



Australian Catholic University

Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

Name of Policy	Research Centres Policy
Description	This policy sets out the principles that provide the framework for the establishment and conduct of the University's research centres.
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Description of Revision	

RESEARCH SERVICES

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Research Centres Policy

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Research Centres Policy

1. Background

The University's Strategic Plan 2009-2011 requires research and knowledge transfer to be focused in four areas:

- Common good and social justice;
- Education;
- Health; and
- Theology and Philosophy.

This strategy of research concentration and selectivity is designed to build research capacity that is strongly aligned with the University's identity and mission and to focus funding and support on proven and promising research endeavours. The intention is to improve the University's research performance, while recognising that not all nationally and internationally significant researchers will be located within research centres and that individual researchers will continue to make an important contribution to the University's research effort.

Research centres play a critical role in the University's research activity in strengthening research capability, attracting external funding and improving the quality and quantity of research outputs. Further, they enhance the career development and research opportunities of individual staff members and are instrumental in attracting high quality researchers and higher degree by research students to the University. In this policy, the term 'centre' is used generically and includes units named as 'centre' or 'institute'.

From 2009, research is to be conducted and managed within the Faculties. It follows that previous arrangements of research groupings defined by terms such as Flagship, Senate Centre, University Centre and Faculty Centre are no longer applicable.

2. Policy Statement

This policy has been developed to address the University's intent to focus strategically on defined areas of research strengths and to develop research that is of national and international significance.

3. Policy Purpose

This policy sets out the principles that provide the framework for the establishment and conduct of the University's research centres. This policy affirms the role of research centres in the strategic planning for the development of research at Australian Catholic University and provides guidance on the implementation of this strategy. It delineates the different nature of each type of research grouping. It sets out the principles for financial support and the responsibilities to the University of research centres.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Policy for Establishment, Administration, Review and Dissolution of Centres.

4. Application of Policy

This policy applies to the establishment and conduct of all research centres at the University.

This policy does not apply to the establishment of centres that are externally funded through a competitive process, e.g. ARC Centres of Excellence or Co-operative Research Centres (CRCs). Such centres are set up by a contractual arrangement for a period specified by that arrangement.

Proposals for externally funded centres must be submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) in a timely manner prior to application to the funding body.

This policy does not apply to any group that has activities that fall predominantly outside the definition of research.

This policy does not apply to academic organisational units of the University. Academic organisational units may undertake research activity but are governed through alternate University mechanisms.

4.1 Transition Arrangements

Directors of centres that were existing at the date of approval of this policy as listed in the Schedule of Centres and Institutes are approved to continue their operations. The Schedule also lists academic organisational units that are designated as centres or institutes.

4.2 Schedule of Centres and Institutes

A list of centres and institutes is set out in Schedule 1.

5. Definition of Research

In this policy, **research**¹ comprises creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of humanity, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications.

6. Role of Research Centres

The establishment of research centres should enhance the development of quality research outcomes at Australian Catholic University by concentrating resources through the formation of groups of researchers working in an area of research in which collectively they have a demonstrable national or international profile evidenced by a record of achievement in scholarship, publications, research income and measures of knowledge transfer and esteem. In addition, the areas of research for each research centre must fit with the University's four focus areas for research concentration.

The achievements of a research centre must be more than the sum of the parts. It follows that the context of the research centre must provide direct benefits including a collegial, collaborative and stimulating environment to foster:

- the generation of innovative ideas and projects;
- interdisciplinary collaborations;
- enhanced networking opportunities;
- challenging, critical discussion and review; and
- better resourcing, facilities and support for research.

Higher degree by research (HDR) students associated with research centres should similarly benefit from an exciting and supportive training environment. Further the profile and record of research centres should be such that they add value and credibility to applications for competitive grant applications and inspire confidence in prospective industry partners that quality research outcomes will be achieved.

Recognition of a small number of research centres as meeting these criteria is evidence of the University's commitment to concentrate its research in restricted areas of demonstrated

¹ OECD.

achievement and relevance. It is necessary to distinguish such research centres from other existing groupings within the University that conduct research and/or other activities and that may be described by the one or more of the terms 'research,' 'centre' or 'institute'. At present, some of these exist primarily to conduct research while others are academic organisational units that include the conduct of research as part of their roles and responsibilities.

There needs to be unambiguous recognition of those research groupings that meet the expected benchmarks of research quality and productivity and those that do not, to ensure consistency with the University's statement of research concentration. At the same time, the existence of such other groupings is essential to maintain flexibility, to encourage enterprise and innovation and to provide opportunities for new researchers to develop. The University will adopt an evidence-based approach to monitoring the emergence of new research strengths and the decline of others as circumstances change.

7. Categories of Centres

From 2009 Australian Catholic University will recognise the following categories of centres.

7.1 University Priority Research Centres

These centres and institutes will be distinguished by:

- (i) the use of the descriptor "University Priority Research Centre"; and
- (ii) the use of the term "Research" in their approved name, where applicable.

"University Priority Research Centre" means a research grouping that undertakes research activity in a focussed area of expertise of relevance to the University's mission and its areas of research concentration. The research outcomes have demonstrated standing beyond the University and have the potential to contribute in that area of academic expertise at the national and international level. Where applicable, a University Priority Research Centre may make a demonstrated contribution to the wider community. A University Priority Research Centre will meet the criteria that define research centres and the continued use of the appellation is subject to review on that basis.

The Policy for Establishment, Administration, Review and Dissolution of Centres is applicable to such centres and institutes. The achievement of categorisation as a "University Priority Research Centre" is dependent on meeting the criteria designated for this purpose and is subject to review.

7.2 Other Centres

Other centres conduct research with a common theme and with focused goals in key strategic areas.

Other centres are neither permitted to use the descriptor "University Priority Research Centre" nor to use the term research in their name in any documents, including web pages.

7.2.1 Other Centres that are not Academic Organisational Units

Centres that are not organisational units are comprised of researchers who form a cohesive group that shares a developing research focus in a distinctive area which complements existing strengths. Criteria for the establishment and continuation of such centres include evidence of productive collaborations, grant income, quality publications and research training.

The Policy for Establishment, Administration, Review and Dissolution of Centres is applicable to such centres and institutes.

7.2.2 Other Centres that are Academic Organisational Units

Centres and institutes that are organisational units are established within the governance structure of the University and have a range of specified responsibilities that include to varying extents the conduct of research.

The Policy for Establishment, Administration, Review and Dissolution of Centres is **not** applicable to such centres and institutes.

7.3 Other Groupings

The formation for various purposes of informal groupings or networks of researchers within and across Faculties may be supported and promoted by Schools and Faculties. Such informal groupings are usually flexible, transitional structures with shorter life spans than formally approved centres. In some instances, such a grouping or network may lead over time to an application for formal approval to establish a centre.

8. Characteristics of Research Centres

Research centres that are designated as University Priority Research Centres are well established, productive centres with a critical mass of researchers who demonstrate a high level of achievement against designated performance indicators. Their overall performance distinguishes them from other centres that support research and the development of researchers and achieve quality research and research training outcomes.

In particular, centres designated as University Priority Research Centres will:

- a) Strategically plan and articulate a program of activity with clear goals, strategies and performance indicators and report annually on progress;
- b) Demonstrate intellectual cohesion around well articulated research problems and research programs addressing those problems;
- c) Have a critical mass of researchers including a leading, visionary and productive researcher as the Director, a group of strongly performing researchers, a group of developing researchers, including normally one or more postdoctoral fellows, and higher degree research candidates and honorary appointments;
- d) Articulate succession plans, demonstrating the development of future generations of researchers via support of postdoctoral fellows and research candidate training;
- e) Demonstrate organisational cohesion and leadership, together with strong governance processes and external oversight through an advisory board;
- f) Contribute to the enhancement of research and research training outcomes for the relevant Faculty;
- g) Demonstrate collaborative research partnerships within and outside the University;
- h) Demonstrate that they achieve knowledge transfer and have impact as measured by their influence on other research and teaching programs;
- i) Demonstrate a return on investment through generating external income benchmarked by discipline, that increases over time and that exceeds any internal funding by a very significant factor;
- j) Demonstrate quality in research publications by recognised measures;
- k) Have broad types of dissemination of results, appropriate to relevant community, industry and scholarly linkages;
- l) Have outcomes exceeding the achievement level of the University overall in each performance measure and evaluate performance by benchmarking against national and international concentrations of research in the relevant field of study.

9. Academic, Administrative and Resourcing Matters

Centres are normally included in the organisational structure of the relevant Faculty for academic and resource purposes.

9.1 Legal Status

Centres are not independent legal entities. Any research agreements with external bodies must be approved and executed on behalf of the University by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) or those persons with delegated authority.

9.2 Relationships with Faculties and Schools

The Dean of each Faculty has overall responsibility for the direction and strategies for research and research training in line with the University's Strategic Plan.

University Priority Research Centres are associated with a Faculty as designated by the Vice-Chancellor. Other centres that are not academic organisational units are associated with a School within a Faculty as recommended by the Dean and approved by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research). There is an obligation on centres to contribute proactively to enriching and enhancing the research culture and research outcomes of the relevant Faculty/School.

University Priority Research Centres have cost codes located within the Office of the relevant Faculty. Other centres that are not academic organisational units have cost codes normally located within the relevant School.

9.3 Directors, Staffing and Reporting Lines

The Director of a University Priority Research Centre is normally a full-time position which may be funded in part or in full by the Faculty or by the centre. The Directors of other centres associated with Schools may have a full-time or part-time role and may be funded in part or in full by the School or by the centre.

The Directors of University Priority Research Centres report normally to the Dean of the relevant Faculty. The Directors of other centres associated with Schools report normally to the Head of School.

Staff employed only by a centre report to the relevant Director. Staff employed by a School who are also members of a centre report to the Head of School.

An academic staff member who is employed only by a research centre may apply to a relevant Head of School to be recognised as a *Research Associate* of that School. The title *School Research Associate* is an honorary title that is designed to build links between centre-only staff and academics in Schools and to help foster a research culture in Schools. Academic staff who hold continuing or contract positions of one year or more duration within a centre may apply through the Centre Director to one (and not more than one) Head of School to be recognised as a *School Research Associate* for the period of their employment by the centre. The Head of School will seek the approval of the Dean who makes a recommendation to the Ceremonials and Protocols Committee. *School Research Associates* are recognised in the University Handbook entry for that School and are expected to engage with the School, especially in regard to activities that support the development of research and research training.

Joint appointments of staff may be made to foster collaboration between Schools and centres. Such appointments should specify clear reporting lines and funding arrangements and be carefully

managed to ensure that there are clear expectations of work commitments for both Schools and centres.

9.4 Teaching

The University places strong emphasis on its teaching and learning experience being informed by quality research. Staff employed by centres may contribute to the teaching and coordination of undergraduate and postgraduate programs through collaborative arrangements with Schools and Faculties, however centres will not administer or deliver undergraduate programs in their own right. Any income from such activities will be allocated in line with University funding guidelines.

9.5 Research Training

Centres are not responsible for enrolling research students. All higher degree by research students associated with centres will be enrolled through the relevant School/Faculty and associated income will be allocated in line with established University guidelines. This does not preclude centre staff from assuming a supervisory role within the constraints of University's policy and procedures. In such cases, while the student may be associated with the centre, the centre supervisor is responsible through the Head of the enrolling School for all candidature matters.

9.6 Planning, Reporting and Review

Centres that are designated as University Priority Research Centres are required to submit a strategic plan and to provide an annual report to the University Research Committee. Centres are established for a prescribed period and are subject to review which may result in their dissolution. Details are provided in the Policy for Establishment, Administration, Review and Dissolution of Centres.

9.7 Funding and Institutional Support

Research centres and institutes that are designated as University Priority Research Centres will be funded by the University for the initial three year period of the centre. Thereafter support will be performance-based and relate to national and international benchmarks and achievements in research publications, research income and knowledge transfer and impact.

10. Review of the Policy

The University may make changes to this policy from time to time to improve the effectiveness of its operation. Review of the policy will be initiated by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) within a five-year period.

**SCHEDULE 1
CENTRES AND INSTITUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY**

1. UNIVERSITY PRIORITY RESEARCH CENTRES

FOCUS	Former name	New name	Faculty	Director
Common good and social justice	Institute of Child Protection Studies	Institute of Child Protection Studies <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Arts and Sciences	Associate Professor Morag McArthur
	Quality of Life and Social Justice Flagship	Quality of Life and Social Justice Research Centre <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Arts and Sciences	Professor Ruth Webber
Education	Flagship for Creative and Authentic Leadership	Centre for Creative and Authentic Leadership <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Education	Associate Professor Michael Bezzina
	Mathematics and Literacy Education Research Flagship	Mathematics Teaching and Learning Research Centre <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Education	Professor Doug Clarke
Health	National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research	National Centre for Clinical Outcomes Research <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Health Sciences	Professor Sandy Middleton
Theology and Philosophy	Centre for Early Christian Studies	Centre for Early Christian Studies <i>University Priority Research Centre</i>	Theology and Philosophy	Professor Pauline Allen

2. OTHER CENTRES AND INSTITUTES

2.1 CENTRES AND INSTITUTES THAT ARE NOT ACADEMIC ORGANISATIONAL UNITS

Name	School/Faculty	Director
Asia-Pacific Centre for Inter-religious Dialogue	School of Theology Faculty of Theology and Philosophy	Professor Raymond Canning
Centre for Physical Activity across the Lifespan	School of Exercise Science Faculty of Health Sciences	Professor Geraldine Naughton
Golding Centre for Women's History, Theology and Spirituality	School of Theology Faculty of Theology and Philosophy	Dr Sophie McGrath rsm
Plunkett Centre for Ethics	School of Philosophy Faculty of Theology and Philosophy	Associate Professor Bernadette Tobin

2.2 CENTRES AND INSTITUTES THAT ARE ACADEMIC ORGANISATIONAL UNITS

	Portfolio	Director
Centre for Indigenous Education and Research	PVC (Academic)	Associate Professor Nereda White
Centre for Learning and Teaching	PVC (Students. Learning and Teaching)	Professor Yoni Ryan
Institute for Catholic Identity and Mission	Director (Identity and Mission)	tba
Institute for Legal Studies	Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Professor Spencer Zifcak
Institute for the Advancement of Community Engagement	PVC (Academic)	Professor Jude Butcher cfc
Public Policy Institute	PVC (Research)	Professor Scott Prasser