

## S1 RESEARCH GROUPS AND CENTRES

### Purpose and scope

- 1.1 This section of the Consolidated Academic Policies and Regulations (CAPR) explains what research centres are; how they are formed; and how they are managed and reviewed.
- 1.2 This policy applies to all research groupings created by Faculties and Departments on or after 1 June 2016 regardless of the date of the idea or proposal that gave rise to the group.

Note: The Academic Board does not currently consider proposals to establish collaborative research centres under this policy. It will consider them when the Academic Board and Board of Directors decide that other types of research grouping (such as disciplinary research groups) have been operating for the period they regard as necessary to ensure that research governance and management are sufficiently understood within Departments and Faculties to ensure good practice.

### Definitions

- 1.3 'Collaborative research centre' means a College-wide centre open to all members of the academic community, including students and professional services staff, which has a coherent approach to the research of a topic or theme and a defined membership. A research centre's defining feature is the significant value added to the College's work and reputation that only its existence can create. This value is typically expected to last financially and academically for at least three (3) to five (5) years.
- 1.4 'Disciplinary research group' means an informal group of individuals that has a defined research area, topic or theme and is supported and monitored by the relevant Faculty.
- 1.5 'Research' means activity that is encompassed by the Frascati definition, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) definition used for the Research Excellence Framework, or the HMRC's definition used for VAT Purposes. (These are explained in more depth earlier in this part of the CAPR.)

### Introduction

#### *Overview*

- 1.6 The College will develop a scholarship and research culture that is fully integrated into its learning and teaching. Based on its Code of Dignity and Freedom, and through its commitment to social justice and inclusion, the College promotes the opportunity of staff and students to research and express their opinions.
- 1.7 In addition the College will seek to make a contribution to relevant areas of research and scholarship through the creation, support and monitoring of specialist research centres,

particularly where the aims of these centres supports the College's strategic development and reputation for expertise in the academic and broader community.

- 1.8 And specialist research centres provide opportunities for the College and departments to develop and derive reputational, intellectual value and financial value from collective expertise in new, emerging and collaborative projects not reflected in the standard College structures such as Faculties, Departments and discipline groups.

*Principles*

- 1.9 Primarily, the College will develop and direct its research and scholarship activities through two (2) type of groups: disciplinary research groups; and collaborative research centres.
- 1.10 Disciplinary research groups (DRGs) are located in a 'parent' academic Faculty or Department, and are created to develop the College direction or exploration of a loosely defined research or scholarship area, topic or theme.
- 1.11 A DRG:
- (a) is open to all members of the College community including students but does not have a defined membership;
  - (b) is expected to raise the reputation of the relevant departments or the College or both;
  - (c) is expected to attract extra research or scholarship income for its parent Faculty, and potentially associated departments;
  - (d) depends financially on the parent academic Faculty or Department;
  - (e) is supported academically by the relevant Head of Department;
  - (f) is formally responsible to the Head of Department for its operation and resourcing. The head of the group will usually report to the Head of Department;
  - (g) does not have any associated academic or administrative staffing. All staff are allocated to the parent (or associated) Department not the group itself.
- 1.12 Collaborative research centres (CRCs) are the College's major research bodies. They are interdisciplinary in nature and form – independent of academic Departments that will develop and sustain a significant external profile.
- 1.13 A Collaborative research centre (CRC):
- (a) is open to all members of the College including students, and the membership is defined, recorded and published;
  - (b) is independent in the medium to long term (at maximum five (5) years) in intellectual and financial terms and as regards its critical mass of academic support and activity;
  - (c) is free to appoint staff, subject to College and budgetary oversight;
  - (d) may undertake research and scholarship in the centre's name, including applying for research grants;
  - (e) may host postgraduate students, training and teaching programmes, subject to the appropriate College approval processes; and
  - (f) is permitted to publicise itself in its own right. Details of its work will also appear in the College's communications.

- 1.14 A CRC's constitution may enable it to establish a management committee or equivalent body, which would be responsible for advising its director on day-to-day activities. The management committee would typically include members from all academic departments with a significant financial or intellectual stake in the CRC's activities; and at least one (1) member who is external to the College.
- 1.15 All College publications and webpages that list its research groups or centres must include only those approved through the procedures listed below. Other groups or centres must not be included in information accessible to people outside the College.

### Procedures

#### *Overview*

- 1.16 The approval of a research group or centre has three (3) stages:
- (a) Stage 1: Submitting a proposal.
  - (b) Stage 2: Considering the proposal.
  - (c) Stage 3: Annual review of groups and centres.

#### *Stage 1: Submitting a proposal*

- 1.17 A group of staff and students may submit a proposal to establish, alter or disestablish a DRG or CRC:
- (a) in writing on the prescribed form with the full name and signature of the Head of Department (DRG) or the proposed interim director (CRC);
  - (b) to the place and person in line with the form's written instructions.
- 1.18 The proposal must include:
- (a) a clear statement of the grounds for the request (i.e., why the group believes the group or centre will provide reputational, intellectual or financial value);
  - (b) any consultation already done regarding the proposal and the strength of support it has from relevant heads of Department, Faculty Chairs, or Senior Officers of the College;
  - (c) proposals for the first year of establishment; and
  - (d) a list of any people who have signed up to be members of the group or centre.
- 1.19 Final decisions as to whether to establish or disestablish a DRG are made by the Faculty Board after considering recommendations from the Research Committee.
- 1.20 Final decisions as to whether to establish or disestablish a CRC are made by the College Executive Group after considering recommendations from the Academic Board.

*Stage 2: Considering the proposal*

- 1.21 A proposal to establish a new DRG or to disestablish or significantly amend an existing group's terms of reference will be considered by the Research Committee. It will put forward a recommendation to the Faculty Board after consulting the relevant Dean of Faculty.
- 1.22 A proposal to establish a new CRC or to disestablish or significantly amend an existing CRC's terms of reference will be considered by the Research Committee. It will put forward a recommendation to the Academic Board after consulting the relevant Faculty Board(s).
- 1.23 In making its recommendation the Research Committee will consider the following questions:
- (a) Does the proposed group or centre bring together individuals from different departments to provide a multi-disciplinary approach or, in the case of a single disciplinary proposal, does it have a significant and potentially enduring identity that is more robust than an informal research group?
  - (b) Does the proposed group or centre provide added value and is it greater than the sum of its parts? Is there sufficient critical mass to allow it to endure?
  - (c) Does the proposed group or centre demonstrate coherency in terms of its structures (including management structures for CRCs), research plans and resources appropriate to meet the stated aims and objectives?
  - (d) Are the activities brought together under the proposed group or centre of sufficient standing for it to aspire to achieve an appropriate impact (internally, locally or nationally)?
  - (e) For CRCs, is the designation of CRC status likely to assist in achieving external funding to make it financially self-sustaining in the short to medium term?
- 1.24 On receiving the recommendation, the Faculty Board or Academic Board may decide:
- (a) to reject the application;
  - (b) to approve the application in whole or in part with conditions; or
  - (c) to approve the application in whole or in part.
- 1.25 If the group or centre depends substantially on direct or indirect funds, the College or its owners or subsidiaries, the Academic Board or the College Executive Group may apply conditions to the establishment of the DRG or CRC.
- 1.26 The proposer of minor amendments to a group or centre's terms of reference should submit a brief paper to the Research Committee giving reasons and a copy of the existing terms of reference with additions underlined and deletions struck through.
- 1.27 These will be considered for approval by the Chair of the Research Committee and Deans on behalf of the relevant Faculty Boards.

*Stage 3: Annual review of groups and centres*

- 1.28 The Research Committee and the relevant Deans need relevant and up-to-date information to inform the development of the College's research strategy and to maintain accurate records for publication in the College regulations and elsewhere.

Therefore the Research Committee will undertake a light-touch annual review of all groups and centres.

- 1.29 The Research Committee will supply a form for each group and centre and it will at minimum include:
- (a) a review of management structure;
  - (b) a list and review of all staff and students participating in the group or formally attached to the centre;
  - (c) a list and review of the achievements and activities of the group or centre in the last year and over the previous three-year period;
  - (d) three to five year plan and justification for ongoing approval of the group or centre.
- 1.30 In addition, centres may be subject to review or reporting via other College processes to any or all of the relevant Heads of Departments, their Advisory Board, the College Executive Group, etc.

#### Advice and support

- 1.31 Advice for student on research group and centres is available from their programme leader or Head of Department. More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals.
- 1.32 Advice for staff on research centres is available from their nominated Academic Policy Partner. More complex queries may be referred to appropriate individuals.
- 1.33 If any staff development needs are identified, these may be discussed with members of the Staff and Educational Development Team.

#### Fees

- 1.34 No additional fees or charges are associated with this policy.

#### Legal context

- 1.35 These procedures are expected to conform to the general guidelines issued in 2002 by the Director General of the Research Councils and the Chief Executives of the UK Research Councils. In addition, this policy has had regard to the principles outlined in the Educational Reform Act 1988, as amended, concerning academic freedom.
- 1.36 The College may not be bound by the principles and this policy alone may not provide the procedure to meet all of these principles, some of which may be met by other College policies and procedures.. It uses the principles as guidance only, to help it deal soundly with these matters.

#### Enforcement, monitoring and review

- 1.37 If any person or body in the College refuses to comply with a request or decision made to enforce this policy, their refusal must be reported to the Provost. They will take such action to enforce this policy as they think necessary.
- 1.38 Each year, the College must receive a report that enables it to monitor, identify and act on any shortfalls in how this policy is interpreted and applied.
- 1.39 Every three (3) years, the College must review this policy to ensure that:
- (a) it remains up to date and continue to meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code, applicable legislation or guidance;
  - (b) areas of improvement, or any concerns, raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies have been addressed; and

(c) opportunities to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy have been taken.

**Schedule (not part of the policies and regulations):**

*Responsible Officer: Director of Research*

*Approved by: Board of Directors and Academic Board*

*Version: 1.0*

*Date:*

*Monitoring and Review Body: Research Committee*

*Effective From: 01/06/2017*

*Next Scheduled Review:*