

Introduction

A *Research Centre* consists of a substantial group of University scholars whose integrated research addresses a set of problems of major theoretical, empirical, or applied significance, and which has achieved international recognition. The Centre may be organised as a set of closely linked clusters or research streams, often involving collaboration across disciplines and departments. Recognition as the Centre signals the excellence of the research group and leverages infrastructural support for the research conducted by the group. Such centres provide unique training opportunities for students, and may support coordination of activities not readily undertaken within the University's department structure.

The purpose of the Research Centers Program is to:

- recognize and advance faculty expertise;
- engage undergraduate and graduate students in experiential learning opportunities through service and research;
- apply the intellectual capacity of UTAR to the needs of the region;
- market those capacities to the public and private sectors;
- provide opportunities to integrate teaching, research and service;
- encourage multidisciplinary collaboration;
- facilitate the administration of externally supported projects;
- attract significant external research income; and
- demonstrate national leadership and international recognition for excellence.

The policies outlined below are to be used in the creation, operation, and evaluation of Research Centers at UTAR.

Criteria for Establishment of a Research Center

In order for a proposed center to receive consideration for establishment it must meet the following criteria:

- The center must build upon current UTAR faculty strengths;
- The center must be collaborative and serve as a mechanism for the creation of a multidisciplinary community of scholars;
- The center must be housed in an academic department and be linked to an academic program in order to provide research, service, and experiential learning opportunities for faculty and students;
- The center must demonstrate the potential for attracting external support;
- The center must provide services useful to the community.

Procedure for Establishment of a Research Center

Requests for approval to establish a new center must follow the sequence described below:

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- Discussion and the drafting of a proposal among groups of academic staff and researchers of UTAR of interests and expertise relevant to the core research theme of a research centre.
- Discussion and consultation with the Vice President (Research, Development and Commercialisation) and Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research (IPSR) can be held to enhance the relevance and justification of the proposal
- Submit the proposal to the hosting Faculty (usually the faculty which is most closely relevant or related to the research theme of the proposed research centre).
- Faculty Research, Development and Postgraduate Studies Committee (FRDPC) and Faculty Board consider and recommend to Research, Development and Commercialisation Committee (RDCC) for consideration.
- RDCC consider and recommend to Senior Management Committee (SMC).
- SMC consider and decide on the approval of the setting up the centre.
- The President decides and appoints the Chairperson of the centre.

Organizational Structure

The following guidelines are to be used to inform decisions regarding center organization:

- The Centre Chairperson will be appointed, with terms specified by the appointment letter;
- Upon receiving approval for centre formation, the Centre Chairperson shall consult Vice President (Research, Development and Commercialisation) and IPSR on the operating guidelines addressing the following: internal governance, membership criteria, and identification of an internal/external advisory group;
- The Centre shall not be the tenure home for participating faculty;
- The Centre shall not offer any form of course, academic program, degree, or certificate;
- The Centre shall provide monthly progress reports and an annual report to IPSR for compilation before being presented to the President, advisory group, and any other stakeholders.

Support for the Centre

Upon formation of a center, the University may consider some kind of support for the Centre.

Center Assessment and Life Span

A center is not intended to have an indefinite institutional life:

- Within three years of establishment the Center shall undergo a comprehensive program review. When appropriate, the Center should also solicit an external evaluation as part of its comprehensive review;
- After the initial review cycle, the Center shall complete additional reviews every three years. The administration, however, has the right to initiate a review at any time;
- A center will exist only as long as it is deemed to be performing the function for which it was established.
- A center may be disestablished for any of the following reasons:
 - it ceases to accomplish its objectives,
 - it has fulfilled its objectives,
 - the objectives can be met more effectively in some other way, or
 - there is no longer sufficient funding from internal or external sources.

Required Components of a Proposal for Creation of a Research Center

Mission Statement

What is the purpose of the center? What will be its focus? What will it do?

Rationale

Why is such a center needed? Why is it significant? Is there an audience or market for the services of the center? This section must address all of the topics described in the "Criteria" section above.

Activities

What activities would the center sponsor (e.g. training, consulting, research)?

Goals

What are the specific goals for the first three years of the center.

Facilities and Equipment

What existing and new equipment and facilities would be needed? How would new equipment and facilities be funded from external sources? A statement approving the use of non-departmental facilities must be attached.

Structure

How would the center be organized and governed?

Membership

Who would be members or associates of the Center? Will the Center have an internal or external advisory committee?

Administration

How would the center be administered and who would have that responsibility?
Will there be support staff?

Action Plan and Budget

What would be the specific goals/activities and budget of the Center for Year 1 through Year 3? How will progress be assessed? What metrics will be used to assess goal achievement?

Sustainability

How will the activities of the center be sustained after the initial three years of support? What external sources of support are expected to be available?