



**CENTRES PROCEDURE:**  
*Establishment, Management and Review of Centres and Institutes*

<b>Policy Hierarchy link</b>	This procedure details actions pursuant to the authority listed in the Register of Delegations: Establish and Disestablish a University Centre or Institute (Section 7.3.2)		
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) & Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)		
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<b>Superseded Documents</b>	v2.0: Centres Policy 1 November 2005, Academic Board (AB05/117). v1.0: Centres Policy 1 July 2003, Academic Board (AB03/24)		
<b>File Number</b>	2004/2482		
<b>Associated Documents</b>	1: <a href="#">Template for the Establishment of UNSW Centres</a> 2: <a href="#">Template for Financial Reporting of UNSW Centres</a> 3: <a href="#">Template for the Review of UNSW Centres</a>  Intellectual Property Policy Paid Outside Work by Academic Staff Research Code of Conduct UNSW Delegations of Authority Conflict of Interest Policy Insider Trading Policy		
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## Purpose and Scope

This procedure covers the principles and process for establishment, management and review of all centres and institutes involving UNSW. The Centres Secretariat in the Research Strategy Office can provide assistance on any aspect of the procedure.

Where the term “centre” has been used broadly, it means all types of centres referred to in this procedure.

### 1.1 Introduction

The University establishes centres to encourage research, teaching and community service in areas not readily covered by individual schools and faculties. Most centres concentrate on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary fields and bring together similar groups of academics across different schools and/or faculties. Centres also provide a common and easily identifiable “brand” external to UNSW.

All approved centres are listed in the Centres Registry (<http://www.gmo.unsw.edu.au/CentresSecretariat/ListOfUNSWCentres.html>) maintained by the Centres Secretariat. The University limits the use of the title “centre” and “institute” to those entities that have been approved by the processes covered in this Procedure, except where they have been established as administrative units by UNSW, e.g., Learning Centre, Analytical Centre.

The key criterion for the establishment and on-going operation of a centre or institute is that it must add value to UNSW’s collaborative and cross disciplinary research and/or educational mission beyond that which would accrue from the normal conduct of its members’ duties.

Centres should not be invested with expectations of permanency. Their existence is linked to specific functions and goals identified at their establishment. At regular times, centres will be reviewed to assess their performance against their objectives and to justify their continuation.

**The UNSW Centres Secretariat** within the Research Strategy Office provides services spanning the life-cycle of research centres (including Commonwealth/State Funded centres) from application to contract and centre management and compliance, and assists centres with integration and alignment with academic/administrative structures and lines of reporting across the University.

The Centres Secretariat is responsible for:

- maintaining the UNSW Centres Registry;
- maintaining and administering the broad framework for all centres;
- providing regular reports to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the performance and compliance of centres;
- acting as a repository of all centre annual reports and minutes of committee meetings; and triggering and managing the review process for centres.

Correspondence relating to Centres should be addressed to:

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## 2. Definitions

The University limits the use of the title “**centre**” and “**institute**” to those entities that have been approved by the processes covered in this Procedure, except where they have been established as administrative units by UNSW.

## 3. General Defining Principles

The following five types of centres are formally recognised at UNSW:

1. UNSW Research Centres
2. UNSW Program Centres
3. UNSW Community Centres
4. UNSW Research Institutes
5. Commonwealth/State Funded Centres
6. Other Centres involving external parties

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) has overriding authority over:

- Program Centres; and
- Community Centres.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has overriding authority over:

- Research Centres;
- Research Institutes;
- Commonwealth/State Funded Centres; and
- Other Centres involving external parties.

Significant changes to the operation of a centre (e.g. type of centre, change of name, committee structure or composition, terms of reference) must be approved by the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

### 3.1 UNSW Research Centres

UNSW Research Centres are established within the University to undertake research and they recognise an established area of research strength, or an emerging area of research strength, at UNSW.

UNSW Research Centres will not normally be established within a single school or replicate functions which are those of existing schools or faculties, *i.e.* they are not a means to set up an activity that could be a normal part of a school's/faculty's activities.

UNSW Research Centres generally have an interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary focus and involve significant collaboration within UNSW, nationally and internationally.

UNSW Research Centres may also be established as focal points for research-related entrepreneurial activities involving skills, expertise and personnel, which cut across school/faculty structures.

UNSW has the sole governance responsibility for UNSW Research Centres.

A UNSW Research Centre has the following characteristics:

- Activity is within an area of research strength or area of emerging research strength, and fits within the strategic goals and priorities of UNSW;
- Activity is focused across several faculties/schools/units;
- The level of activity demonstrates significant critical mass\*;
- Income is obtained from a variety of sources including competitive, industry and international sources;
- Support from the relevant schools and faculties;
- A recognised core of staff associated with the centre and its activities;
- Recognised space, equipment and facilities; and
- Its own identifiable cost centre and accounts.

\*Note: "critical mass" will vary according to the field, but the intent is that centres should be large enough to achieve significant national / international impact. Very small centres find it difficult to achieve the impact expected of centres by the University.

### **3.2 UNSW Program Centres**

Program Centres are concerned primarily with interdisciplinary teaching activities which involve significant cooperation across school and/or faculty boundaries. There may also be a strong research component in a Program Centre.

UNSW has the sole governance responsibility for UNSW Program Centres.

A UNSW Program Centre has the following characteristics:

- Activity is within an area of teaching strength or area of emerging teaching strength, and/or fits within the strategic goals and priorities of UNSW;
- Activity is focused across several faculties/schools;
- The level of activity demonstrates significant critical mass;
- Support from the relevant schools and faculties;
- A recognised core of staff associated with the centre and its activities;
- Recognised space, equipment and facilities; and
- Its own identifiable cost centre and accounts.

### 3.3 UNSW Community Centres

UNSW Community Centres contribute in a particular way to the outreach and community engagement of the University *e.g.* in community service, as an information source or an integrating centre, *etc.* that extends their activities beyond the University's normal activities. There may also be a strong research component in a Community Centre.

UNSW has the sole governance responsibility for UNSW Community Centres.

A UNSW Community Centre has the following characteristics:

- Activity is within an area of teaching/research strength or area of emerging teaching/research strength, and/or fits within the strategic goals and priorities of UNSW;
- Activity has outreach or community engagement as its main focus;
- Activity is focused across several faculties/schools;
- The level of activity demonstrates significant critical mass;
- Income is obtained from a variety of sources which may include competitive grants, industry and international sources;
- Support from the relevant schools and faculties;
- A recognised core of staff associated with the centre and its activities;
- Recognised space, equipment and facilities; and
- Its own identifiable cost centre and accounts.

### 3.4 UNSW Research Institutes

UNSW will only have a few Institutes at any one time and they will be used as a major strategic focus for UNSW.

UNSW Research Institutes are broad structures which can be either umbrella organisations representing a range of centres, or a major joint venture involving schools, centres, and possibly external stakeholders *e.g.* affiliated medical research institutes.

A UNSW Research Institute will have the following characteristics:

- Activity is within an area of research strength or area of emerging research strength, and fits within the strategic goals and priorities of UNSW;
- A significant organisational grouping;
- Significant, longer-term, multidisciplinary research activity focused across several schools/faculties;
- Significant linkages with industry, government and other external research;
- International recognition with the ability to attract the best international students and visitors;
- Recognised space, equipment and facilities, which may employ a core of dedicated staff; and
- Its own separate identifiable cost centre and financial management.

### 3.5 Commonwealth/State Funded Centres

Commonwealth/State-funded centres include Cooperative Research Centres, ARC Centres of Excellence, National Centres of Excellence and NHMRC Centres of

Clinical Research Excellence. These centres have contractual governance, compliance and reporting requirements and are covered in further detail in [section 8](#) of this Procedure.

On award, these centres will automatically be assigned UNSW centre status and will be monitored by the Centres Secretariat.

Two UNSW centres covering the same discipline/resources/staff are not normally permitted. For example, if a Commonwealth/State Funded Centre grows from a UNSW Research Centre, the UNSW Research Centre will be disestablished, and the Commonwealth/State Funded Centre will be assigned UNSW centre status.

### **3.6 Other Centres involving external parties**

Centres which involve UNSW sharing the control of research/teaching programs, postgraduate research training and resources with another institution or organisation must have UNSW centre status. Governance arrangements should be broadly consistent with this Procedure but with details negotiated through formal agreements with the other parties involved. The agreements should fulfill the requirements for the establishment of a new UNSW Centre, and must include the following considerations:

- Structure of the joint venture;
- Measurement of contributions from each party (cash and in-kind);
- Administration of any external funding;
- Composition of the management board or committee;
- Determination of overall centre objectives;
- Determination of research, consulting and educational projects;
- Control of outputs;
- HR issues including status, selection and appointment of Director and other staff;
- Freedom to conduct teaching, research and consulting activities outside of the centre in circumstances where there are overlapping interests;
- Ownership of intellectual property resulting from joint projects and control of its publication and use in teaching, further research and commercialisation;
- Strategies for commercialisation and distribution of income;
- Arrangement for students, their supervision and their intellectual property; and
- Term of Agreement and arrangements for termination or wind-up of the centre.

It is also expected that the performance and direction of these jointly operated centres will be reviewed broadly along the lines described in [Section 6](#) for UNSW centres. The Centres Secretariat will recommend appropriate timing and mechanisms to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

## **4. Creation of UNSW Centres**

### **4.1 The Proposal**

Proposals to establish a UNSW centre must use the template provided at [Attachment 1](#), following consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including heads

of schools. The Centres Secretariat's feedback should be sought on draft proposals before they are finalised.

#### **4.2 Approval Process**

Proposals must be approved by the Dean of each faculty with which the centre is associated (or appropriate DVC, where the Centre is outside of the Faculty structure), the Dean of the faculty in which the centre will formally reside is referred to as the "Presiding Dean". The proposal is forwarded through the Centres Secretariat to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor for consideration. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will review the proposal and, if approved, will notify the Presiding Dean and the Academic Board via the Policy Advisory Committee (Program and Community Centres), or the Committee on Research (all other centres). The Centres Secretariat will then add the new centre to the UNSW Centres Registry.

If the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor does not approve a proposal, he/she will report the reasons back to the Presiding Dean.

### **5. Management of UNSW Centres**

In all of their operations, centres must ensure that the reputation of the University is maintained. Centres must not engage in activities which could bring the University into disrepute or in any way conflict with the mission of the University.

Centres must properly and prominently acknowledge their relationship with the University in all correspondence and published material.

#### **5.1 Centre Director**

Each centre must have a director appointed by the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the recommendation of the Presiding Dean. The director is responsible to the management board for the implementation of policy, the promotion of the objectives of the centre and the day-to-day administration of its activities. He/she would normally chair meetings of the centre's senior management team.

The director of a centre will not normally be appointed for more than three years, but will be eligible for reappointment at the end of his/her term.

Deans and relevant heads of school must ensure that centre directors, if not full-time in their role, are given sufficient time and support to allow them to make significant impact. If at least a 50% time commitment is not financially feasible for the director then it is suggested that the Presiding Dean re-evaluate the centre's fit with the faculty's strategic direction, and if appropriate recommend winding up of the centre.

#### **5.2 Management Board**

The director and his/her senior management team are responsible for day to day operations. Since centres cross school / faculty line management boundaries, oversight by a management board is essential for good governance. Historically, the centres that perform well usually have management boards which provide significant input.

The role of the management boards is analogous with that of a company board, ensuring that the centre pursues its objectives in line with its terms of reference. Importantly the role involves proactive mentoring of the centre management team, oversight of centre performance, assisting with development of strategy and ensuring that operations and finances are in good order and compliant with University requirements. The management board will also determine the limit of financial and other delegations of the director (within UNSW policy); any expenditure beyond this limit must be approved by the Presiding Dean. The director should facilitate monitoring of centre finances by the board through provision of regular reports in the standard format attached as [template 2A](#).

All centres will have a management board (unless otherwise approved by the relevant DVC) comprising:

- The Presiding Dean or nominee, who will normally act as Chair;
- The Director of the centre;
- Up to three other members from faculties/schools associated with the centre who are not members of the centre; and
- Other members, co-opted as required.

The relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor (or nominee) may also be a member of the management board and/or may attend its meetings.

The management board will be established by the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on the recommendation of the Presiding Dean. Members other than the Presiding Dean will normally serve two-year terms, with provision being made for staggering the rotation of membership to ensure some continuity of membership and the possibility of renewal for further terms.

The management board will meet at least three times per year. A quorum will be 51% of members including the Chair. The centre must notify the Centres Secretariat of meeting dates and provide them with a copy of the agenda. Minutes must record all decisions of the board and be forwarded to the Centres Secretariat within four weeks of the meeting.

### **5.3 Advisory Committee**

An advisory committee may be established, on the recommendation of the Presiding Dean, by the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The formation of an advisory committee is highly recommended when there is active participation of, or engagement with, significant external professional or user organisations. The role of the advisory committee is to assist and guide the director and the management board on matters of strategy and policy.

An advisory committee would normally consist of the director, the management board Chair (or nominee), one other member of the management board and other external members with distinguished reputations and/or wide experience relevant to the policies and programs of the centre.

#### **5.4 Funding**

Centres are normally expected to be financially self-sustaining. The normal expectation is that centres should either command support from the participating schools and faculties or attract sufficient external resources to cover their needs. Note that competitive grant schemes usually do not cover the financial, administrative and other support resources that are essential for centre operations, so it is important that centre directors negotiate stable arrangements to cover those costs with the relevant Deans or Heads of School. Deans and proposed centre directors should not sign off on centre proposals until arrangements for support needs have been negotiated.

All centre finances must be run through the centre's own cost centre established within the UNSW finance system. The faculty of the Presiding Dean (or relevant Division) has responsibility for the operation of the centre, including financial management, and it is therefore recommended that the cost centre be established under the presiding faculty rather than under a single school. Any budget deficit is the responsibility of the faculty of the Presiding Dean unless there is a formal agreement in place to specify an alternative arrangement.

#### **5.5 Annual Report**

By 1 June each year, each centre must provide to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, an annual report of the centre's activities in the previous calendar year.

The annual report must be approved by the management board before it is submitted to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for consideration. The centre must also provide a copy of the report to the Centres Secretariat.

This report will include:

- a summary of the centre's performance for the year in relation to its identified aims and strategies, and an indication of major goals for the coming year;
- a statement of financial performance for the period presented in a standard format;
- a statement of in-kind contributions including academic/ other salaries, infrastructure and other resources provided to the centre;
- details of any publications, research projects, consultancies and other scholarly achievements associated with the centre during the period;
- details of significant managerial or personnel changes;
- a list of teaching and research supervision carried out by the centre on behalf of academic units; and
- a record of dates and attendance at meetings of the centre's management board and advisory committee.

#### **5.6 Teaching Activities within Centres**

Centres cannot of themselves be responsible for undergraduate and/or postgraduate teaching activities. They may not, except in special circumstances,

be a program or course authority for a program. Any teaching activities must be coordinated by a school or faculty and the course authority for any teaching programs should be identified as the faculty of the Presiding Dean.

Centres may, through arrangements with schools or faculties, assist in the coordination and delivery of undergraduate and/or postgraduate teaching programs. Centres may play an active role in the promotion, organisation and support of postgraduate teaching activities. Normally they would receive funding for their teaching activities as part of their arrangements with schools / faculties for support funding.

At the postgraduate level, research training may be undertaken within centres. However, the final academic responsibility resides with the Academic Board through bodies directly responsible to it. Research students whose programs are located in a centre must be enrolled through a school and/or faculty. Centres may obtain funding for their research training activities as part of their arrangements with schools / faculties for support funding.

## **6. Review of UNSW Centres**

All UNSW centres will be reviewed every three years. The UNSW Centres Secretariat is responsible for managing the review process, in consultation with the centres and Presiding Deans.

### **6.1 Review Purpose**

Each centre will be reviewed to determine whether:

- it is continuing to effectively and efficiently pursue its stated functions and goals;
- the centre has met the planned objectives and Key Performance Indicators for the review period;
- the centre's functions and goals continue to be relevant and that the centre has demonstrated a case for continuation;
- the management of the centre is adequate and appropriate, and that the director's performance is satisfactory;
- the centre's finances are in order and the centre is financially sustainable;
- strategic and operational planning is in place for the ensuing period, including succession planning;
- the centre's activities do not replicate the functions of existing schools or units within the University;
- academic and financial support for the centre remains sufficiently strong to justify its continuation;
- all research performance is being appropriately captured and shared (if appropriate); and
- all commercial activities are appropriately captured and monitored in accordance with University policy.

### **6.2 Review Process**

Each centre will be given at least eight weeks notice by the Centres Secretariat to prepare for the review. Documentation for the review must be provided to the review panel at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled review date.

Review committees will be established by the Centres Secretariat on the advice of the Presiding Dean.

Each review committee will be chaired by a Dean (who is not the Presiding Dean) or a relevant associate Dean, and will include at least two members of the academic staff who are broadly familiar with the research/teaching area of the centre but who are not directly connected with the centre. At least one member of the review committee must be external to UNSW.

Each review committee will be assisted by the Centres Secretariat, who will be responsible for coordinating the review, taking minutes during the review, and preparing the draft report and recommendations in close consultation with the committee chair and members of the review committee.

Using the Centre Review Template ([Attachment 3](#)), the final report will be presented by the chair of the committee to the Presiding Dean, centre director and the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

Within two weeks, the centre director and Presiding Dean may provide comments on the recommendations made in the report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor will approve/reject the review recommendations and report the outcomes of the review to the Academic Board via the next available Policy Advisory Committee or the next available Committee on Research, respectively, including the decision for the continuation, or disestablishment of the centre as detailed in 6.3 below.

### **6.3 Review Recommendations**

Recommendations arising from the review of a centre may include:

- Continue, in its current form
- Continue, with changes (changes, milestones and timeframe must be specified)
- Be discontinued (reasons must be specified)

Where the review committee recommends that a centre continue with changes or further review, the Centres Secretariat will be responsible for following up the recommendations within the timeframe specified in the review report. The Centres Secretariat may also be able to assist centres in their implementation of certain review recommendations, for example by linking them with mentors in strategic planning where appropriate.

## **7. Closure of UNSW Centres**

Centres may be closed in the following circumstances:

- The Presiding Dean or director may recommend closure of a centre to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for example on the grounds that it is no longer financially viable or no longer meets the strategic objectives of UNSW;
- Where it is deemed by a review committee that a centre is no longer functioning adequately, the chair of that committee should recommend the disestablishment of the centre to the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor; or
- Where the Centre has seriously breached UNSW policy, procedures or guidelines, or if the centre in any way brings, or has the potential to bring, the reputation of the University into disrepute, the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor may close the centre.

In closing a centre, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor must be satisfied that the Presiding Dean and/or the director has a strategy for the closure and has undertaken due diligence in terms of the distribution of centre finances and resources (or management of deficit), including the impact on any staff or students associated with the centre.

Where the Deputy -Vice-Chancellor approves the disestablishment of the centre he/she will notify:

- the Academic Board via the next available Committee on Research or next available Policy Advisory Committee that the centre will be closed; and
- the Centres Secretariat, so that the centre can be removed from the UNSW Centres Registry.

## **8. UNSW involvement in Commonwealth and/or State Government funded research Centres**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Government-funded research centres (eg CRCs and Centres of Excellence) typically support large scale, longer term research in areas not readily covered by individual schools and faculties. Most centres concentrate on multidisciplinary or interdisciplinary fields and bring together similar groups of academics across different schools, faculties, universities and industry. These centres also provide a common and easily identifiable “brand” external to UNSW.

The key criterion for UNSW’s involvement in any centre is that it must add value to UNSW’s collaborative and cross disciplinary research beyond that which would accrue from normal faculty/school activities.

### **8.2 UNSW Framework**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has responsibility for UNSW’s involvement in Commonwealth/State funded research centres. These centres are primarily funded by the Commonwealth and typically involve UNSW sharing the control of research programs, postgraduate research training and resources with other organisations. Unlike the internal UNSW centres, governance of these centres is determined through formal contractual agreements, which must address (at a minimum):

- Structure of the collaboration;
- Measurement of contributions from each party (cash and in-kind);
- Administration of external funding;
- Governance, including the role and composition of the management board or committee;
- Definition of the overall centre objectives;
- Determination of research, consulting and educational projects;
- Control of outputs;
- Human resource issues including the status, selection and appointment of director and other staff;
- Freedom to conduct teaching, research and consulting activities outside of the Centre in circumstances where there are overlapping interests;
- Ownership of intellectual property resulting from joint projects, publication and control of its use in teaching, further research and commercialisation;
- Strategies for commercialisation and distribution of income;

- Arrangement for students, their supervision and their intellectual property; and
- Term of agreement and arrangements for termination or wind-up of the centre.

**Competitively-awarded** Government-funded centres will automatically be assigned UNSW Centre status, in accordance with the *UNSW Centres Procedure* and will be monitored by the Centres Secretariat.

UNSW's involvement in Government-funded centres which are **not competitively awarded** must be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), after first seeking appropriate approvals from Heads of Schools and Deans. UNSW's involvement in non-competitively awarded research centres will also be monitored by the Centres Secretariat.

Two UNSW centres covering the same discipline/resources/staff are not normally permitted. For example, if a Commonwealth/State funded centre evolves from a UNSW research centre, the internal centre will be disestablished and the Commonwealth/State Funded Centre will be assigned UNSW centre status.

UNSW staff nominated as board members will be senior members of staff selected for the role by the DVC-Research in consultation with the relevant Dean/s. Note that the directors of *incorporated* centres take on considerable legal responsibility with the role: to ensure they have the required competencies, UNSW staff joining boards for the first time **must** complete a company directors course run by the Australian Institute of Company Directors or similar body, within 6 months of appointment to the board. The DVC-Research will cover the cost of the course.

While UNSW staff acting as directors of incorporated centres must retain confidentiality regarding centre affairs in line with the requirements of the Corporations Act, they are expected to keep UNSW senior management generally briefed regarding matters relevant to UNSW *where no conflict arises with the director's duty to the centre.*

### 8.3 General Issues for Consideration

At any one time, UNSW would expect to be a partner in a number of centres at various stages of development – from new, to mature, to re-birthed centres. There are some obvious advantages and disadvantages for UNSW staff being involved in externally-funded research centres:

#### Reputation & Kudos

Government-funded research centres are viewed very positively by the higher education sector, funding agencies, and the general public, both locally and internationally. There is substantial kudos associated with successful outcomes, especially commercial outcomes associated with Cooperative Research Centres. Research centres are also an identifiable mechanism for engaging the commercial, applied research arena. However there may also be significant reputational risk associated with centres. The involvement of multiple partners builds a requirement for complex legal agreements, which consume considerable time and money. UNSW is typically a minority player with little control of the management or research program of the Centre.

#### Legal Structure and Administration

Government-funded research centres require a significant management/administrative commitment – each centre may require board representation, and

there may be committees and sub-committees of the board, periodic reviews and onerous reporting requirements. The University is also required by law to maintain a Commercial Activities Register covering the arrangements (<http://www.legal.unsw.edu.au/commercial/index.html>).

**If a centre is incorporated** (eg all new CRCs), it has independent legal existence and UNSW is a shareholder. The main advantage is that there is a clear body of law for governance and the intellectual property is clearly held by a single entity. The operational arrangements can be simpler and it is easier to deal with potential investors. The Board members have legal responsibility to the centre, not to UNSW.

**If a centre is unincorporated** (eg ARC Centres of Excellence), the partners are bound together in a joint venture by specific legal agreements. The management of intellectual property is usually more complex because agreements usually need to be struck with multiple parties. The board members generally represent the interests of their constituencies.

### Long-Term, Big Research Programs

Government-funded research centres typically provide very significant commitment to research programs over 5-7 years. They usually bring in research support much larger than other sources of funding, eg ARC/NHMRC projects. There are very few other programs where long-term, large-scale research investment can be obtained. The funding is usually sufficiently large that substantial research teams can be assembled to tackle “big-picture” research questions. In addition these centres have the potential to provide long-term commercial returns to the University and researchers.

Externally-funded centres can significantly boost the research critical mass of the Faculties involved through increased postdoctoral staff, research assistants, postgraduate students, equipment, and support for infrastructure. Assets acquired by the centre as part of its research program typically stay with the University even beyond the term of the centre.

Universities are not generally well prepared for long-term commitments. Centre agreements are binding for the term of the centre, and there will be significant change during that period. The term of most centres is generally beyond the time frame of most management structures (Head of School, Dean, researchers, and even Governments). Legislation, governance and University policies are also likely to change within the term of centre - there is a real need to **be prepared for the dynamic, unstable, continuously changing environment** external to the centre.

Large-scale research centres need careful management – sometimes they grow larger than the remaining research programs in a School, which has the potential to cause internal friction (haves and have-nots).

### Research Funding

Care is required to ensure that the University does not suffer unplanned financial loss through participation in these centres as a result of the overheads they generate.

The management of a large team of typically fixed-term staff within the University human resources framework can be difficult and there is the potential for industrial issues to arise, for example regarding fixed term contracts. There may also be significant financial exposure that needs to be underwritten including severance payments, salary bills *etc*. Some centres also require cash commitments from the University, and all centres require real, on-going commitment of resources from the

University (personnel, space, labs, and refurbishments) – unfortunately the indirect infrastructure support is not always apparent to individual staff members who may see only benefits in the direct funding of their own research team. Offsetting the cost to some extent is the fact that the University's involvement in government-funded research centres provides direct performance indicators to the University's competitive research income and contributes indirectly to the Research Block Grant funding received by the University through the Research Training Scheme (RTS) and the Institutional Grants Scheme (IGS).

Some research centres, such as CRCs, also provide considerable secondary research income to the University through contracts and consultancies in the short term and royalties in the longer term.

### Research Direction & Staff Commitment

Government-funded research centres provide some prescriptive direction to research. Staff involved in these centres in most cases give up some of their academic freedom to work on centre projects.

Staff commitment to government-funded research centres is real – a commitment to the work of a centre leaves a void for other activities. There may be some overlap between University activities and centre activities, but, for example, a 40% commitment from a staff member to a centre means that there is 0.4 FTE of that staff member not available for regular University activities within a School and this must be made up elsewhere. **No staff member will commit more than 50% of his/her time to an externally-funded centre unless they are explicitly appointed to work on centre related programs.**

### Research Students

Government-funded research centres are generally attractive to research students as they can provide scholarship support (often a source of support for students who are not eligible for other support), enhanced stipends, an opportunity for students to work on well-focused research programs as part of a high-flying team, and an opportunity to gain experience working with industry – including experience in meeting deadlines and milestones. Many centres also provide students with valuable working knowledge of issues surrounding intellectual property protection.

Research student completions for postgraduate students involved in externally-funded centres provide a very significant research performance indicator for UNSW.

### Intellectual Property (IP)

IP needs to be carefully managed. Involvement with an external centre may require staff to sign away their IP rights to the centre, so staff need to be fully aware of the consequences. Staff may forego their rights under the UNSW IP Policy and their equity in any invention may be diluted or lost completely.

Postgraduate students, in particular require careful management. **Before they commence work on any project, postgraduate research students must be fully informed of the IP implications of their work** and any restrictions that may apply to publication.

## 8.4 Approval Process

In applying for any externally-funded Research Centre, there needs to be broad consultation with all present or intended stakeholders in the Centre. **The University will not enter into Centre agreements without time for appropriate consultation.**

### **Interest in Participation**

Regardless of whether the application is to be submitted by UNSW or another institution, as soon as a researcher (or team of researchers) has an interest in submitting an application for an externally-funded Centre, they **MUST** contact the Manager, Centres Secretariat (refer Section 1.1) for guidance.

### **Sign-off**

A proposal for any externally-funded research centre must be completed using the application form specified by the funding agency and must initially be approved by the Dean of each faculty with which it is associated, following consultation with relevant stakeholders, including Heads of Schools. The proposal, with evidence of approval(s), is then forwarded to the Manager, Centres Secretariat for checking, obtaining the appropriate University sign-off and submission by the due date.

### **Legal Agreements**

Successful applications lead to an offer by the funding agency. Negotiation and signing of the required agreements will be coordinated by the Centres Secretariat through the UNSW Legal Office.

## **8.5 Instructions for Specific Application Rounds**

Complementary information and instructions will be published from time to time on the Research Strategy Office website.

- Attachment 1** [Template for the Establishment of UNSW Centres](#)
- Attachment 2** [Templates for Financial Reporting of UNSW Centres](#)
- Attachment 3** [Template for the Review of UNSW Centres](#)

## Appendix A: History

Version	Authorised by	Approval Date	Effective Date	Sections modified
1.0	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	24 October 2008	24 October 2008	Full review of Centres Policy (v2.0 AB05/117)

Archived Document