

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES

GUIDELINES ON THE PURPOSE, ESTABLISHMENT AND REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES

The purpose of this document is to provide direction:

- to those seeking university approval for the establishment of a University Research Centre; and
- to aid in the review of the performance of University Research Centres.

For information on the purpose, establishment and review of Research Centres or Research Groups please see the [Overview of Sussex Research Groupings](#).

For information on the University and Regional Research Centre Review process, see the [University and Regional Research Centre Review Guidelines](#).

1. DEFINITION

University Research Centres are groupings of academics undertaking research that is publicly recognised as world-leading in an established area of expertise. They address significant international challenges and problems and redefine the parameters of one or more disciplines. University Research Centres are distinguished from Research Centres primarily through their significance to the University Strategy and through the external funding they attract. They are expected to maintain a portfolio of significant grants over a sustained period.

KEY FEATURES OF A UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRE

1.1 Purpose of a University Research Centre

A University Research Centre's purpose is to:

- Represent a priority area of Sussex's research strength both nationally and internationally.
- Promote and facilitate world-leading collaborative research.
- Generate significant research funding, outputs and impact over a sustained period.
- Provide a coordinated, University wide focus for external and/or internal stakeholders.

1.2 Research activities

A University Research Centre will:

- Undertake research that addresses significant international challenges and problems
- Redefine the parameters of one or more disciplines
- Undertake research with national and international collaborators
- Have extensive links with external research, business and government groups, which will provide a means for collaboration with external partners
- Sponsor and organise lectures, conferences and colloquia
- Undertake world-leading to research leading to joint publications, outputs and impact.

- Undertake high-quality activity that will contribute significantly to the REF in terms of environment, impact and outputs.
- Maintain a portfolio of significant grants over a sustained period.
- Undertake public engagement activities.
- Maintain an up-to-date externally facing website.
- Attract international students and researchers in high volume.

1.3 Teaching activities

A University Research Centre will:

- Co-supervise doctoral students
- Provide a supportive environment for early career researcher development.

A University Research Centre may offer:

- Masters programmes
- Postgraduate training
- Postgraduate seminars
- Masterclasses

1.4 Management and Reporting

- University Research Centres will normally be led by a member of Sussex faculty who is given the title 'Director'.
- The Director will be of prominent international standing. They will normally be recruited internally but may be recruited externally as appropriate.
- For details on the responsibilities of Directors see section 3 'Duties and Responsibilities of Directors'
- University Research Centres are expected to develop and maintain a comprehensive three-year plan and communications strategy.
- Beyond the Director, University Research Centres are expected to have a management group and /or advisory board.

Reporting

Annual reporting requirements for University Research Centres may be defined by the Head of School in which the centre is based.

Every three years University Research Centres will participate in a University Research Centre Review led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research. Details of which can be found in the [University and Regional Research Centre Review Guidelines](#).

1.5 Membership

University Research Centre members will:

- Be committed to collaborative working
- Take an active interest in other member's work
- Have signed up to a core set of values

A University Research Centre can include:

- Smaller research groups / labs that fit within the larger centre structure
- Associated members: generally visiting academics and PhD students
- Core members: generally members of Sussex faculty who contribute to the centre's activities on a regular basis.

1.6 Funding and resources

University Research Centres:

- Will have sustainable and diverse income streams, with revenue that is substantial with respect to national norms for its thematic focus.
 - Will have a recognised core of dedicated support staff.
 - May have a recognised space, equipment and facilities.
 - Are expected to have a significant contribution from the relevant Schools, typically a combination of financial and in-kind support, and including the provision of infrastructure.
 - Resourcing arrangements are likely to vary depending on the structure of the Centre and its external links.
 - There is no core university funding available for University Research Centres.
 - University Research Centres are expected to seek external funding for their activities.
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2. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF DIRECTORS

The Centre Director will report to the Head of School in which the Centre is based.

The approval process for new URCs will include discussion with Pro-Vice Chancellor Research, Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Interdisciplinary Research) and one University Research Centre Director to discuss the expectations of this leadership role.

The University expects that University Research Centre Directors will be internationally outstanding research leaders in their field, capable of:

- Maintaining the confidence and cooperation of centre members.
- Developing the wider centre aims in addition to their own research focus.
- Fostering a supportive and collaborative research environment for all members, including early career researchers.
- Ensuring that a portfolio of external grants is maintained.

University Research Centre Directors are responsible for:

- Managing the budget and administrative matters for the Centre
 - Ensuring the centre's three-year plan is aligned with the University's Strategic Plan.
 - Ensuring the centre meets the targets set out in its three-year plan and as agreed in the University Research Centre Review.
 - Encouraging and supporting the development of applications for external research funding.
 - Working in collaboration with the Research Centre's governance committee where relevant.
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3. ESTABLISHMENT PROCESS

Stage 1: Thinking of becoming a University Research Centre

If you are considering becoming a University Research Centre you should contact the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Interdisciplinary Research) in the first instance.

Stage 2: Applying

If the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor decides to invite an application, you will be required to complete an University Research Centre application. The application form can be found on the [Sussex Research website](#) and should be submitted via email to C.Brownbridge@sussex.ac.uk. Applications not invited by the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor will not be considered.

Stage 3: Review

The application will be reviewed by a panel generally comprising:

- Pro-Vice Chancellor Research
- Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor Interdisciplinary Research
- Head of School in which the Centre is based
- Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange for the host School
- Two Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange with no links to the proposed centre.

Stage 4: Approval

If approved the decision will be reported to Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

Sussex Research set up the Centre's database record. The Director will then be expected to establish and maintain the website and database membership record.

4. REVIEW OF UNIVERSITY RESEARCH CENTRES

Once approved, University Research Centres may be reviewed annually according to their host School's procedures and will be reviewed every three years by the University. Details of the University Research Centre Review process can be found in the [University and Regional Research Centre Review Guidelines](#).

5. CLOSURE

The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research may decide upon the closure of centres, subject to their review procedures.

Where University Research Centre Directors wish to close their centre, they should notify both the Deputy Pro-Vice Chancellor (Interdisciplinary Research) and their Head of School.