

## **POLICY FOR RESEARCH INSTITUTES, CENTRES, AND CLUSTERS**

**University Policy No.:** RH2010

**Classification:** Research

**Approval Authority:** Board of Governors

**Effective Date:** November 18, 2016

**Supersedes:** none

**Last Editorial Change:** August 2017

**Mandated Review:** November 2023

### **Associated Procedures:**

None

### **POLICY PURPOSE**

The pursuit and encouragement of scholarship and research at Concordia University of Edmonton is dependent principally upon the efforts of its faculty members. Faculty members may form organizations to address research problems that are of mutual interest to them. The development of such research organizations can see a number of strategic objectives, for example, building a critical mass of researchers and increasing their potential impact, enhancing research collaborations, facilitating interdisciplinary research, increasing the visibility of Concordia University of Edmonton nationally and internationally, increasing Concordia University of Edmonton's ability to secure funding, and facilitating the linkages between research and education. These research organizations may be located within a Department or Faculty or they may have a university-wide mandate. This policy is designed to encourage substantive collaborations and to facilitate the benefits that researchers may find in establishing research organizations.

Research organizations can vary in type and structure depending on the objectives they are designed to accomplish and the scope of their activities. This policy outlines three (3) categories of research organizations, which are referred to as Institutes, Centres, and Clusters. These categories acknowledge both the spectrum of complexity that research organizations can achieve as well as the increased levels of governance required. This policy is designed to provide guidance to faculty who are interested in establishing a research organization as well as to Directors of already established research organizations regarding their governance, reporting and review obligations to the university.

### **Classes of Research Organizations**

Different research organizations may be formed to address certain types of research problems; to plan for, manage and optimally exploit certain common research infrastructure, and to otherwise advance the interests of a group of researchers. These will be organized into three groups, hereafter referred to as Institutes, Centres, and Clusters. It may be at present there are research organizations which fit into one of these categories, but do not carry with them an appropriate

name. It is recommended that at the next review of the organization that they change their name to the appropriate research organization, to be consistent with Concordia University of Edmonton's structure for research organizations.

### **1. Institutes**

Institutes are the research organization most closely aligned with the strategic interests of the university, by virtue of one or more of several criteria: their size, breadth, or national and international impact on their focus area of research. Institutes normally report to the Vice-President Research & International (VPR). The VPR, in consultation with the Dean or Dean(s) most directly involved in the Institute, then reports annually on the status, progress, and plans of the Institute to the General Faculties Council (GFC) and the Board of Governors. Institutes may have membership spanning two or more faculties, or may be based mainly in one Faculty. An Institute is expected to be supported by external funding. The success of an Institute may have significant financial and other implications for the University.

### **2. Centres**

Centres are similar to Institutes. Their mission for research and scholarship with a national and international impact in their areas of interest is the same, but their interests are less closely aligned with the university's strategic interests and they may have smaller budgetary implications for the university. Although their interests will often be largely internal to a particular Faculty, in some cases their membership will cross two or more Faculties. As such, they would normally report to the appropriate Dean, to whom any requests for funding should be made. The Faculty Dean then reports for information on their status, progress, and plans to the VPR. There may be instances where a Centre would report directly to the VPR, by virtue of having membership across more than one Faculty. The status, progress and plans of Centres is not reported to the GFC or the Board of Governors.

### **3. Clusters**

Clusters are smaller research organizations, which can be as small as three faculty members. Clusters may or may not receive financial support from the University, and would normally report to the appropriate Faculty Dean, for groups whose research lies largely within the domain of a single Faculty, or to the VPR for groups whose research interests span the domains of two or more Faculties. Their status, progress, and plans are not reported to the GFC or the Board of Governors.

## **POLICY**

The University must be informed on the status, progress, and financial viability of the research organizations which carry out its strategic interests. As such the University's Institutes, Centres and Clusters must adhere to general practices of good governance with reporting structures that seek expert national and international advice and which ultimately informs the VPR and the Faculty Dean as to their activities and standing within the international or national research community. In the case of Institutes, the VPR then reports on the status, progress and plans of Institutes to the GFC and the Board of Governors.

Since change and renewal are critical if universities are to meet the challenges of modern research, none of the organizations described in this document can be considered permanent

fixtures.

## **Governance and Review of Institutes**

### **a. Governance of Institutes**

An Institute is led by its Director, who is normally appointed for a 5 year term. The Director establishes an Advisory Committee, whose purpose is to provide advice to the Director with regard to scientific or scholarly priorities and direction for the Institute. The Advisory Committee is chosen by the Director, and is consulted at least every two years, or more frequently at the discretion of the Director.

The Director reports annually to the VPR or appropriate Dean, for Institutes which reside principally within a single Faculty, and the final authority for all matters regarding the direction and operation of the Institute rests with the VPR or appropriate Dean. In the case of Institutes which reside principally within a single Faculty, the appropriate Dean will report on the Institute to the VPR for information only. The VPR or appropriate Dean then reports annually on the status, progress and future plans of the Institute to the GFC and the Board of Governors.

### **b. Review of Institutes**

Every five (5) years, or sooner, a review of the Institute will take place. This will normally be the year before the Director's term is complete. It is recommended that an External Review Board (ERB) completes the review. The composition of the ERB is to be determined by the Director, appropriate Dean(s), and the VPR, and should take into account the aspirations of the Institute and the availability of funds to support the review. The ERB will assess the performance of the Institute's Director and its program. The Institute must be compatible with expectations as described in the University's research policies. The ERB is expected to use accepted measures of performance such as publication number and impact to assess the Institute's contributions in comparison with those of (a) the Institute during the preceding five (5) years, and (b) the performance of institutes of similar size and in the same field of research. The recommendations of the ERB will include the renewal of the Director, and whether the Institute's performance is consistent with that of another Institute at Concordia University of Edmonton. The report of the ERB will be submitted in confidence to the VPR or appropriate Dean(s). Normally, the VPR would share the ERB's report or major recommendations from the report with either the current Director or the successor to the current Director, so that the leadership of the Institute benefits from the perspective of the ERB.

## **Governance and Review of Centres**

### **c. Governance of Centres**

All final authority for all matters regarding the direction and operation of the Centre rests with the Dean of the Faculty appropriate to the Centre, or with the VPR for Centres for whom a substantial fraction of their membership is drawn from more than one Faculty. The Dean (or VPR) does not report to the GFC or to the Board of Governors, and instead reports to the VPR for information only. In all other respects, its governance structure is that of an Institute which resides principally within a single Faculty.

d. Review of Centres

Every five (5) years, or sooner, a review of the Centre will take place. This will normally be the year before the Director's term is complete. It is recommended that an External Review Board (ERB) completes the review. The composition of the ERB is to be determined by the Director, appropriate Dean(s), and the VPR. The mandate of the ERB is similar to that described for the ERB for Institutes.

## **Governance and Review of Clusters**

e. Governance of Clusters

The Leaders of the Research Clusters, in communication with the Research Office, will keep a Data Sheet (Appendix 2) of events. The Leaders will also keep the website updated with information on Membership, research, publications, events, etc. No automatic funding is attached to the recognition of a Research Cluster, and funding should be sought internally and externally. The Leaders will report to the Relevant Dean, or VPR, for information only.

f. Review of Clusters

The Leaders will submit a Data Sheet to the Relevant Dean or VPR annually.

## **Establishment, Termination and Transition of Research Institutes, Centres and Clusters**

a. Establishment

The lead participants in either a proposed Institute or Centre should prepare a proposal for submission to the relevant Dean and VPR as appropriate, using the New Academic Program Approval Form. The proposal is then considered by the Research & Faculty Development Committee, as a first step.

In the case of a proposed Institute, the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) shall consider whether the proposal is consistent with the academic priorities of the University and whether resource requirements and sources of funding have been appropriately considered. If the proposal is endorsed by the ASC, it will be recommended to both the GFC and the Board of Governors for approval. The proposed Institute will be formally established upon receiving the approval of the Board of Governors.

In the case of a proposed Centre, the appropriate Dean and VPR, in consultation with the Research & Faculty Development Committee considers the proposal and makes a decision as to whether or not to support the new Centre. The decision then goes to the Board of Governors for information only.

In the case of a proposed Research Cluster, the proposed Leaders must complete the Application Form, and return to the VPR. The VPR will evaluate the application against the criteria and communicate the decision to the Cluster and the Research & Faculty Development Committee. If approved, the Cluster will be listed on the research web page.

b. Termination

An external review may conclude that the performance of an Institute or Centre is inconsistent with institutional expectations. The decision as to whether to disband the Institute or transition it to a Centre is made by the Board of Governors, on the recommendation of the VPR or appropriate Dean. The decision as to whether to disband a Centre or transition it to a Cluster, shall rest with the Dean or VPR, on the recommendation of the relevant ERB.

c. Transitions

In some instances, following a negative review, the membership of an Institute will regroup as a Centre or a Cluster. It is also possible for the VPR or Dean will dismiss the incumbent Director and instigate a search for a new Director who can address the deficiencies of the negative review and better serve the interests of the Institute and University.

In other instances, and ERB may recommend that a Centre become an Institute, in which case a formal application should be made to the VPR and the ASC. The approval process then follows that of the establishment of an Institute.

The objective is to provide the institution's researchers with sufficient flexibility to optimize their productivity and impact.

### **Financial Matters**

All Institutes, Centres, and Clusters are expected to adhere to the University's financial policies and procedures as established or amended from time to time.

### **AUTHORITIES AND OFFICERS**

A list of authorities and officers for the policy:

- a. Approving Authority: Board of Governors and General Faculties Council
- b. Designated Executive Officer: Vice President Research & International
- c. Procedural Authority: Vice President Research & International
- d. Procedural Officer: Faculty Deans

### **RELATED LEGISLATION**

### **RELATED POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS**