
Research Centres and Institutes Policy

1. Purpose

This Policy sets out the framework for establishing, managing and reviewing Research Centres and Institutes (RCIs) at Te Herenga Waka – Victoria University of Wellington (the University).

2. Application of Policy

This Policy applies to Staff Members.

This Policy applies only to those entities that meet the Definitions for [Research Institutes, University Research Centres and Faculty Research Centres](#).

Policy Content

3. Purpose of RCIs

3.1 The purpose of RCIs is to:

- (a) contribute to and build on the University's research excellence and reputation, by creating, enhancing and advancing knowledge, strategies and technologies to respond to challenges faced in Aotearoa and globally;
- (b) contribute to upholding the University's commitments to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, te reo Māori, and mātauranga Māori, and the values of the University;
- (c) collaborate with others across the research system within the University and internationally to foster interdisciplinary research and diverse, inclusive research teams;
- (d) engage authentically and effectively with end-users of research to enhance understanding, decision-making and uptake of research; and
- (e) share the insights of research broadly to extend and enhance knowledge and translate research into practice, to contribute to informed public discourse, and to improve the quality of information and data in the public domain.

4. Core characteristics of RCIs

4.1 An RCI will usually have all of the following characteristics:

- (a) It is primarily focused on research and engagement.
- (b) It is clearly aligned to a University strategic objective(s) and/or an identified national or global need(s).
- (c) Its research is conducted appropriately and safely for the Aotearoa New Zealand context, it engages fully with the outcomes of the University's Mai i te Iho ki te Pae - Māori Strategic Outcomes Framework, and meets the obligations and opportunities of Te Tiriti o Waitangi.
- (d) It consists of a group of people undertaking collective research activity which would not otherwise occur through an informal collaboration.
- (e) It has an external focus and identity.
- (f) It has clearly identified stakeholders and an active stakeholder engagement approach.
- (g) It has a strategic plan and potential for growth and longer-term sustainability.

5. Establishing a new RCI

- 5.1 A new RCI must be established in accordance with the RCI Establishment, Review and Closure Procedure.
- 5.2 A new RCI will initially be established for a period of five years. A new RCI will be reviewed within this period, and the review process will include a recommendation regarding the future operation.

6. Reporting for RCIs

- 6.1 RCIs will report against their relevant strategic plan on an annual basis to their relevant management and governance bodies.

7. Reviewing RCIs

- 7.1 A new RCI will be reviewed at least every five years. The review must be initiated by either the Dean of the host Faculty or the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), who will determine the specific timing of a review of a new or existing RCI.
- 7.2 The review process will be developed in accordance with the RCI Establishment, Review and Closure Procedure with the goal of understanding the current state of the RCI in order to enable success and/or transition.
- 7.3 The review process must consider the size and scale of the RCI and tailor the review accordingly. A review will at a minimum:
 - (a) Assess whether the RCI is meeting its objectives as an RCI;
 - (b) Assess the overall key performance indicators; and
 - (c) Determine if there is an ongoing need for the RCI, and whether it is sustainable and continues to contribute to the University and end-users.
- 7.4 Review reports will be considered by Te Hiwa.
- 7.5 Other formalised research and engagement entities will be reviewed using the review procedure.

8. Expectations of the University

- 8.1 In order to support the success of RCIs, the University is expected to:
 - (a) Recognise that RCIs structure and operations differ from Schools and Faculties, therefore may require different approaches to supporting administration, operational management, and project management than standard University processes.
 - (b) Ensure that RCIs have appropriate guidance on financial and operational sustainability.
 - (c) Provide support to RCIs to encourage and facilitate co-location either within or between Faculties where appropriate.
 - (d) Clarify expectations and processes regarding management of philanthropic, external research funding, and commissioned research, ensuring effective cooperation between the Development Office, the Research Office, and Wellington UniVentures respectively.

9. Definitions

In this Policy, unless the context otherwise requires:

Research Institute means an Institute that is normally a standalone, independent organisational entity that has an identity beyond the University. The

primary purpose is research, development and delivery, and it has clear linkages with external stakeholders and engages externally around the research it undertakes. An Institute has a portfolio of related research areas, and a substantial cohort of research staff that report to a Director. An Institute will have an executive group and will be primarily self-sustaining (e.g., with funding coming from grants, commercial works, etc.), with financial independence regarding its budget, assets and capital expenditure. An Institute supports and supervises post-graduate students, and while staff may undertake teaching, this is not the responsibility of the Institute. An Institute may also support other research groupings (e.g., hubs, labs and centres) and infrastructure within its structure.

University Research Centre

means a Centre that is normally an identifiable entity that provides a distinctive contribution unique to the University and the Aotearoa New Zealand research system, and that the University seeks to directly support. It has a clear and defined research focus or theme, aligned to a University strategic objective or an identified national or global need, but narrower than that of an Institute. There is significant intellectual leadership which brings together an interdisciplinary cohort of researchers to undertake collective research activities. A University Centre has an external focus, with a brand identity (or potential for this) and clearly identified external stakeholders. It engages externally around the research it undertakes and is able to pursue commercial research opportunities independently of the University. The structure of a University Centre means it has a management group with an independent budget and associated finance cost centre. It is usually hosted by a Faculty to enable access to the shared resources that centres need to function, although funding may be from both internal and external sources.

Faculty Research Centre

means a Centre that is normally an identifiable entity which undertakes research and engagement activities that generally fits within the Faculty disciplines, and is embedded within a School. It often provides a unique contribution to the University and/or the Aotearoa New Zealand research environment, through deep expertise in a narrower field than a University Centre, and may also have a brand identity that is associated with this. It is likely to be timebound and may be a response to emerging needs or grassroots ideas. It is supported by the Faculty which is responsible for decision-making. It will normally have a Director and a manager, who may report to either a Dean or a Head of School. Funding for the centre may come from the Faculty and/or external grants.

Related Documents and Information

10. Related Documents

[Education and Training Act 2020](#)
[Victoria University of Wellington Act 1961](#)

[Research Centres and Institutes Establishment, Review and Closure Procedure](#)
[Research Centres and Institutes Guidelines](#) (internal to staff)

11. Document Management and Control*Essential Record*

Approver	Tumu Whakarae – Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	14 November 2023
Effective Date	14 November 2023
Next Review Date	01 November 2026
Policy Sponsor	Maruārangi – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Policy Owner	Director - Research Office

Modification History

Date	Approval Agency	Details
N/A	Tumu Whakarae – Vice-Chancellor	New policy
31 October 2025	Principal Advisor, Research Policy	Editorial corrections