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Process	Research Centres
Related Policy:	Research Policy
Objectives	To outline the processes for the establishment, approval, administration, review and closure of Research Centres at RMIT.
Exclusions	This process applies to all existing RMIT Research Centres and any future applications under this category. This process excludes other internal Research Structures (including Research Groups and Enabling Capability Platforms), Research Centres who establishment are required by an external funding agreement or that are a separate legal entity, Cooperative Research Centres, and Centres of Excellence.

Definitions and acronyms

Co-Directors: RMIT researchers with shared responsibility for leading the research direction of the Research Centre, maintaining appropriate membership, and managing the Research Centre's establishment, approval, reporting, review, and closure in line with this process.

Director: An RMIT researcher with responsibility for leading the research direction of the Research Centre, maintaining appropriate membership, and managing the Research Centre's establishment, approval, operation, reporting, review, and closure in line with this process.

DPVCRI: The relevant College Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation.

DVCR&I: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation, RMIT University.

External Members: Non RMIT University academics with a track record of research activity appropriate for the discipline.

Enabling Capability Platforms (ECPs): A virtual platform designed to complement research activities in Colleges and Schools and enhance research impact, by encouraging collaboration. The Enabling Capability Platforms connect researchers from multiple disciplines and from across Colleges, under a strategic theme.

Externally Funded Research Centre: A Research Centre established mostly with funding from sources external to RMIT.

HDR Member: A Higher Degrees by Research candidate whose membership has been approved by the Research Centre Director.

Member: RMIT Academic with a track record of research activity appropriate for the discipline and their research level. Research Centres may include members from multiple Schools and Colleges.

Research Centre: A Centre aligned with Schools and/or Colleges that undertakes research in areas of recognised disciplinary strengths and collaborative expertise, supported by advanced facilities and specialist resources.

Research Group: A Group located within a single School that undertakes research in areas of specific

Research & Innovation Process

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disciplinary strength, aligned to the School's research agenda.

Research Level: See RMIT's [Teaching and research academic staff classifications](#).

Research Structures: Structures that receive formal recognition from the University that it is undertaking a program of research around a specific issue, set of questions or theme(s). RMIT's recognises the following Research Structures; Research Groups, Research Centres, Externally Funded Research Centres and Enabling Capability Platforms.

Process Steps

1. **ESTABLISHMENT**

1.1 A Research Centre will meet the establishment criteria set by the relevant College and must meet or exceed the R&I criteria outlined in Appendix 1. Contact the College Research Office, see Supporting Resources tab.

1.2 The Director of a proposed Research Centre will apply to establish a Research Centre using a Research Centre Plan (Plan), provided by the College Research Office, see Supporting Resources tab. It is recommended to consult the College Research Office at an early stage. The Plan will include:

   1.2.1 how proposed Research Centre meets or exceeds criteria for establishment as a Research Centre, including, academic leadership, critical mass, focus and strategic alignment and the relevant College's establishment criteria;

   1.2.2 a strategy document covering at least three years;

   1.2.3 Research Centre business planning including reference to how performance indicators will be met;

   1.2.4 membership and how each member will contribute to the business planning;

   1.2.5 resourcing and funding arrangements;

   1.2.6 governance, management, and reporting arrangements; and,

   1.2.7 relationship or connection to other relevant RMIT Research Structures.

1.3 The Plan will be:

   1.3.1 Discussed with the Research Committee in the School(s) in which members are based;

   1.3.2 Recommended for approval by the Dean/Head of School and the Research Committee in the School(s) where the Director(s) are based;

   1.3.3 Discussed with the College Research Committee and endorsed by the relevant College Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation (DPVCRI), as Chair of the College Research Committee;

   1.3.4 Approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation (DVCR&I) as Chair of the RMIT Research Committee; and,

RMIT Classification: Trusted

Research & Innovation Process
Process: A Process is a policy document which will be followed.

1.3.5 a copy sent to Research Capability Initiatives for recordkeeping purposes.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 A Research Centre will have a Research Centre Director or Co-Directors. Where there are Co-Directors, sharing of responsibilities between the Directors will be clearly documented.

2.2 If a Director resigns, the DPVCRI will appoint an interim Director, appoint a new Director in line with 2.3, or close the Research Centre in line with Section 7 of this process.

2.3 To appoint a new Director, the DPVCRI will call for Expressions of Interest. The new Director will be approved by the DPVCRI, as Chair of the College Research Committee, for noting by DVCR&I and Research Committee.

2.4 Membership can be through invitation or request. The Director approves membership changes and informs <the Research Office> to enable accurate reporting.

2.5 RMIT Academics can be a member of more than one Research Centre and/or Research Group at a time. RMIT Academics will inform the Director if they are members of other Research Structures and discuss what their contribution to each Research Structure will be. Members will plan accordingly with the Director and their line manager.

2.6 HDR candidates can be members of a Research Centre if they are currently enrolled at RMIT, making good progress with their candidature and if their membership is supported by their supervisor and approved by the Director.

3. GOVERNANCE, FUNDING, RESOURCES & SUPPORT

3.1 The establishment criteria and performance indicators for Research Centres will be set by the relevant DPVCRI, as Chair of the College Research Committee. See Appendix 1. While a Research Centre's strategy, focus, leadership and membership may change over time, the establishment criteria and performance indicators set by the College Research Office should be met when establishing a Research Centre and throughout its lifecycle. See the Supporting Resources tab for more information.

3.2 Research Centres will have governance arrangements that are appropriate for their size and scale that assign governance and management responsibilities to appropriate roles, and may include an Advisory Committee and a Deputy Director.

3.3 Research Centres' administrative support, capital requirements, equipment maintenance and upgrades, research-related travel and other resources associated with Research Centre members will be supported by the relevant School and College and external research funding, in line with relevant University policies and processes.

3.4 Research Centres may seek support from internal and external grant schemes.

4. REPORTING

4.1 Directors of Research Centres will report annually (on the previous calendar year) to the College Research Committee for acceptance and to the RMIT Research Committee via <Research Capability

RMIT Classification: Trusted

Research & Innovation Process
Process: A Process is a policy document which will be followed.

Initiatives> for noting by April.

4.2 This annual report will include the Research Centre's plan for the next calendar year and will use the Research Centres Annual Report template provided by the College Research Office (see Supporting Resources tab) to report on the following:

4.2.1 the Research Centre's achievements against its Plan and analysis of the Centre's progress against performance indicators;

4.2.2 any performance indicator that is not being met, or that is not on track to be met, and reasons for this;

4.2.3 any variations and reason for major variations; and

4.2.4 any difficulties facing the Research Centre which may affect its future operation.

4.3 Research Centres established after March do not have to report until the second reporting year. Their first annual report will cover the period from establishment until the December of the following year.

4.4 Research Capability Initiatives will acknowledge receipt of annual reports. The DPVCRI, or nominee, will provide written feedback on reports within three months including recommendation that the Research Centre should be continued, reconstituted, reviewed or closed.

5. **REVIEWS**

5.1 The College Research Office will ensure Research Centres are independently, externally reviewed at least every 5 years. Reviews can also be requested by the DVCR&I, the DPVCRI or the College Research Committee. A review provides an opportunity for continuous improvement and may be required if the Research Centre does not meet performance indicators, there are major membership changes or if the Director leaves. Reviews will be appropriate to the size and scale of the Research Centre. Review panel members will have relevant knowledge and expertise.

5.2 The Chair will be external to RMIT and external panel members will together represent more than half of the membership.

5.3 The Review will include assessment of and advice on:

5.3.1 the Research Centre's impact and achievements against its current criteria identified in its most recent Plan;

5.3.2 recommended updates to the Research Centre's performance criteria in light of benchmarking;

5.3.3 the Research Centre's contribution to the overall research performance of the University; and,

5.3.4 any difficulties facing the Research Centre which may affect its future operation, including recommendations to address such difficulties.

5.4 The Panel will report within three months of the review concluding. The Review report will include findings, recognition of achievements, and a recommendation as to whether the Research Centre should be continued, reconstituted or closed.

RMIT Classification: Trusted

Research & Innovation Process
Process: A Process is a policy document which will be followed.

5.5 The Chair or proxy will send the Review report, along with any response from the Director, to the DPVCRI, as Chair of the College Research Committee for consideration. The DPVCRI will discuss the report with the Director and provide them with an opportunity to submit a response.

5.6 The DPVCRI will send the Review report and any Director's response to the College Research Committee, for discussion and endorsement.

5.7 The DPVCRI will submit the endorsed Review report to DVCR&I, as Chair of RMIT Research Committee, for acceptance.

5.8 The DPVCRI communicates the outcome of the review to key stakeholders, including College Research Committees, College and School leaders, and the RMIT community at large.

6. **VARIATIONS**

6.1 Major variations will be approved by the DPVCRI, for noting by the DVCR&I. Major variations include changes to the name of the Research Centre, the Director, and the strategy.

6.2 Minor variations will be approved by the Director and included in the annual report. Minor variations include changes to the work plan or membership.

7. **CLOSURE**

7.1 The Director, DPVCRI, or DVCR&I may recommend closing a Research Centre if:

   7.1.1 its focus/aims and objectives have been fulfilled, have not been met or are no longer aligned with RMIT strategy or College strategy;, or

   7.1.2 it is no longer adequately meeting its establishment criteria or performance indicators; or,

   7.1.3 it fails to comply with reporting or review requirements; or,

   7.1.4 the Review Report recommends closure.

7.2 The application to close a Research Centre will include a Closure Plan, covering what will happen to all resources, research data, and funding, a timeline for closure, and assigning responsibility for closure to appropriate role/s. Contact the College Research Office for the Research Centre Closure Template, see Supporting Resources tab. The application will be:

   7.2.1 Recommended for approval by the relevant College Research Committee;

   7.2.2 Endorsed by the DPVCRI;

   7.2.3 Approved by the DVCR&I ; and,

   7.2.4 Noted by the RMIT Research Committee and notified to <Research Capability Initiatives>.

Research & Innovation Process
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Supporting resources

Please contact the relevant College Research Office for the Research Centres establishment criteria and for the documents to use for the Research Centres Plan, the Research Centres Annual Report or the Research Centre Closure Template.

- College of Design and Social Context: dscgrants@rmit.edu.au
- College of Science, Engineering and Health: caroline.northwood@rmit.edu.au
- College of Business: rachel.nowotnik@rmit.edu.au

Status & Details

Custodian/s title and email:	Executive Director, Research Office	Custodian email	researchstructures@rmit.edu.au
Approved by:	Executive Director, Research Office	Date approved:	28 July 2017
Responsible unit/s:	Research Capability Initiatives	Published/effective date:	24 January 2018
Review date:		Document ref:	POL/2018/00023

RMIT UNIVERSITY

Research & Innovation Process
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Appendix 1 –Establishment Criteria for a Research Centre

Specific establishment criteria for Research Centres will be set by the relevant DPVCRI, as Chair of the College Research Committee. Research Centres will use this College specific establishment criteria to establish and report on Research Centres. (See 1.1 and 3.1 of this Process).
Contact the relevant College Research Office, see Supporting Resources tab.

Note: The College Research Offices have developed specific establishment criteria that align with the general establishment criteria set by the Research & Innovation Portfolio, as shown in the box below:

R&I Criteria	Description
1. Academic Leadership	Director or Co-Directors with established, relevant, research track record and appropriate leadership ability to lead the proposed Research Centre.
	AND
2. Critical Mass	Sufficient members with an appropriate track record that will enable the centre to achieve its objectives. All members meet the relevant research expectations for their level.
	AND
3. Focus	Aims and objectives, including a commitment to research impact and engagement.
	AND
4. Strategic Alignment	Alignment with RMIT Strategy. Fit with other RMIT Research Structures, including alignment with an Enabling Capability Platform/s.