# Criteria & Guideline for a Research centre

## Definition of a Research Centre

The generally accepted definition of a Research Centre is a grouping of researchers focused on a significant common research area, with critical mass of academic staff, research activity and external funding, whose existence brings identifiable benefits, for example, growth, breadth, funding potential, impact and internal and external visibility. A Research Centre is a flagship for researchers and research activity in the institution and operates as a centre of excellence.

Research Centres are normally cross-departmental and multi-disciplinary in terms of their activities and the nature of research undertaken; however, they will be based in a single home Department for administrative and financial purposes. They may also include members or affiliated members from outside the institution.

The above is the main distinguishing characteristic of a ‘Research Centre’ compared to a Research Institute, which though also a beacon for research, is organisationally comprised from or entirely separate from Departments. It also differs from a ‘Research Group’, which is a more informal grouping of researchers within a single department.

Research active staff may also get together to form ‘Research Clusters’, or ‘Themes’, which are groups addressing a specific, multi-disciplinary research theme but that do not have the critical mass of or meet the criteria for a Research Centre. They may include groups aspiring to eventually develop into a Research Centre.

A ‘Research Centre’ differs from a ‘Centre’. A ‘Centre’ will normally operate focused on a track record of KE/CPD/Professional/Practice-based work, build on internal and external networks of applied researchers and practitioners, and will normally be funded through KE funding streams (including HEIF), contract and consultancy income, public engagement funding, IP etc.

Collaborative work may be undertaken between one or more Centres and Research Centres, especially where there are synergies in applied research or innovation, between two Research Centres, or between one or more Research Centres and a Research Institutes.

The main purpose of a Research Centre is to encourage clusters of academic staff to generate a stimulating research environment, which will both inspire new collaborative activity among experienced researchers and encourage the development of PGRs, early career and early stage researchers through the training, support and mentorship that arises through everyday interactivity. It would also act as a vehicle, through identified themes, of attracting external income

## 2.0 Criteria & guidelines for a Research Centre

The following are the minimum requirements to qualify for recognition as a Research Centre:

* **Theme:** A Research Centre must have a specific research theme that is aligned to and encompasses the research interests of its members.
* **Size:** Research Centres are expected to demonstrate critical mass. They must comprise at least 6-8 members from the University (including academic staff, postdoctoral researchers, ECRs/ESRs and PhD researchers), and may in addition include staff members of external agencies.
* **Funding:** The Research Centre should include members with a successful track record of research productivity and bids for external funding. The Research Centre once formed will act as a stimulus for securing external funding (including externally funded doctorates)/the theme will be attractive to identified external funders, and to make a financial contribution.
* **Host Department:** The Research Centre must have a host Department, which is responsible for overseeing the administrative and financial arrangements of the Centre.
* **Director:** The Research Centre must have a Director/co-Directors who is a/are research active member(s) of academic staff from the host Department.
* **Development Plan:** The Research Centre must have a three-year development plan, building on an established track record of research activity and vibrant, inclusive, and interdisciplinary research environment.
* **Strategy:** The Research Centre should have a Research Strategy, distinct from that of the host Department and this should be updated annually.
* **Publications:** Researchers associated with the Centre should all be actively engaged in research and disseminate their findings by publishing peer- reviewed research articles/other appropriate high-quality outputs (including, but not limited to datasets, software or creative outputs) under the Research Centre’s name on a regular basis.
* **Meetings:** Research Centres should hold regular (virtual/in-person/hybrid) meetings, symposia, workshops and seminars aimed at facilitating research collaboration between existing members and potential members in the Institution and with external networks.
* **Mentoring:** Research Centres should have a programme of mentoring and training to encourage the development of postgraduate researchers, early career and early stage researchers, to support mobility and return to work.
* **Website:** Research Centres should maintain an up-to-date web presence, including information on current research, publications, and contacts for external visitors.

## 3.0 Process for approval and recognition of a Research Centre

3.1 A member of academic staff planning to apply for a new Research Centre should in the first instance discuss their plan with their Dean, and the Institutional Lead for Research.

3.2 Proposals for new Centres to be submitted for consideration by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) via the secretary.

3.3 The proposal should include a statement of the scope and objectives of the Centre, outlining how it will align with the above listed criteria and the University’s Research Strategy, adhere in practice to the principles of a positive research culture, and how it will provide added value to the Institution by enhancing research activity and output. Proposals must be approved by the Head of the host School, in the form of a supporting statement, and countersigned by the Dean of Faculty/Institute.

3.4 RKEC will consider the proposal, and make recommendation to Academic Board;

3.5 RKEC (secretary) will submit the recommendation to academic Board for approval, at the next meeting of the Academic Board and/or Chairs action will be sought.

### **Confirmation of approval**

3.6 Academic Board (secretary) will inform the Proposer, Dean of Faculty/Institute and the RKEC Secretary of approval;

3.7 The RKEC secretary will liaise with Finance to obtain a Budget Code for the Research Centre and inform the Proposer and the Dean of Faculty/Institute.

3.8 The research centre must comply with the University’s [GDPR](https://www.leedstrinity.ac.uk/freedom-of-information/) regulations and data processing and storage requirements and act in accordance with these policies at all times.

For continued recognition the Centre will be expected to continue to comply with the criteria listed above and submit annual reports on activity (setting income and output targets) to RKEC for audit. Should review of the annual report be considered unsatisfactory, RKEC may recommend closure of the Centre.

## 4.0 University support for a Research Centre

Formally recognised Research Centres will be listed on the University’s research web pages and the institution will provide support in the form of promotion and publicity for development and maintenance of the Centre’s web pages.

4.1 It is the responsibility of the Director of the Research Centre to make arrangements for the Research Centre to be listed on the University’s web pages.

## Recommendation for a new Research Centre

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title of the Research Centre |  |
| Faculty / Institute |  |
| Host School |  |
| Name of Proposed Centre Lead / Director |  |
| Proposed Research Centre start date |  |

Please provide a statement of the scope and objectives of the Centre detailed in section 3.3 of this document

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|  |
| Statement of Support by Head of Host School |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Signed by the Proposer |  | Date |  |
| Signed (by Head of School) |  | Date |  |
| Signed by (Dean of Faculty/Institute) |  | Date |  |

**Section to be completed by RKEC:**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| RKEC decision | Approve the recommendation |  | Reject the recommendation |  |
| Rationale: | | | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Chair of RKEC (signature) |  | Date |  |