

Faculty of Media, Arts and Humanities

Research Centre Review & Planning Guidance

Background

The annual review of MAH Research Centres is part of the support we provide for [Research Centres in the Faculty](#) without substantial external funding or already supported by Sussex Research Initiatives. It is informed by [central university guidelines](#) published after a review of centres in 2021.

We want to strengthen Centres so they can help to realise Faculty and University research goals. Faculties are under increasing pressure to ensure that Research Centres have a strategy for self-financing over the longer term – most likely to be enabled through successful external funding applications, which have the potential to recruit administrative posts to support Centres.

There is a need for greater transparency and equity of treatment among Research Centres in the Faculty which have different levels of funding and existing support; different abilities to raise funds; different levels of administrative support and different levels of ambition.

Finally, given budget constraints, we need to ensure the highest possible return on investments in Research Centres.

How it works

Once a year (usually after the end of the Summer term), Research Centres are required to report on their activities and achievements over the past academic year (including how previous Faculty funds have been used to progress the aims of the Centre), and submit budgeted proposals for the upcoming academic year.

Your proposal (up to 3 pages), should describe the Centre's ambitions for the coming year, including plans for events and engagement activities (with justification – see criteria below), and plans for developing external or internal (e.g. AHRC IAA) funding applications.

Proposals should also provide a full costing of requested activities. Guidance on budgets for events can contact the MAH-research@sussex.ac.uk team for advice.

Criteria

Decisions on which activities the Faculty can afford to support will be considered against the following criteria:

- Whether the proposed activities are potentially fundable by external funding sources
- Have the potential for enhancing research *impact*
- Have the potential for enhancing *visibility/profile* of the Institute/Faculty
- Alignment of Centre aims with the Faculty's *research strategy*, and contribution to the Faculty's *research culture including the collaboration between centres*
- Justification (*purpose, value for money*) of activities, especially events (See Annex below)
- Evidence of *effective use of previous funds received*. Future access to these funds will depend on demonstrating effective use of previous funds applied for
- *Equity* between Centres and across the Faculty (the need to support all key research areas and departments at different times)

Planning your Centre programme

If approved...

- The Research Professional Services team will contact you in the autumn, requesting further details on your proposed activities (timeframes, speakers etc);
- You'll receive a budget code for your Centre expenditure, and guidance on how to spend from it;
- The team will provide essential guidance to be followed (e.g. [planning your event](#), visiting speaker policy) and offer support where appropriate;
- **Please familiarise yourself now with (and continue to refer to) the information below on support for Centre events, webpages etc.**

Decisions will be made by the Associate Dean for Research in review with the Research Portfolio team.

Further information and guidance on Centre activities

Research Centre Events

Further to the new SLT-approved principles and processes for MAH events (see Education newsletter June 2024), followed by the University's announcement that budgets will be substantially reduced for 2024/25, *Centres will be limited to hosting two events per term, including a maximum of 1 event featuring an external speaker/artist, per term.*

A 'Research Centre event' is typically defined as an event...

- requiring **funds from the Centre's budget** – and/or logistical support from MAH Professional Services – for booking rooms, catering, speaker fees etc, and/or
- organised by Research Centre members, **promoted as a Research Centre event**, and attended by Research Centre members, students (and potentially colleagues from elsewhere in MAH / the University), and/or
- with a **speaker** (usually external), requiring accommodation, hospitality, expenses, and the processing of an External Speaker form and fees, and/or
- requiring **promotional support** from MAH Professional Services, including the creation of a Broadcast event listing, TicketTailor (or equivalent, e.g. Eventbrite) registration page, inclusion in newsletters and social media, etc.

All Research Centre events should use a ticket management platform (e.g. TicketTailor or Eventbrite) to record registration and attendance data; this is now essential for reporting and accountability purposes. Further guidance will be circulated on using these platforms to create and manage events (working with the MAH Research Team).

Research Centres whose members wish to meet more frequently on an informal basis are welcome to do so (for example, writing days or idea/bid development sessions); however, these activities will not be eligible for Research Centre funding or PS support i.e. they should be self-organised and self-catered.

Please note: this guidance supplements the '[Planning a Research Event or Conference](#)' page, which should be referred to for all research events.

Visiting speakers

Please consult the policy on [payment and expenses for guest speakers](#).

Important: If you invite **guest speakers/contributors** from outside the University as part of the Centre programme it is essential that you complete the **external speaker request form** [here](#) in advance of the relevant event, and send a copy to mah-research@sussex.ac.uk.

Research Centre communications (webpages)

It is increasingly important (for student recruitment, accessibility, among many reasons) that the University's webpages prioritise the needs of its users. The recently-launched '[New Web Estate Project](#)' includes a 'Less is More' imperative from the Digital Content team who manage the website, and – in response – the MAH Research team is currently auditing content and refining/refreshing Faculty research pages. This includes reviewing webpage analytics (to understand which pages are visited more/less frequently) and transferring content to the 'new' template (e.g. [Centre for Modernist Studies](#)).

As part of this work, we have reviewed the content currently hosted across the [Faculty's Research Centre](#) webpages, and have agreed the following principles and corresponding processes for supporting their maintenance.

Principles:

1. Centres' 'static' (e.g. landing, **About us**) pages should present an accurate, up-to-date and succinct overview of the Centre's work. This is the first (and potentially only) interaction that a new visitor will encounter, and it will need to engage their interest in reading further.
2. **'People' pages** should clearly distinguish and prioritise Sussex staff (and link to their Elements profiles, which should be kept up-to-date), in contrast to non-Sussex 'members'. While it's important to acknowledge the multi-institutional/collaborative nature of our Centres' work, the primary/target users of these pages (e.g. prospective students or non-academic collaborators) will likely be more interested in exploring the work of Sussex staff.
3. **Content relating to Centre outputs and impacts** (e.g. publications, videos, case studies, media coverage etc) should be highly curated – a representative selection of the Centre's best and most interesting work. These webpages are not a repository for recording or showcasing *all* Centre activity; they should convey – at a glance (quality over quantity) – that the Centre produces excellent research/outputs, is meaningfully engaging within and beyond their discipline, and achieving impact outside academia.
4. **News and Events pages** should use [Broadcast](#) feeds (including archive feeds of past events), to collate and showcase upcoming and recent activity (e.g. [Centre for Modernist Studies](#)); time-sensitive content should not be hosted on static pages (e.g. chronological lists of events or activities, past or future) unless exceptional e.g. a major or recurring annual conference, or award of a large external grant. For accessibility reasons, Centres should not host PDF documents that have not been checked and adapted to meet the latest accessibility guidelines.
5. **Other pages / content** (e.g. Work with us, PhD or teaching-related content, resources, Centre-specific schemes, fellowships or other initiatives etc) may be retained, and updated, with the agreement of the MAH Research team. Where possible, pages should signpost – rather than duplicate – content that exists elsewhere on the website (e.g. Teaching page signposting to Prospectus pages).

Processes:

The MAH Research team no longer has capacity to process ad hoc requests for Centre page updates. Centres may submit a 1-email compilation of update requests to MAH-Research@sussex.ac.uk on a termly basis (see below). Subsequent requests submitted within the same term will be held by the team, to be processed at the end of term.

1, 2, 3, 5: Centres should review these pages periodically (at least once per year, as part of the Review process; at most, once per term), including checking hyperlinks and noting out-of-date content, and submit updated content to mah-research@sussex.ac.uk to upload.

1. Static (landing, 'About us') pages
2. 'People' pages
 - a. Member lists should include: name, link to Elements profile, job title, Faculty (if not MAH), role in the Centre e.g. Director. Member lists may also include: 1-2 sentences about each Sussex staff members' current research; lists of PhD researchers and their projects; information about current Visiting Fellows. (See e.g. [Centre for Cultural Studies](#))
 - b. Member lists should contain minimal information about non-Sussex members: name, affiliation and a single hyperlink to the members' institutional profile page (not to a document or CV).
3. Outputs and impacts
 - a. Centres should feature a brief list (~5-10) of their highest-quality, most influential or representative outputs from the last ~5 years, ideally with a brief 'lay abstract', author list and DOI link to the content.
 - b. Publications pages (where static i.e. that aren't feeds from SRO) – the team will no longer process ad hoc requests to add information to un-curated lists.
 - c. Centres should use their 'People' page to signpost visitors to Sussex staff members' Elements pages, for more detailed information about Publications and other research outputs/activities.
 - d. Centres should signpost to other related content elsewhere on the Sussex website, e.g. [impact stories](#), [KE projects](#), rather than duplicate content.
4. News and Events pages
 - a. News stories (e.g. reporting event or funding success) should be published on Broadcast – all staff can publish items on this platform (there is a basic manual, and it's quite intuitive), and assign their item to the relevant Centre 'channel'. Important: please ensure you select this setting in the Editing Permissions section: *'Anyone who is an editor on any of the following channels: School of Media, Arts and Humanities (internal or external)'*. Once approved, the item will appear on a Broadcast 'feed', embedded on the Centre's 'News' page. The MAH Research team can support this if necessary – email MAH-Research@sussex.ac.uk with details of your news.
 - b. Events should also be published on Broadcast (different template to News, same interface/process). For support with posting an event to Broadcast (and subsequent promotion in newsletters, social media etc), complete a ['Promote Your Event'](#) form at least 4 weeks before an event.
 - c. Past events should appear on webpages within an 'archive' feed. Centres may make a case for retaining a pre-Broadcast, manually-published 'highlights' list of past events (e.g. [Centre for Modernist Studies](#)), but these can no longer be added to.
5. Other pages / content