

PVCRE meeting with potential Centre of Excellence applicants 09/12/2022: Q&A

1. How does Centre of Excellence status align with REF submission?

Post REF21 is a good time to revisit our research strengths, however the CoE application and review process is not tied to REF results.

2. What metrics should be used to support CoE bids?

The list of metrics provided in Annex 2 of the Guidance document are provided as an example only; applicants do not need to address all of metrics listed and should select those that will best evidence excellence. Applicants are encouraged to have early conversations with Mark Chee and/or Hayley Cordingley for help identifying and producing metrics. Please contact them using resinfosystems@sussex.ac.uk

3. Should research centres/programmes that are applying for CoE status have a role in teaching MA or PhD students?

Centres of Excellence should be research led rather than teaching focused. However, research led teaching activities can be highlighted in the CoE application.

4. Is there a particular business model for a CoE?

No. A one-size fits all approach will not be adopted, therefore CoEs may differ in size and mode of organization depending on their subject and scope.

5. What is the University's commitment to the Research Centres and Groups that do not achieve CoE status?

All other Research Centres and Groups will be governed at School level and will continue to undertake their research as usual.

6. Will CoEs receive VIP treatment?

No, CoEs will not receive VIP treatment. They will receive enhanced support from the Communications, Marketing, and Advancement Division to produce more prominent news stories and campaigns to ensure the work of the CoE is promoted to and understood by a range of stakeholders. CoEs may have more frequent contact with the PVCRE and will therefore be able to raise any concerns/barriers/opportunities that need addressing across the University.

7. Two of the assessment criteria refer to impact (AC6 and AC8); clarity is needed on the difference and on time period.

AC6 and AC8 have been revised to provide clarity on what is needed to address them:

Assessment Criteria	Original wording	Revised wording
AC6	Does the proposed CoE generate significant research funding, outputs, knowledge exchange and impact over a sustained period?	Does the proposed CoE generate significant research funding and/or make a major contribution to the next REF, as evidenced by outputs, impact cases (or potential for) and contributions to the research environment?
Assessment Criteria	Original wording	Revised wording

AC8	Does the proposed CoE have an impact on the wider community through engagement with other higher education institutions, government, departments, industry, and the private and charity sectors?	Does the proposed CoE have a demonstrable social and/or economic impact on the wider community, facilitated through collaboration and knowledge exchange activities with other higher education institutions, government departments or local authorities, commercial sector, public and third sector?
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The revised Guidelines and application form are available at <http://www.sussex.ac.uk/staff/research/sussexresearch/centres-of-excellence>

There isn't a set time period because we recognise that some Centres will have existed for longer than others. As well as providing historical information, all CoE applications should include details of current and relevant impact.

8. Who will be reviewing applications?

CoE applications will be reviewed by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RaKE) in May 2023. The Committee is largely made up of DRaKEs, and the membership is available for all to view on Sussex Direct at https://direct.sussex.ac.uk/page.php?page=group_members&trail=committees&group_seq=5211

9. The specification states that applications should be 'light-touch' however the application form is ten pages which is quite significant.

Ten pages is a maximum. Applicants should focus on how the Centre meets the criteria rather than writing 10 pages. It is hoped that applicants may have relevant information from funding applications or Centre reports which can be copied into their CoE applications rather than starting from scratch.

10. Is there a separate application process for existing Research Centres?

No, there is only 1 process for all applications regardless of what the current category the Centre is.

11. What financial support will be available for CoEs?

CoEs have the option to apply for support from the Strategic Development Fund (SDF) alongside their CoE applications. The maximum amount that can be requested is £100K per CoE.

SDF requests are for new and transformational research; if the applicant requests support for costs that are currently being covered by the School, they must make a convincing case for those costs to be covered by the SDF. CoE applications will be judged independently from SDF requests.

12. The Guidance states that CoEs will be managed 'centrally'; what does this mean?

This refers to the selection and governance of CoEs being undertaken by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee. CoE status will be conferred for 5 years. RaKE will undertake a review after 2.5 years and after 5 years, when CoEs will be subject to a renewal process. The review and renewal processes have not yet been finalised however Heads of School will be involved in both.

13. Can somebody be a member of more than one CoE?

Yes. People are currently able to belong to more than one Research Centre and this will not change.

14. Will inactive Research Groups be disbanded?

All other Research Centres and Groups will be governed at School level and will be subject to periodic reviews as determined by their School. Schools will determine potential outcomes of a periodic review which may include the following:

- Confirmation that the Research Centre or Group continues
- Advance notice of potential closure if no longer research active
- Closure or renaming of the Research Centre or Group

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