



## Policy: UJ Research Structures

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### Related documents

<b>UJ documents</b> <small>(e.g. Policies, Regulations, Guidelines, Contracts)</small>	<b>Other</b> <small>(e.g. Legislation, DoE and HEQC directives and guidelines)</small>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UJ Strategic Plan 2025</li> <li>• UJ Research Policy and Strategy</li> <li>• UJ Research Committee Charter</li> <li>• Report on Structural Definitions adopted by other HEIs</li> </ul>	

**Stakeholders affected by this document (units and divisions who should be familiar with it):**

- Management Executives;
- Executive Deans/Directors;
- All academic employees;
- Directors and Heads of Departments of:
  - academic units;
  - academic administration support services;
  - service and support divisions

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# Contents

1. PREAMBLE.....	3
2. PURPOSE .....	3
3. SCOPE.....	3
4. PRINCIPLES .....	3
5. CLASSIFICATION OF UJ RESEARCH STRUCTURES.....	4
APPENDIX.....	11

## **1. PREAMBLE**

The University expects all academic staff to be research-active, consistent with the norms and standards of their disciplines. In enabling and empowering academic staff towards this purpose, the formation of research entities is encouraged. In turn, the University, through these formally recognised entities, seeks to develop and nurture niche areas, in which potential strength or unique opportunities are demonstrated, in a manner that confers comparative advantage for the University.

Since the current policy for UJ Research Structures is dated and insufficient, the said policy is revised to guide systematic establishment, governance and management of University-recognised research and strategic entities.

## **2. PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to:

- deliver on the University's strategy i.r.o. research and innovation excellence;
- ensure a systematic approach in the naming, establishment, management and reviewing of University-recognised research and strategic entities;
- create an objective basis for comparison across the range of research and strategic entities;
- provide a guideline for the classification of existing and future research entities; and
- facilitate effective promotion of strategic and opportunistic areas, as well as the University's research strength areas.

## **3. SCOPE**

The policy applies to all faculties<sup>1</sup> and relevant divisions at the University.

## **4. PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1 No University research activities, groups or entities may assume any of the following titles: Research Unit, Centre, or Institute, or assume a Flagship status without seeking approval in terms of this Policy.
- 4.2 All future research activities or structures that wish to utilise one of the terms mentioned above, or any other structural term similarly denoting an organisational entity, will need to follow approval processes outlined in this Policy.
- 4.3 In exceptional instances and on the basis of arguments or existing contractual obligations put forward by the respective research group, activity or entity, the University Research Committee (URC) may decide to recommend to Senate approval of a term or title, even where the research activity, group or entity does not align with the provisions of the Policy, provided the URC identifies and presents cogent reasons for such a recommendation, and provided such a deviation is an exception to the rule.
- 4.4 All URC recommendations on the titles of research activities or structures, or on action plans as mentioned above, will be submitted to Senate for consideration and approval.
- 4.5 Once a University research activity or entity has received approval to utilise either of the terms listed above, it retains the right to that use unless a subsequent review suggests otherwise; such reviews must be conducted at least once every five years.

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<sup>1</sup> Referral includes the College of Business and Economics (CBE)

- 4.6 Irrespective of the substance or timing of any prior approval by Senate to any research activity, group or entity for the use of either of the titles listed above, Senate may at any time withdraw such permission on the recommendation of the URC.
- 4.7 All researchers are in the first instance members of staff and therefore linked to a specific faculty/college, and the research entities consequently are faculty/college structures that operate and report within established faculties/college; except for strategic entities, where the Director reports to the DVC: Research and Internationalisation or as duly delegated.

## 5. CLASSIFICATION OF UJ RESEARCH STRUCTURES

The revised policy accounts for the UJ Council strategy enriched by South African university benchmarks and frames differentiation among research entities.

The guidelines, tabulated below, for differentiation of research entities, are derived from UJ's policy for research structures; and classifications used in other guidelines of South African Higher Education Institutions.

These guidelines will apply to newly established entities and renewed existing entities, following their end of term review.

The classification allows faculties/college to exercise flexibility taking into consideration prevailing circumstances and presented opportunities.

The following classification of research structures is adopted:

- Research Unit;
- Research Centre;
- Research Institute; and
- Flagship Entities

A University system must appropriately balance structural formality and organic development – in this sense, it is recognised that research groups or clusters may exist informally and may grow, over time, into a formal structure (unit, centre or institute).

The **appendix** is provided as procedural support to this Policy.

**TABLE 1. Guidelines for the classification of UJ research structures**

Research Entity	Definition	Mandate	Governance	Management
<p><b>Research Unit</b></p> <p><i>Simplest formulation – typically within an academic department with oversight of the Faculty/Faculty Research Committee (FRC).</i></p>	<p>A Research Unit is a formal research- and community-orientated structure located within a University Faculty/College, centred on expertise of a specialist researcher.</p> <p>“Specialist” implies that the research leader presents a disciplinary niche, relevant research or industrial track record and the structure’s formulation will enable significant research activity and productivity.</p>	<p>A Research Unit is mandated to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Assemble a discipline-focused research team of postgraduate students, visiting scholars and PDRFs.</li> <li>2. Advance scholarship through innovative research.</li> <li>3. Where necessary, generate third-stream revenue.</li> </ol>	<p>Research Unit governance centres on the following overarching goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote research in a Faculty/College context.</li> <li>2. The Unit strategy and its operations support highly specialised research.</li> <li>3. Research-related outputs are annually monitored and overall performance evaluated/in-depth reviewed, aiming for renewal by the end of a five-year period.</li> <li>4. To ensure that the Unit’s establishment is approved by the Faculty Board/Board of College.</li> </ol>	<p>The management of a Research Unit is left to the discretion of the Faculty/College. However, it can be guided by the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Unit is managed by a unit head who is a permanent UJ employee with an established research or industry track record. The head of the unit is an academic – he/she will provide leadership as part of professional and disciplinary development.</li> <li>2. Upon retirement or leaving the employment of the University, the Dean will ensure that the Faculty Board/Board of College approves continuation based on performance.</li> <li>3. The Unit leader to report to the HOD/s.</li> <li>4. At establishment, the Unit is supported by a business plan approved through FRC and the URC is informed. The information, or approach, is intended to foster collaboration institutionally.</li> <li>5. Aligned to the institutional strategic plan, the business plan should include KPAs and KPIs with clear targets per annum over a five-year period; the organisational structure; resources, including staffing, succession plan, networks; and revenue and expenditure projections over the</li> </ol>

				appropriate period. These variables will serve as performance evaluation criteria.
<p><b>Research Centre</b></p> <p><i>A Research Centre may culminate from a Research Unit or synergistically from research units – ideally to position research that occurs between academic departments and requires formalisation.</i></p>	<p>A Research Centre is a formal research and/or community orientated structure, located within a UJ Faculty/College, centred on advancing academic discipline(s), collaborative research, scholarly activity, creative endeavours and industry/sectoral growth.</p>	<p>A Research Centre is mandated as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To assemble a research network of students, research staff, visiting scholars and PDRFs that will deliver on its broad mandate, as defined in the Centre's business plan, that rests within a discipline or spans across disciplines.</li> <li>2. To advance scholarship through innovative, collaborative research.</li> <li>3. To actively engage in relevant academic forums and community outreach.</li> </ol>	<p>Research Centre governance centres on the following overarching goals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. At establishment, the Centre is supported by a business plan discussed by the FRC, recommended by the Faculty/College board, approved by the URC and noted by Senate.</li> <li>2. Research Centres, inclusive of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SOTL), to serve at the Senate Teaching and Learning Committee (STLC) for noting before serving at the URC.</li> <li>3. To establish an Advisory Board chaired by the Dean of the Faculty/College, or a delegate from within the deanery, to</li> </ol>	<p>Research Centre management requirements are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Centre is managed by a Director who is a permanent UJ employee with an established research track-record and some international standing. It is understood that in some disciplines, the research undertaking may cluster already appointed academics and/or resourcing, and thus fund through internal mechanisms – as long as the self-sustainability can be guaranteed by the host faculty.</li> <li>2. The appointment of a director will follow the same process as for Heads of Department.</li> <li>3. Upon retirement or leaving the employ of the University, the existing Director/Dean will ensure that the FRC approves continuation based on performance. Building a succession pipeline and transformation is an important part of the Director's undertaking and through the FRC oversight.</li> <li>4. The Director must report to the Dean or duly-delegated authority – the approach must be coordinated suitably – in many cases, Directors will have a line-function to a Head of Department.</li> </ol>

		<p>4. Where appropriate, to generate third stream revenue.</p>	<p>oversee centre progress.</p> <p>4. The Annual Report of the Centre is tabled at the FRC and forwarded to URC for noting.</p> <p>5. Research-related outputs are annually monitored and overall performance evaluated, aiming for renewal by the end of a five-year period.</p>	<p>5. Aligned to the institutional strategic plan, the business plan should include KPAs and KPIs with clear targets per annum over the appropriate period; the organisational structure; resources, including staffing (including the résumé of the entity head), succession plan, networks, and revenue and expenditure projections over the appropriate period. These variables will serve as performance evaluation criteria. The Director's allowance must be budgeted by the faculty.</p> <p>6. URC funding applications are subject to final approval by the URC. URC funding is not guaranteed and the goal must be, where funding is required, for the Centre to develop external relationships and to fund its activities as a result of such collaboration.</p>
<p><b>Research Institutes<sup>†</sup></b></p> <p><i>A Research Institute may culminate from a Research Centre or synergistically from Research Centres and Units – ideally to position research that occurs between academic faculties and requires formalisation.</i></p>	<p>A Research Institute is a formal research- and innovation-orientated structure located within a UJ Faculty/College, established with the purpose of longer-term, national and international research projects, geared towards</p>	<p>A Research Institute is mandated as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To establish an interdisciplinary research network of students, research staff, visiting scholars and PDRFs.</li> <li>2. To actively participate in innovative national</li> </ol>	<p>Research Institute governance centres on the following overarching goals.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To promote inter-, trans- and multidisciplinary research across faculties, national, regional, and international forums.</li> <li>2. To seek external funding through</li> </ol>	<p>Research Institute management requirements are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Institute being managed by a Director permanently appointed at UJ with an established research track record, a distinguished international standing and who has successfully accessed external funding.</li> <li>2. The appointment of a Director will follow the same process as for Heads of Department.</li> <li>3. Upon retirement or leaving the employ of the University, the existing Director/Dean</li> </ol>

	<p>lending prestige and global recognition in the area.</p>	<p>and especially international research collaborations.</p> <p>3. To actively impact relevant academic forums and community outreach.</p> <p>4. To generate third-stream revenue.</p>	<p>grants, foundations and funders.</p> <p>3. To ensure that the establishment of the Institute is approved by Senate on recommendation of the URC. The proposal of a research institute will emanate from a host faculty and in collaboration with other faculties (due consultation must occur and prior to presentation at URC).</p> <p>4. Each Institute must have a charter. The charter would also define appropriate expertise required for governance.</p> <p>5. To ensure that the governance of the Institute is overseen by a governing board chaired by the DVC: Research and Internationalisation, or a delegate (usually to the Dean of the host faculty). The governing</p>	<p>(host faculty) will ensure that the FRC approves continuation based on performance. Building a succession pipeline and transformation is an important part of the Director's undertaking and through the FRC oversight. In the case of an Institute, the collaborating faculties must be duly consulted.</p> <p>4. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Research and Internationalisation is the accountable authority for Institutes, but may delegate the responsibility to line management.</p> <p>5. A business plan is approved by the governing board and noted by the FRC/Faculty Boards (collaborating faculties) and URC.</p> <p>6. Aligned to the institutional strategic plan, the business plan should provide for KPAs and KPIs with clear targets per annum over the appropriate period, organisational structure, resources, including staffing (including the résumé of the entity head), succession plan, networks, revenue and expenditure projections over the appropriate period. These variables will serve as performance evaluation criteria. The Director's allowance must be budgeted by the faculty.</p> <p>7. URC funding applications are subject to final approval by the URC. URC funding is not guaranteed and the goal must be, where funding is required, for the Centre to develop</p>
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			<p>board must meet at least once a year.</p> <p>6. The Annual Report of the Institute is tabled through the governing board and forwarded to URC for noting.</p> <p>7. Research-related outputs are annually monitored and overall performance evaluated, aiming for renewal by the end of a five-year period.</p>	<p>external relationships and to fund its activities as a result of such collaboration.</p>
<p>Flagship Entities are leading, uniquely positioned entities, and/or entities resulting from institutional strategic intent to confer a competitive advantage for the University</p>	<p>A Flagship Entity is a teaching and learning/research programme, located within a UJ Faculty/College or the Office of the relevant Deputy Vice-Chancellor, focussed on advancing institutional strategic priorities with potential strength, unique opportunity or existing critical mass for</p>	<p>“Flagship” attributes closely align to UJ strategy and/or catalytic initiatives. Typical features include the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Demonstrating leadership and prestige from undergraduate or postgraduate levels, notably an excellent master’s, doctoral and/or postdoctoral programme.</li> <li>2. Being a national leader, with</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Same as for Institutes. Where applicable, the Senior Director: Strategic Initiatives and Administration (SIA), will play a significant role in providing operational oversight.</li> <li>2. For Flagship Entities, funded through council-supported catalytic initiatives, additional reporting to the Management Executive Committee (MEC) is expected.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The management of “Flagship Entities” is determined by its function and structural alignment within the University.</li> <li>2. The management of the Flagship Entity will generally be the same as for a Research Institute.</li> </ol>

	<p>comparative advantage.</p> <p>A Flagship Entity will undertake academic activities that will have a national impact, while strengthening the University's global stature.</p>	<p>international recognition in its focus area.</p> <p>3. Maintaining an international and interdisciplinary research network of students, research staff, visiting scholars and PDRFs.</p> <p>4. Various teams are headed by team leaders with outstanding professional profiles.</p> <p>5. Attracting and generating substantial external support.</p> <p>6. Advancing scholarship through innovative, collaborative research.</p>		
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‡A Centre of Excellence (CoE) funded by the National Research Foundation (NRF)/Department of Science and Technology (DST) would follow the governance approach of an institute.

**APPENDIX****1. Applications for recognition as a university-recognised Research and Strategic Entity**

An application for University recognition of any of the previously listed entities, the evaluation of value-add, and ultimately the review are subject to the following outline.

<b>Headings</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>Low</b>
Name of the entity			
Mandate			
Governance: Strategy (alignment to institutional strategy)			
Scholarly output			
Research capacity building			
Structure			
Management: Structure, staffing and infrastructure			
Finance			
Overall value-add to University strategy			
Comments			

## 2. Recognition of research entities

### 2.1 Guidelines for establishing various research entities

	Focus	Research capacity	Collaborations	Financial viability	Discipline leadership
Research Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and Innovation</li> <li>• Postgrad/PDRF training</li> <li>• Growing the programme/discipline</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement is recommended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head</li> <li>• A team of researchers</li> <li>• Postgraduate students</li> <li>• PDRFs</li> <li>• Transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental and/or within the discipline</li> </ul> <p><b>Encouraged</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty</li> <li>• Inter-faculty</li> <li>• National</li> <li>• International</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internal funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Encouraged</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External grants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognition from peers, e.g. member of editorial board, leadership in professional bodies</li> </ul>
Research Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and Innovation</li> <li>• Postgrad/PDRF training</li> <li>• Growing the programme/discipline</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement is recommended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Centre Director</li> <li>• Teams of researchers</li> <li>• Postgraduate students and PDRFs</li> <li>• Transformation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relevant institutional national and international</li> </ul> <p><b>Encouraged</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong international network</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Combination of internal funding and, where appropriate, external funding</li> </ul> <p><b>Strongly encouraged</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External grants</li> <li>• Self-sustainable after the first five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National leader in its focus area with international prominence</li> </ul>
Research Institutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research and Innovation</li> <li>• Postgrad/PDRF training</li> <li>• Advancing the discipline</li> <li>• Stakeholder engagement is recommended</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Institute Director</li> <li>• Team members with considerable national/international standing</li> <li>• Transformation</li> <li>• Postgraduate students and PDRFs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extensive and relevant institutional, national and international collaborations and impact</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage funding from various sources</li> <li>• Self-sustainable after the first five years</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International/global recognition in the field</li> </ul>

## 2.2 Recognition assessment criteria

Proposals for establishing a University-recognised research entity will be assessed against these criteria:

- **The strategic gain** – For establishing the entity and alignment to institutional strategic plan.
- **Research agenda** – How well is the research and innovation agenda defined, with projects inter-linked or focused around a common theme?
- **Engaged scholarship and impact** – To what extent will the entity’s research contribute towards addressing socio-economic/political/legal/artistic/philosophical and other challenges in the country and/or the continent?
- **Research team, collaborations and building stature** – Does the entity have an adequately strong core team and networks to deliver on its mandate? How does the entity position itself for enhancing national and global reputation?
- **Human Capital Development** – Is there evidence of emerging academic staff, postgraduate and postdoctoral training and mentoring within the entity? Given the history of South Africa, there must be a clear strive for transformation.
- **Financial position and sustainability** – Is there evidence of current financial viability and a clear projected five-year budget to enable sustainability in terms of operational costs?
- **Infrastructure and equipment** – Is the required infrastructure and equipment available and accessible? Are there plans in place to accommodate projected growth in team members and future project requirements?
- **Governance and management** – Is there a clear plan for effective management and governance of the entity?
- **Proposal eligibility** – Does the proposal meet the classification guidelines of proposed entity type?

## 3. Performance review of strategic entities

### 3.1 Review process

All entities will be subject to an in-depth, end-of-cycle, peer-review process to assess performance. The review outcomes will inform the decision on whether to renew or renounce the bestowed University-recognised status of the research entity.

The review will include an evaluation of the performance of each entity against goals set out at the time of its establishment, following the review criteria outlined. Entities will be assessed for merit and the extent to which they address set objectives through peer reviews. The review will also evaluate the alignment of the entity goals or objectives with the mission and research strategy of the University.

Reviews will be based on the entity’s leader/director’s self-evaluation report.

For Research Entities, the host faculty will be responsible for initiating the review process and at least nine (9) months in advance of the expiry term. In the case of Research Units, the process will be internal to a faculty.

### 3.2 Review criteria

The following criteria will be used for end-of-cycle reviews of strategic entities:

#### Outputs/productivity

- Entity measured against set goals and criteria for the entity.
- Generated outputs in the context of the entity and with emphasis on human-capacity development outputs (postgraduate outputs).
- Measures of research, research output, output quality and impact applicable to the entity and its focus area.
- Level and significance of collaborative work, institutionally, nationally and internationally.
- Level and significance of established networks with industry, civil society and government departments, where applicable.
- Other measures, including staff and student prizes, prestigious awards, NRF ratings, plenary speakers, dissemination of knowledge via conferences, seminars, workshops, research impact communication (e.g. through op-eds), etc.
- Socio-economic/political/legal/artistic/philosophical impact of research.
- Plans in place to further strengthen the quantity and quality of outputs, in areas listed above.
- Contributions national, regional and international instruments.

#### Funding and sustainability

- Income generated through various funding sources.
- Evidence of financial sustainability in the short, medium and long term.

#### Human resources

- Evidence of academic leadership.
- Management and administrative competence.
- Succession planning.
- Capacity development – emerging academic staff, postgraduate students and postdoctoral fellows.
- Critical mass of adequately skilled researchers, technical staff, postgraduate students and postdoctoral research fellows (PDRFs).

#### Next five-year plans

- A five-year plan, to include, *inter alia*, timeframes, contribution to teaching, particularly of postgraduate students, projected outputs including

postgraduate outputs, proposed team members including PDRFs, existing and planned strategic collaborations, office and laboratory space, equipment currently in place, and major equipment acquisitions planned;

- A five-year income and expenditure budget.

#### **4. Transitional provisions**

- The recognition and governance requirements apply to all University recognised research entities.
- As such, all existing entities are automatically deemed to be recognised. Where appropriate, the five-year review period will allow for assessment and improvement and as guided by FRC (closest to the entity) or through URC intervention.

