

Policy and Procedures for Approving and Monitoring Research Institutes and Centres

Scope

1. A centre/institute should be a recognisable entity which is able to develop its own identity. It may be either interdisciplinary and/or multi-departmental or a single (sub)-disciplinary activity within a department.
2. Three main categories of centre have been identified:
 - (i) Externally funded centres that have to satisfy the demands and expectations placed upon them by the external funder(s).
 - (ii) Centres/Institutes that are funded either wholly or in part by the University, where USG has decided to make a strategic investment in order to achieve something greater.
 - (iii) Centres/Institutes that do not receive funding, either externally or internally.
3. The processes outlined in this document will not apply to the first category of centres although, should external funding cease, a proposal for the establishment of a centre within one of the other two categories may be made. Such a proposal should be made two years before the projected end-date of any external funding, so that due deliberation can be undertaken at University level to explore alternative funding streams and alternative ways of organising the centre's activities. Any such proposal would have to be approved by USG and Senate as required.

Institutes

4. The title of 'institute' should be used to denote areas where the University has a global reputation for a particular field (or fields) of work where the University demonstrates significant disciplinary and cross-disciplinary strength. Institutes will typically cluster collections of other centres and research clusters that draw on the expertise on the academic staff on a pan-University basis and may involve a wide range of external partners. They represent 'flagships' for the projection of the University's research, externally, particularly in the field of impact and knowledge exchange. Given their organisational complexity and scale, the level of support provided by the University may reflect this.

Establishment of a Centre

5. New Centres will be established on the following basis.
 - (a) A proposal to establish a centre must be submitted using the appropriate form (see Appendix 1), through the relevant Heads of Department/Executive Dean to the Research Committee which will consider the proposal and make recommendations to USG and Senate as required.
 - (b) Although members may be drawn from a number of different departments, centres will be linked to a single sponsoring department and faculty for management and administrative purposes. Normally, the Centre Director will be a member of the sponsoring department, though there may be exceptional circumstances in which this is not the case. Research Committee will review nominations for Centre Directors and make recommendations to USG and Senate.

- (c) There must be departmental commitment to a centre rather than just the commitment of a single academic or group of academics. Crucially, the centre's activities must be linked to the departmental research strategies.
- (d) Overall managerial responsibility for all academic and other staff linked to the centre rests with the HoD within the department to which the staff member is appointed. Academic Staff are not normally appointed to a post within a centre.
- (e) The sponsoring department and faculty have responsibility for ensuring the resourcing of a centre, which includes the provision of space.
- (f) Income from research grants and contracts is allocated to the department(s) of the applicant(s). It should be clear when an application for funding is submitted if it is intended that such income should be used for specific activities undertaken within a centre rather than a department so that the income can be ring-fenced.
- (g) Executive Deans and HoDs will be expected to discuss in advance of a centre's establishment whether or not and (if yes) to what extent the Centre Director could expect to receive credit for the directorship in the departmental workload model.
- (h) A centre will normally be established for a period of three years in the first instance. A report on progress using the appropriate form (see Appendix 2), and submitted through the relevant Head of Department/Executive Dean, will be reviewed by Research Committee at the end of this period. Research Committee will consider approval for the centre to continue for an additional period of three years or for the closure of the centre and make recommendations to USG and Senate as necessary.

Criteria to be used by Research Committee for the establishment of a Centre

6. Research Committee will make recommendations to USG and Senate for the establishment of new centres using the following criteria:
 - (a) Does the proposed Centre bring together individuals from different departments to provide a multi-disciplinary approach or, in the case of a single disciplinary proposal, does it have a significant and potentially enduring identity that is more robust than an informal research group?
 - (b) Does the Centre provide added value and is it greater than the sum of its parts? Is there sufficient critical mass in the Centre to allow it to endure?
 - (c) Does the proposed Centre demonstrate coherence in terms of its management structures, research plans and resources appropriate to meet the Centre's stated aims and objectives?
 - (d) Are the activities brought together under the Centre of sufficient standing for the Centre to aspire to achieve an international/national reputation?
 - (e) Is the designation of Centre status likely to assist in achieving external funding?

Monitoring and Evaluating Existing Centres

7. Centres will report to Research Committee on a three-year cycle.
8. In evaluating centre reports, Research Committee will use the following Operating Principles:
 - (a) Centres must demonstrate sustainability and they must produce financial and/or reputational benefits for the University that exceed the costs of their operation.
 - (b) Centres that cannot demonstrate net benefits in either of these senses will be recommended for closure.

- (c) Centres based around a single individual are unsustainable.
- (d) Research groupings within departments may be sufficient to sustain a high quality research culture and environment, without the need for a free-standing Centre.
- (e) Centres should not have further centres within them.
- (f) Centres which have no significant research activity should be closed.

Approved by:

Research Committee: 3 May 2016

USG: 13 June 2016

Senate: 29 June 2016