



UNIVERSITY OF
LIMERICK
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

**POLICY FOR UL RESEARCH
INSTITUTES AND CENTRES:
ESTABLISHMENT, GOVERNANCE
AND MANAGEMENT
ARRANGEMENTS**

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this policy

Research institutes and centres (both internal centres and externally funded centres), build upon UL's existing research strengths to provide a focal point for both national and international engagement with UL. These may also involve a number of organisations (in addition to UL), which have agreed to form a collective to pursue a joint mission which is set out in a consortium agreement e.g. externally funded research centres.

This policy sets out the principles for the establishment, governance and management of research institutes and centres. The policy outlines reporting, oversight and structures which underpin Institute and Centre governance.

Whilst flexibility and independence is required when leading research programmes and centres/institutes, this must be balanced against adequate oversight to ensure that external constraints and regulations on the University are adhered to e.g. financial, reporting, human resources, health & safety, intellectual property management. The University has responsibilities to ensure Research Centres/Institutes operate within this framework, while at the same time being cognisant of the needs of PIs in managing their research.

The management and governance requirements of externally funded research centres have been taken into consideration in the development of this policy. The policy is designed to complement and support the governance requirements as stipulated by funders' contracts. In the event, that this policy deviates from the funders' requirements, the funding contract stipulations take precedence.

1.2 Scope

1.2.1 *To whom and in what situations does the policy apply?*

This policy applies to existing institutes, new institutes, internal research centres and to externally funded UL hosted research centres.

The policy, thus applies to UL employees seeking to apply to lead a centre or institution or for institute status of their existing [area] and secondly to all those employees who are responsible for the management of a UL institute, internal centre or external centre.

The establishment of research centres which are externally funded are subject to the funder's management and governance requirements. Funders are required to ensure that unambiguous procedures exist for the appraisal and management of capital expenditure projects arising under its funding programmes. Accordingly, each centre must ensure that it has clear governance and advisory structures, to ensure optimal performance and oversight of each centre. This policy sits alongside the management and governance requirements imposed on UL by those external funders.

1.2.2 Who is responsible for ensuring that the policy (and any associated procedures) is implemented and monitored?

The Vice President Research (VPR) has overall responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy and responsibility for recommending to Executive Committee and Governing Authority, the establishment, review, transition or closure of UL research centres and institutes.

The Office of the Vice President Research will engage with the University Research Committee in the implementation of this policy. Heads of Department, Faculty Deans, Institute/Centre Directors and management also have responsibilities with regard to the implementation of this policy.

Staff involved in the governance, operation and strategic direction of a research centre or institute hosted by the University of Limerick have responsibilities in implementation of this policy and its related procedures.

1.3 Definitions

- Institute: the largest research grouping in UL, situated at University level.
- Internal centre: a research group created to build growing critical mass around a research theme.
- External centre: developed on the basis of the University receiving funding following a successful grant application. Examples include Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) funded centres, Enterprise Ireland (EI) funded Centres, Higher Education Authority (HEA) funded centres.

When the term centre is used it covers both internal and external centres.

2 Principles for University of Limerick Institutes and Centres

2.1 Defining characteristics of University of Limerick Institutes and Centres

UL Institutes and Centres are central to facilitating the University meeting its strategic ambitions for research, being open to new opportunities or emerging strategic areas of research focus and in building critical mass in areas of strength.

By establishing institutes and centres, the University of Limerick seeks to achieve global impact through research, which complement and exceed that which cannot be achieved through individual schools, departments and faculties.

Institutes and centres will differ in size, scale, however they will have the following characteristics:

Shared Characteristics for Institutes and Centres

- **Strategic Alignment** - Aligns with the strategic goals and priorities of the University of Limerick.
- **Added value** – An Institute or Centre must have added value for the University's research profile and performance above what can be achieved if the centre/institute is not established.
- **Critical mass** - Has a critical mass of established research leaders together with early and mid-career researchers.

An Institute operates at scale and has all of the following characteristics:

- Facilitates long-term, interdisciplinary research across the university to address global challenges and deliver impact for the University.
- Positions the university as an international leader in its research areas with a track record of long-standing research partnerships and linkages.
- Financial Sustainability – Has a sustainable funding model that includes attracting external funding (including competitive, commercial (where relevant), philanthropic).

Internal Research Centres operate at a smaller scale and have the following additional characteristics:

- Accommodate significant research activity with the potential to be a contributor in its field of expertise at a national and international level.
- Has a number of significant national or international research collaborations in place.

2.2 Principles for the Establishment of Research Institutes and Internal Centres

Research institutes and internal centres are established, governed, managed and evaluated according to the following principles. Proposals to establish a research institute or internal research centre must follow the procedure for the establishment of research institutes or internal research centres which is part of the Office of the Vice President Research Quality Management System (OVPR QMS).

- 2.2.1** Institutes are established in alignment with a university strategic goal(s).
- 2.2.2** An interdisciplinary ethos designed to meet global challenges aligned to the university's goals is a fundamental feature of our research ecosystem and is reflected in our institutes and internal centres.
- 2.2.3** Institutes and internal centres are an important feature of our organisational structures, and their activity should complement and enhance the profile of Faculties, Departments and Schools. This relationship is key to the success of any research institute or internal centre as the members play key roles in our academic, research and civic engagement missions.
- 2.2.4** Institutes and internal centres may operate across disciplines, however for the purposes of governance and administration, a primary affiliation to a faculty will be nominated informed by the thematic focus of its research activity and the academic affiliation of the majority of its members. The host faculty will reflect the discipline of the majority of the Institutes/Centres membership. The decision regarding the host faculty is made by the Vice President Research in consultation with the relevant Dean(s). In the case where there is no clear majority of affiliation to a faculty, the appropriate host faculty must be proposed and agreed during the establishment process.
- 2.2.5** Key performance indicators for the institute will be agreed on establishing an institute and will be recorded in the institute monitoring plan.
- 2.2.6** Internal research centres are encouraged to become affiliated to institutes. Affiliation to an institute will involve internal centre directors reporting to the Institute Directors on the centre's alignment to the Institute. Applications for affiliation to the institute shall be considered by the Institute Director in consultation with the Institute's Executive Committee.

- 2.2.7** The proposed name for a research institute or internal centre must adhere to the University brand guidelines. The words National, International, European may not be used in the name unless it can be evidenced that the proposed unit is, or has the potential to be a national, international or European leader in the discipline and no other organisation is currently holding that title.
- 2.2.7** Externally funded UL hosted centres naming and branding is in the most part, subject to funders approval. Where it is not subject to funders' terms, the branding must adhere to the University brand guidelines.
- 2.2.8** The proposer of an institute or centre must ensure the name chosen does not breach any third-party rights, including copyright and trademark rights, and must confirm with the UL Legal Services Unit regarding same.

3 Governance and Management of Research Institutes and Centres

Each Institute has a formally appointed Director, an Executive Committee (or equivalent e.g. Leadership Team) and an External Advisory Board (or equivalent e.g. External Supervisory Board). Internal Centres have a Director and External Centres follow the leadership and management structures detailed in their grant and host agreement.

3.1 Research Institute Director

- 3.1.1** The Vice President for Research is responsible for overseeing the appointment of Institute Directors, in accordance with the University's appointment policies and procedures in particular the Research Centre and Institute Director – Succession and Appointment Procedures and Role Profiles.
- 3.1.2** The term of appointment for an institute director is normally 5 years with a possible once-off extension subject to appointment through open competition. The term may be renewed for a subsequent term subject to the approval of the Governing Authority on the recommendation of the Vice President Research.

The intention is that no Director will serve longer than a ten-year period in this role, however, in exceptional circumstances this may be extended for a time limited period if deemed necessary by the VPR and Dean

- 3.1.3** Institute directors will report to the Vice President Research and their host Faculty Dean for the purpose of the institute's strategic development and performance. See HR dual reporting lines procedure.

3.2 Internal Research Centre Director

- 3.2.1** Internal research centres will nominate a director from among its members who is responsible for the operation and delivering on the strategic direction of the institute. This is a voluntary leadership position which can be held on a rotating basis if required. A co-director arrangement can only be facilitated under exceptional circumstances, in this case a clear outline of assigned roles and responsibilities (including line management) must be presented for approval by the host Faculty Dean prior to the arrangement being finalised.

- 3.2.2** In a co-directorship arrangement, both directors will be required to sign-off on centre decisions. In the situation where a decision cannot be reached between the directors, the relevant line manager in terms of strategic oversight (Host Faculty Dean or Institute Director) will be briefed and requested to make the casting vote.
- 3.2.3** The term of director for an internal research centre is normally 3 years depending on the requirements of the internal centre. The term may be renewed for a subsequent term subject to the approval of the host Faculty Dean and the Vice President Research.
- 3.2.4** Internal Centre directors report to the centre's host Faculty Dean on the strategic development and performance of the centre and maintains their existing line management to their head of department. In the case of an internal centre within an institute, the centre director(s) report to the Institute Director for strategic development and performance of the centre. This does not impact their existing line management arrangements with their heads of department.

3.3 External Research Centre Director

- 3.3.1** The process for appointment of the director of an externally funded research centre may be mandated by the funder. If it is not mandated, then the Research Centre and Institute Director – Succession and Appointment Procedures and Role Profiles.
- 3.3.2** Externally-funded centre directors will report to the Vice President Research and host Faculty Dean for the purpose of their centre programmes. They also retain their original reporting also to their line manager for non-Centre related activities e.g. teaching activities.

3.4 External Advisory Boards

- 3.4.1** Institutes are required to establish an External Advisory Board which advises the director and submits a brief annual report to the President on the Institute's performance and strategic direction. The External Advisory Board focuses on strategic advice in terms of the direction of the institute.
- 3.4.2** University Research Institutes and Centres Directors should consider carefully their approach to establishing External Advisory Boards and are advised to ensure sufficient supports are available to establish an effective panel and to capitalise on their expertise. See the procedure for the establishment and management of External Advisory Boards.
- 3.4.3** External advisory boards are not mandatory for internal research centres and can be established by the centre director(s) if deemed appropriate to the stage of development of the internal centre.
- 3.4.4** Externally funded Centres may have mandated governance structures as part of the terms of their funding. However, externally funded centres should liaise with Office of the Vice President Research in the set up and reporting of same.

3.5 Membership

- 3.5.1** Academic staff members of a Research Institute are affiliated to an academic department and faculty. Such affiliations need careful and open discussion across the department/faculty and institute/centre with the intention to not inadvertently or inadvertently jeopardise each other's objectives or to operate in isolation of each other.

3.5.2 Institute membership applications and renewal will be managed through a transparent procedure overseen by the Director of the Institute. See Guidance document on institute or centre membership (OVPR QMS).

3.6 Annual monitoring and review

3.6.1 Research Institutes and internal research centres are required to submit an annual report covering the calendar year period. By the end of Q1 of each year, UL institutes will be requested to complete an annual report for the previous calendar year. It is anticipated that the Chair of the External Advisory Board would sign off on the Institute/Centre annual report. Internal research centres will receive an online template for completion as part of their annual report process.

3.6.2 Draft Annual Reports must be sent to the Office of the Vice President Research and relevant Dean(s) for input and approval prior to finalising.

3.6.3 Final annual reports are submitted to a) Host Faculty Dean b) Vice President Research for circulation at University Research Committee c) Chair of the University Quality Committee for their information.

3.6.4 Research Institutes have an annual monitoring meeting involving the University President, External Advisory Board Chair, Host Faculty Dean, Chief Financial and Performance Officer and the Vice President Research. The meeting agenda will examine strategic focus, governance, performance, management and sustainability of the institute. This meeting examines activity against key performance indicators and organisational investment in the research institute or centre. Responsibility for convening this meeting lies with the Office of the Vice President Research.

3.6.5 Annual monitoring of external centres takes the form of an annual meeting of the University President, Centre Governance Committee Chair, Chief Financial and Performance Officer, Vice President Research, Centre Director. The office of the Vice President Research will schedule the annual performance review meetings. The centre annual report will be considered at the annual meeting which will also allow and opportunity for discussion on the strategic alignment of the centre and future planning needs of the centre.

3.6.6 External research centres are required to submit their funder annual reports to Vice President Research and their host Faculty Dean. The requirements for institutional sign-off or endorsement of external research centre reports may vary from funder to funder, it is the responsibility of the Centre Director to ensure the annual report is produced and approved in line with the funder requirements.

3.6.7 Annual monitoring of internal centres is overseen by the University Research Committee (URC)

3.6.8 Research Institutes and internal research centres are required to submit an annual report covering the calendar year period. Each year, UL institutes will be requested to complete an annual report for the previous calendar year. Internal research centres will receive an online template for completion as part of their annual report process.

3.7 Quality Reviews

3.7.1 Research Institutes are subject to periodic quality reviews in accordance with the University Quality review cycle.

3.7.2 The Vice President Research may initiate a review of an institute or centre ad hoc and as they deem required. Where appropriate, a sub-group of University Research Committee will be

formed to oversee a review and supported administratively by the Office of the Vice President Research. The Vice President Research will oversee the formation of Internal Centre performance review sub-group(s) and may co-opt members from across the campus community or from external organisations as required. Centre directors and members will not form part of the review group for that centre. See Annual Performance meeting and review procedure.

3.8 Legal Considerations

- 3.8.1** Institutes, internal centres and external research centres do not have any legal capacity and therefore cannot enter into any contract or any form of binding commitment in the name of its respective centre/institute. All contractual and legally binding commitments shall be entered into on behalf of the University and are subject to the University signing authority policy.

4 Related Procedures

The procedures relating to this policy are outlined below with their relevant Quality Management System (QMS) unit link indicated. These include:

Office of the Vice President Research

- Procedure for the establishment of an institute or internal centre
- Institute/Internal Centre establishment form
- Internal research centre annual report [template](#)
- Annual performance meeting and review process for research institutes and centres.
- Guidance on the establishment of External Advisory Boards
- Guidance on membership of Research Institutes and Centres

Human Resources Division

- Dual reporting lines procedure.
- Research Centre and Directors succession and appointment procedures
- Research Centre and Institute Director role profiles

5 Related Policies

- Intellectual Property Policy, UL Policy Hub
- Research Integrity Policy, UL Policy Hub
- Conflict of Interest Policy, UL Policy Hub
- Risk Management Framework, UL Policy Hub
- Fixed Assets – Disposal/Transfer/ Sale of Assets Policy, UL Policy Hub
- Signing Authority Policy, UL Policy Hub
- Policy for the recruitment of staff, UL Policy Hub
- Quality Policy, UL Policy Hub

6 Document Control

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