 2009](#).

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	10th December 2024
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Responsible Manager - Policy	Alistair Duncan Executive Director, Research Office
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