

Policy Title:	ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres
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1. INTENT

The University is committed to providing a strong research environment and investing in world-class research to create lasting impact for the community. The University's Strategic Plan sets out its mission for advancing research and knowledge translation. Supporting world-class research that directly links to the University's strategic research areas is critical for enhancing and sustaining its research reputation. ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres leverage upon existing research strengths in Schools and engage in collaborations with the broader research community, both internal and external to the University. Achieving and maintaining world-class research excellence and facilitating knowledge translation at local, national and global levels are key drivers behind the establishment of this Policy.

This Policy and its related Procedures outline the principles for the establishment, governance, performance, management and closure of ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres.

This Policy applies to ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres established under this Policy.

2. ORGANISATIONAL SCOPE

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Staff (including honorary and adjunct appointments) and Higher Degree by Research Students of the University.
- 2.2 This Policy also applies to all Members of ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres who are not Staff and external persons appointed to act as part of a governance structure of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre.
- 2.3 This Policy does not apply to wholly externally funded and/or affiliated research groupings such as Cooperative Research Centres or Centres of Excellence. Nor does this Policy apply to wholly School funded research groupings. This Policy refers to ECU Strategic Research Institutes or Centres established in accordance with this Policy that will be partly or wholly funded by the Strategic Research Fund (SRF).
- 2.4 It is recognised that many School-based research centres and groupings exist within the University that do not receive financial support from the SRF, but which may receive some financial support from the School. This Policy does not currently apply to these research groupings, however this Policy may be extended at a later date to cover a broader range of research groupings.
- 2.5 The research architecture at ECU allows for the following: ECU Strategic Research Institutes, ECU Strategic Research Centres, and School based research centres and groups (the latter two of which are not currently covered by this Policy and corresponding Procedures).

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Unless the contrary intention appears, the [University Glossary](#) applies to this Policy. In addition to the glossary the following definitions apply:

Name	Description
Director	The person occupying the role responsible for the management and operation of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre appointed in accordance with this Policy and the Procedures.
ECR	An Early Career Researcher, being an academic Staff member who is undertaking research, normally within five years of completing their doctoral qualification (relative to opportunity).
ECU Strategic Research Centre	A group established in accordance with this Policy consisting of Members with the objective to engage in world-class research activities, and to deliver on world-class research outputs, that enable the University to progress one or more of its Research Priority Areas. ECU Strategic Research Centres provide a focus for research activity in one or more applicable Research Priority Area(s) and act to grow research excellence and engagement with industry.
ECU Strategic Research Institute	A group established in accordance with this Policy consisting of Members with the objective of engaging in interdisciplinary or multi-disciplinary world-class research activities and delivering on world-class research outputs. The group encourages significant collaboration across the University and drives engagement across industry, government and the global academic elite. ECU Strategic Research Institutes build capability and capacity around one or more Research Themes, driving the University's strategic research priorities and research reputation.
HDR	Higher Degree by Research student.
Leadership Team	Employed Staff who contribute to research leadership within the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre, other than the Director.
MCR	A Mid-Career Researcher, being an academic Staff member who is undertaking research, normally five to ten years from completing their doctoral qualification (relative to opportunity).
Member	A member of the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre. The following categories of persons are Members of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employed Staff deployed to work within the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre, whose salary is either wholly or partly funded by the entity's funding (including, but not limited to the Director); and • Staff (including honorary and adjunct Staff) and HDRs of the University who meet the criteria as set out in the Procedures and who are formally admitted as members by the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre in accordance with this Policy and Procedures. • Any other external person as deemed appropriate by the Director and Leadership Team.
Policy	The ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centres Policy.
Procedures	The ECU Strategic Research Institute and Centres Procedures made in accordance with this Policy.

Name	Description
Research	The creation of new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way so as to generate new concepts, methodologies, inventions and understandings. This could include synthesis, collation, evaluation and analysis of previous research to the extent that it is new and creative and/or that it informs policy and professional practice.
Research Priority Area	The priority areas of research established by the University within each of the formally recognised Research Themes as described under the Procedures.
Research Theme	The four broad areas of research focus formally recognised by the University: Health, Natural and Built Environment, Securing Digital Futures, Society and Culture.
Research Theme Leader	Employed staff allocated to have overarching leadership of the University's activities related to a Research Theme.
SRF	The Strategic Research Fund of the University which supports research in line with the University's Strategic Plan and is overseen by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).
World-class Research	A standard of research excellence further described in the Procedures.

4. POLICY CONTENT

Principles

4.1 An ECU Strategic Research Institute established under this Policy will demonstrate the following characteristics:

- a defined research program that aligns with one or more of the University's Research Themes;
- the ability to conduct world-class research with a multi-disciplinary focus in one (or more) of the four Research Themes, that is evidenced by external benchmarks and existing measures of research excellence (including Excellence in Research Australia (ERA), highly-cited research outputs, the generation of grant income from nationally competitive sources and HDR completions);
- membership levels that meet capacity and capability requirements necessary to fulfil research and/or research training key performance indicators and meet any requirements set out in the Procedures;
- the ability to lead engagement with industry, government, other relevant external parties and/or other tertiary institutions;
- the capacity to engage in significant collaboration across and external to the University;
- the capability to create impact through translation of research conducted by Members and through significant collaboration;
- membership across two or more Schools as prescribed by the Procedures;
- has an agreed business plan that supports an initial establishment period of five years and demonstrates plans for the sustainable generation of external revenue or funding after this initial establishment period;
- an appropriate and robust governance structure, including an External Research Advisory Board in addition to a Steering Management Committee, as outlined in the Procedures;
- the ability to advance research excellence and impact across the relevant Research Theme(s) and in line with national and international priorities;
- the ability to provide mentorship and career development opportunities for HDRs, ECRs and MCRs;
- the ability to provide research training to strengthen School-based Honours research programs and increase HDR completions; and

- the ability to work collaboratively and in consultation with any appointed Theme Leaders on strategic matters relating to their relevant Research Theme(s).
- 4.2 ECU Strategic Research Centres established in accordance with this Policy must be able to demonstrate:
- the ability to enhance the strategic direction of the University through a well-defined program of research in one or more of the Research Priority Areas;
 - membership levels that meet capacity and capability requirements necessary to fulfil research and/or research training key performance indicators and meet any requirements set out in the Procedures;
 - the capacity to conduct world-class research, as determined by existing measures of research excellence including ERA, highly-cited research outputs, grant income from nationally competitive sources and HDR completions);
 - the capability to create impact through translation of research conducted by Members and through significant collaboration;
 - ability to advance excellence and impact in research, in line with national and international priorities;
 - a clear governance structure, consisting of at least a Steering Management Committee, as set out in the Procedures;
 - a business plan that includes plans for the sustainable generation of external revenue or funding after an initial establishment period of three years;
 - the ability to provide mentorship and career development opportunities for HDRs, ECRs and MCRs; and
 - the ability to provide research training to strengthen School-based Honours research programs and increase HDR completions.
- 4.3 The terms 'ECU Strategic Research Institute', and 'ECU Strategic Research Centre' are reserved for use by ECU Strategic Institutes and Centres that have been established in accordance with this Policy.
- 4.4 Other research groupings within the University that have not been established as ECU Strategic Research Institutes or Centres in accordance with this Policy are not permitted to be called an 'ECU Strategic Research Institute', 'ECU Strategic Research Centre' or use the descriptor of 'research institute' generally. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) reserves the right to override this clause, in the instance that a case can be made that it could adversely impact ECU's external reputation for a research grouping not to be called a research institute or significant funding from an external body requires this title.
- 4.5 Research Services will maintain the official register of approved ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres.
- 4.6 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres must support and be consistent with the University's applicable Strategic Plan, endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor, in the area of advancing research and knowledge.

Applications to Establish

- 4.7 Applications for the establishment of new ECU Research Institutes and Centres or their subsequent renewal shall comply with the specific requirements and approval process set out in the Procedures.
- 4.8 Following the initial establishment of ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres in 2020 (commencing operations in 2021), future rounds for applications to establish an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre will be made at the discretion of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) in accordance with the requirements of this Policy and the Procedures.
- 4.9 At the discretion of Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), further applications to establish ECU Strategic Research Institutes or Centres may be considered outside of any formal call for applications referred to at 4.13.

Establishment

- 4.10 The Vice-Chancellor, following the recommendation of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and endorsement by the University Executive, may authorise the establishment or renewal of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre and the structure, principles and governance framework under which it shall operate.
- 4.11 ECU Strategic Research Institutes will normally be established for an initial period of five years, and ECU Strategic Research Centres for a period of three years. Before the conclusion of the initial establishment period, the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre will undergo a formal review as set out in the Procedures to determine if it should be renewed.
- 4.12 The University may decline to approve any application under clauses 4.12-4.14 at any stage of the approval process.

Leadership Structure

- 4.13 The Director and Leadership Team of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre shall be proposed and agreed in the formal application process, and will be implemented as such, subject to any modifications required by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) and any requirements set out in the Procedures.
- 4.14 Appointment of persons to the Director position and Leadership Team must be merit based and comply with any requirements imposed by the Academic Leadership Roles Policy, the Procedures and the applicable industrial instrument.

Funding

- 4.15 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres established pursuant to this Policy are eligible to receive University SRF funding for the timeframe and at the amount approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research), as per the approved applicable business plan, subject to clauses 4.15-4.17 of this Policy, the Procedures and any other conditions set by the Vice-Chancellor.
- 4.16 Funding beyond the initial establishment period is not guaranteed. Further funding from the SRF after the initial establishment period shall be subject to compliance with any ongoing requirements and satisfactory performance against key performance indicators set at establishment as assessed through the formal review process set out in the Procedures.
- 4.17 If the SRF funding of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre is not renewed beyond the initial establishment period it shall be disestablished in accordance with 4.34 of this Policy.
- 4.18 Additional SRF funding during the term of the ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres (in addition to the amounts referred to in clause 4.20) will only be provided in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.19 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) may take into account any matter they consider appropriate in determining if further funding shall be provided to an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre during its term.

Staffing and Membership

- 4.20 The allocation of employed Staff (academic and professional) to work within an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre and the source(s) of the funding for those positions shall be in accordance with any requirements set out in this Policy and the Procedures.
- 4.21 The relevant Director and Leadership Team of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre shall determine the criteria for its membership which shall conform to any requirements set out in this Policy or the Procedures.
- 4.22 Members of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre shall act in accordance with any requirements set out in this Policy and the Procedures.
- 4.23 Employed staff allocated to conduct research linked to an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre remain subject to the University's usual employment policies and procedures and the applicable industrial instrument.

Governance

4.24 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres are expected to have robust governance structures that comply with the requirements of this Policy and the Procedures. The governance structure of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre will be approved at the time of its establishment. Any significant changes to the governance structure during its term must first be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

External Engagement and Impact

4.25 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres shall engage with their relevant external communities and stakeholders to drive significant research translation and impact at local, national and international scales.

4.26 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres are required to conduct research that will provide economic, commercial, environmental, social and/or cultural benefits at a local, national and/or international level. ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres are expected to engage with stakeholders and relevant research end-users to provide mutually beneficial outcomes, both at the economic and societal levels.

4.27 Any significant changes in the strategy relating to external engagement and impact as approved at the initial establishment of the ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre, must first be approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Accountability, Reporting and Review

4.28 ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres must comply with ongoing reporting and review requirements outlined in the Procedures.

Disestablishment

4.29 The Vice-Chancellor may disestablish an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre on endorsement by the University Executive of a recommendation to disestablish an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) in accordance with the Procedures.

4.30 The disestablishment process of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre shall be in accordance with any requirements set out in the Procedures and the applicable industrial instrument.

Procedures

4.31 The University may, as set out in the Procedures:

- prescribe the process and documentation required for an application to establish or renew ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres;
- prescribe requirements in terms of the membership and staffing of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre;
- impose reporting and review requirements for ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres;
- prescribe areas of strategic focus for one or more ECU Strategic Research Institutes or Centres;
- impose requirements regarding the governance, leadership and management structures of ECU Strategic Research Institutes or Centres;
- impose key performance indicators on ECU Strategic Research Institutes and Centres;
- prescribe a process for the disestablishment of an ECU Strategic Research Institute or Centre; and
- prescribe and articulate any other matters contemplated by this Policy.

5. ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) has overall responsibility for the content of this Policy and its operation.

The Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) is responsible for maintaining this Policy.

6. RELATED DOCUMENTS

Academic Leadership Policy
Code of Conduct Policy
Postgraduate Research Training Policy
Student Code of Conduct Policy
Research Data Management Policy
Research Grants and Funding Management Policy
Research Misconduct Policy
Responsible Research Conduct Policy

7. CONTACT INFORMATION

For queries relating to this document please contact:

Policy Owner	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
All Enquiries Contact:	Rebecca Ryan, Senior Strategy and Policy Adviser, Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Telephone:	08 6304 2870
Email address:	rebecca.ryan@ecu.edu.au

8. APPROVAL HISTORY

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