



Code	QA506
Title	Establishment, Review and Disestablishment of Research Entities
Policy Owner	Vice-President for Research and Innovation
Date	12/02/2025
Approved By	Academic Council

1. Context

The University of Galway has earned international recognition as a research-led university that drives interdisciplinary research in strategic areas with transformative potential. The University is committed to establishing and supporting research entities of varying scales in achieving research excellence and sustainability. Such activity is complementary to, and augments, the research work of Schools and Colleges. Research Entities are a vital ecosystem through which the University can respond to key developments in the research policy and funding landscape.

Designated Research Institutes represent the largest entities within the University's research landscape; undertaking research activities and training aligned with the prioritised research themes of the University strategy. In addition, Research Centres and Clusters¹ comprise a range of research groups with common and/or complementary research themes/interests and expertise working collaboratively.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to formally define Research Entities within the research landscape of the University of Galway and to set out the requirements for their establishment, review, and disestablishment.

The governance and management of designated Research Entities is set out in QA508.

3. Definitions of a Research Entity

The University defines three level of Research Entities:

- **Research Institutes** – are large-scale entities characterised by significant inter-disciplinary (generally cross-College) research activity, including extensive collaboration nationally and internationally.

¹ For the purposes of this policy, the term Cluster includes smaller Research Entities that meet the criteria for a Cluster, regardless of whether the word 'Cluster' is in their title (e.g. units/groups). It does not include less formal research groupings of smaller scale and scope, which do not require specific approval or review as outlined in this policy and are not visible on the University website.



- **Research Centres** – are medium-scale entities generally aligned to a designated research institute and characterised by inter-disciplinary (e.g. cross-School) research activity, focusing on multiple research themes.²
- **Research Clusters** – are small-scale entities, generally characterised by a small group of researchers, typically (but not exclusively) within one school, focusing on a research theme.

The typical characteristics of a Research Entity – including measures of scale – shall be agreed and published by the Committee for Research Entities (CRE -see Section 5 below).

4. Principles of Research Entities

- Research Entities must align with the strategic goals of the University and relevant Colleges and advance the excellence and impact of research and research training at the University.
- Research Entities should focus on expertise of national or international significance in order to raise the University's reputation and recognition.
- Research Entities contribute significantly to the University's funding success, research outputs and impact.
- Research Entities must be affiliated with one or more Colleges/Schools and have an appropriate reporting and management structure that reflects this. The Governance and Management of Research Institutes is set out in QA508.
- Larger-scale entities (Institute and Centres – as defined in Section 3) must have a strategic and sustainability plan with stated objectives, alignment with the University/College/School strategy, measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets.
- Smaller entities (Clusters – as defined in Section 3) must have a coherent plan for research activity - including funding, collaborations and training - including targets where appropriate.
- Staff may have affiliation to more than one research entity. Their primary affiliation would typically be to one entity. (This would not, for example, preclude staff from having a primary affiliation to both an institute and a centre within that institute.)
- Membership of Research Entities is open to all staff categories. Non University staff (e.g. Research Partners) may be *Affiliated Members* of entities.
- Research Entities must have a presence on the University's online ecosystem (website and research information systems) and comply with the University's branding.
- The use of the word 'National' or 'Irish' in the name of a research entity should apply only for the special case where the research activity uniquely addresses a domain of expertise on a national level.
- Research Entities must be registered and maintained in a local register (at College/School level) and in a central register (maintained by the OVPRI).
- Research Entities must comply with University policies and procedures in relation to all of their activity, including relationships with external entities.

² National Multi-institutional Centres supported by external competitive funding - such as the Research Ireland or Enterprise Ireland Centres - do not fall under this policy. Similarly, entities whose primary purpose is not research are excluded.



5. Committee for Research Entities (CRE)

The Committee for Research Entities, operating within a Terms of Reference as agreed by the Research and Innovation Committee, shall:

- Maintain an independent oversight of the Research Entity ecosystem of the University and their performance and continued alignment with the University's strategic direction;
- Establish general guidelines and process for submission of proposals for new entities;
- Review proposals for, and make recommendations on, the establishment of certain entities of scale (as outlined in Section 6);
- Undertake periodic reviews of Institutes and Centres outside of Institutes (as outlined in Section 7);
- Maintain a register of all research entities; and
- Be comprised of a minimum of 40% women and 40% men.

The Committee will include the following:

- Vice President for Research and Innovation (Chair)
 - Director of Research*
 - Director of Innovation Office*
 - Two College Deans (one STEM and one AHSS)
 - Two Research Institute Directors (one STEM and one AHSS)
 - Bursar*
 - Dean of Graduate Studies
 - Two additional members, for example National Centre Director
- *Or nominee

The CRE shall undertake a periodic review of the overall landscape of all our Research Entities to ensure alignment with strategic direction of the University with recommendations of such a review brought to UMT/Research Committee. Before such a review is undertaken Terms of References shall be agreed.

6. Establishment of a Research Entity

- Research Institutes:
 - The establishment of a new Research Institute must be approved by Academic Council.
 - Proposals for establishment must be submitted by the College of primary affiliation to the Committee for Research Entities.
 - When considering such proposals, the CRE may wish to include consultations with external stakeholders.
 - The CRE will review proposals for new Institutes and will bring its recommendations to the Research & Innovation Committee and UMT.
 - Academic Council shall provide final approval of new Research Institutes based on the recommendation from the Research & Innovation Committee and UMT.
- Research Centres *within* an Institute:
 - The establishment of Research Centres within an Institute must be approved by the relevant Institute University Board.



- The relevant Head(s) of School(s) must be informed of newly established Centres.
- Research Centres *outside* an Institute:
 - The establishment of Research Centres outside of an Institute must be approved by the CRE.
 - Proposals for establishment must be submitted with the support of the relevant College/School(s); as appropriate depending on interdisciplinarity.
- Research Clusters:
 - The establishment of Research Clusters must be approved by the Research Committee of the relevant College(s).
 - Proposals for establishment must be submitted and supported by Head(s) of School.

All new Research Entities approved under the scope of this policy must be notified to the CRE.

7. Review of Research Entities

A review of the performance of Research Entities will be carried out every four years, or at an earlier date if circumstances dictate it, by the same bodies that approved its establishment (as detailed in Section 6).

Specific terms of reference for each review shall be agreed upon by the body tasked with the review. Reviews shall (where relevant and reflecting the scale of the research entity) consider the following:

- Continued relevance to the strategic direction of the University and the relevant College(s) and evidence of adequate infrastructure, and of continued engagement of the University and the relevant College(s);
- Alignment with relevant and current national and European research policy and progress of the centre towards achieving national and/or international standing;
- Effectiveness and achievements of the Research Entity over the reference period against stated aims, objectives and targets;
- Benchmarking of activities against equivalent groups, for example national or international counterparts;
- The management and sustainability of the Entity;
- Challenges and opportunities; and
- Collaboration activity – Internal, External, Industry, Public or Private sector, Institutional links.

The review may also consider, and make recommendations on, the support provided to the Research Entity by the University and/or relevant Colleges.

The Review Body shall make recommendations, as follows:

- Full approval: the Entity receives full approval for a further four years (notwithstanding minor recommendations)
- Qualified approval: Where the review body makes significant recommendations, the Entity will receive approval for a shorter time period determined by the review body.
- Downsizing: The Entity should be downsized to a smaller scale entity (i.e. from Research Institute to Research Centre or from Research Centre to Research Cluster).
- Disestablishment: The Entity should be wound down.



8. Disestablishment of Research Entities

Research Entities may be disestablished following the outcome of a review, as above. Where a Research Entity wishes to disestablish outside the Review process, the following shall apply:

- Research Institutes – the Institute University Board must bring a request to the CRE;
- Research Centres *within* an Institute: The Centre Director must bring a request to the Institute University Board;
- Research Centres *outside* an Institute: The Centre Director must bring a request to the CRE, as endorsed by the College of primary affiliation; and
- Research Cluster must notify the relevant College Research Committee.

The decision to disestablish a larger scale Research Entity shall require a clear plan for its orderly winding down including:

- A timeline for closure;
- The continuation (or otherwise) of affiliated Research Centres/Clusters;
- Management of staff within the entity (where relevant);
- Provision for adequate storage and treatment of data associated with research projects (where relevant);
- Removal of websites (or parts of) where appropriate; and
- Communication to internal and external stakeholders, including funding agencies.

The CRE must be notified of the disestablishment of any of the Research Entities under this Policy.

9. Implementation

- The policy shall come into effect on the date of approval by Academic Council.
- Within a period no later than two years following this date, all current Entities should align to the general definitions of entities (outlined in Section 3) and the characteristics – including measures of scale – to be agreed and published by the Committee for Research Entities.



10. Responsibilities

Name	Key Responsibility
Vice President for Research and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Owner• Chair Committee for Research Entities
Academic Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policy Approver• Approve establishment of new Research Institutes• Approve disestablishment of Research Institutes
R&I Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide recommendation to Academic Council for the establishment of new Research Institutes
UMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide recommendation to Academic Council for the establishment of new Research Institutes
Committee for Research Entities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree and publish the characteristics of a Research Entity – including measures of scale• Review proposals for new Research Institutes and provide recommendations to Research & Innovation Committee and UMT• Approve proposals for Research Centres outside an Institute• Undertake periodic reviews of Research Institutes and Research Centres outside an Institute• Maintain a register of all research entities
Institute University Board	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Approve the establishment of Research Centres within their Institute• Undertake periodic reviews of Research Centres within their Institute• Bring request to the CRE for disestablishment of the Research Institute
Colleges/College Research Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain the local register of all research entities• Support proposals for new Research Centres outside an Institute• Approve establishment of Research Clusters within their College• Undertake periodic reviews of Research Clusters within their College
Schools/Head of School	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support proposals for new Research Centres outside an Institute• Support proposals for Research Clusters within their School
Centre Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring request for the disestablishment of Research Centre to the CRE (for Research Centres outside an Institute) or Institute Research Board (for Research Centres within an Institute)
Research Cluster	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bring request to the College Research Committee for the disestablishment of a Research Cluster