Research Unit Policy

Section 1 - Introduction

(1) The University is committed to fostering collaboration and cooperation across and within academic disciplines, and to improve the visibility and accessibility of the University's research capabilities to external parties.

(2) To support this strategy, the University may establish organisational Research Units such as Institutes, Centres, Hubs, Networks or Laboratories.

Section 2 - Statement of Authority

(3) The authority behind this policy is part 3, section 15 of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003 and part 2, section 6 of the Menzies School of Health Research Act 1985.

Section 3 - COMPLIANCE

(4) This is a compliance requirement under the Code of Conduct - Employees and the Charles Darwin University Act 2003.

Section 4 - INTENT

(5) This document set out the principles and framework for establishing, operating, reviewing, and disestablishing organisational Research Units.

Section 5 - RELEVANT DEFINITIONS

(6) In the context of this document:

a. Academic unit means an academic unit of the University such as a higher education college or VET executive, which has administrative responsibility for the research unit;
b. Governance Document means a formally approved document that outlines non-discretionary governing principles and intentions, in order to guide University practice. Governance documents are formal statements of intent that mandate principles or standards that apply to the University's governance or operations or to the practice and conduct of its staff members and students. They include the Charles Darwin University Act 2003, by-laws, policies, procedures, guidelines, rules, codes and the Enterprise Agreement;
c. Research means investigation undertaken to gain or advance transferrable knowledge, understanding and insight. It does not include routine testing or analysis of materials, components, processes and services, nor the development of teaching materials and similar work;
d. Research active staff members means academic staff members who pursue ongoing research as a major focus of their academic activity;
e. Research and Enterprise Group means the group which monitors the enterprise and research environment and

activities of the university and advises the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation, and coordinates cross-College activity as necessary.

f. Researcher means any staff member, person awarded honorary or academic status by the University, student, or person otherwise associated with the University, who conducts research under the auspices of the University or undertakes study or a formal research affiliation with the University;
g. Senior Manager means a staff member of the University holding the position of Faculty Pro Vice-Chancellor, Head of School or Director; and
h. Staff member means anyone engaged by or associated with the University and includes all permanent, casual or contracted employees (whether full-time or part-time), honorary appointees, visitors, volunteers and/or those holding University offices or who are a member of a University committee.

Section 6 - POLICY

Principles

(7) Research Units must have only one (1) designated academic organisational unit responsible for its administration, such as human resources, finance, and marketing and communications. Other Academic Units may cooperate to support the Research Unit, through the host academic unit.

(8) Research Units may involve staff members drawn from several academic units to capture the opportunities and value afforded by interdisciplinary collaboration.

(9) Typically, Research Units will not be established to conduct a few (or one) research projects. Projects are bounded in scope, timeline and funding, are amenable to contracting, prior planning and predictability and are the normal way to partner, especially with industry clients.

(10) Research Units can be nested within each other, for example, a Tier 3 Unit (Centre) may sit within a Tier 2 Unit (Institute).

(11) Research Units including those established by an inter-institutional Memorandum of Understanding must operate in accordance with all University Governance Documents. Importantly, the quest for identity and visibility by a Unit must be compatible and comply with the University branding; and the University's external communications protocols must be followed at all times.

(12) Research Units are differentiated according to their scale, breadth and expected longevity:

Inter-institutional Research Units

(13) It is possible to establish a Research Unit between the University and another Institution. The establishment of an Interinstitutional or joint Research Unit is subject to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or other instrument that sets out the basis for the inter-institutional relationship. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation, following consultation with the Vice-Chancellor and the Research and Enterprise Group, must approve a MOU or other instrument before execution. If such prior approval has not been obtained, the inter-institutional nature of the Research Unit will not be recognised by the University.

Tier 1 (Research School)

(14) A Research School is established under the provisions of the Charles Darwin University Act 2003, part 5, section 24, which sets out how Research Schools are established, and how their affairs are conducted. This Policy designates a Research School as a Tier 1 Research Unit. The Menzies School of Health Research is currently the only Tier 1 Research Unit. Its arrangements are subject to the Menzies School of Health Research Act and accordingly this Policy

does not apply.

Tier 2 (Research Institute)

(15) A Research Institute assembles a large group of researchers (generally more than 10 FTE) whose academic disciplines collectively represent a body of expertise that is important to the Northern Territory. Most of the researchers associated with a Research Institute will perform above world standard in publication measures and above national standards in the attraction of resources and in the supervision of research students.

(16) Research Institutes will establish a committee or board including several external members who provide advice to the Research Institute Leadership and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation about strategic directions including funding sustainability, end-users' needs, and emerging opportunities.

Tier 3 (Research Centre)

(17) A Research Centre assembles a smaller group of researchers (generally at least 3 FTE), in comparison to a Research Institute and is designed to be disestablished when the interests of the founding research team change. Most of the researchers associated with a Research Centre will perform above world standard in publication measures and above national standards in the attraction of resources and in the supervision of research students.

(18) Research Centres must engage regularly with external stakeholders to ensure that the activity is strategic, responsive, and that related opportunities are identified.

Tier 4 (Flexible Units)

(19) A Research Unit with relatively informal arrangements may be named Hub, Lab/Laboratory, Program, Unit, Network, Community of Practice, or Special Interest Group.

Establishing a Research Unit

(20) The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation must consider the following matters and any other relevant issues in the establishment of a Research Unit:

a. Alignment of the plan of the proposed Research Unit with University plans, especially in relation to the contribution to university targets and performance indicators;
b. additionality to the University, including enhanced external profile, additional research activity, and complementarity to existing Academic and Research Units;
c. plans, capacity and track record for cross-College mobilisation of Staff to address important questions and/or societal challenges relevant to Northern Australia and its neighbourhood;
d. attractiveness to research students, including the promise of a vibrant and supportive scholarly environment;
e. contemporary, demonstrated capability of foundation Staff to attract external support and to participate in relevant national and international scholarly communities
f. endorsement by all Academic Units that will provide resources and Staff upon establishment; and
g. viability of the plan (research program, staff, finances) of the proposed Research Unit.

Active Status

(21) A Research Unit must include a group of research active staff members that fulfils the following requirements to achieve and maintain Active Status:

a. Tier 2 and Tier 3 Research Units / must:
    i. Maintain a current membership list in the University's Research Information System (RIS) that may be used to report on Research Unit activity;

ii. Submit an annual activity report to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation before the end of each calendar year, contextualised around the activity recorded in the Research Information System;
iii. Submit a rolling three-year operational plan and budget to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation by 31 August; and
iv. Undertake an external review every five (5) years or as required;

b. Tier 4 Research Units must:
i. Maintain a current membership list in the University's Research Information System (RIS) that may be used to report on Research Unit activity;
ii. Submit a brief annual report and plan to the Senior Manager of the Academic Unit and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation in a timely manner; and
iii. Undertake an internal or external review every five (5) years or as required;

(22) All Research Units must support the University's research positioning including a presence on the University's website, in capability statements, and other promotional material and channels.

Leadership

(23) All Research Units must have a leader, director, or other identified person who accepts responsibility for oversighting all activities of the Unit, and who is the point of contact between the Research Unit and the University. If no leader is currently appointed the role is undertaken by the Senior Manager of the Academic Unit with administrative responsibility for the Research Unit.

(24) The leader of a Tier 2 or Tier 3 Research Unit will be appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation in consultation with the Senior Manager of the Academic Unit. The leader is responsible to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation for the conduct of activities within the Unit and for maintaining Active Status.

(25) Leaders of Tier 4 Units are appointed by the Senior Manager of the Academic Unit.

Disestablishing Units

(26) In view of the flexibility and responsiveness enabled through the formation of Research Units, longevity is not a primary objective. A Research Unit will be disestablished if it does not maintain Active Status for two (2) consecutive years or as determined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President Research and Innovation.

Section 7 - Non-Compliance

(27) Non-compliance with Governance Documents is considered a breach of the Code of Conduct – Staff or the Code of Conduct – Students, as applicable, and is treated seriously by the University. Reports of concerns about non-compliance will be managed in accordance with the applicable disciplinary procedures outlined in the Charles Darwin University and Union Enterprise Agreement 2025 and the Code of Conduct – Students.

(28) Complaints may be raised in accordance with the Code of Conduct – Staff and Code of Conduct - Students.

(29) All staff members have an individual responsibility to raise any suspicion, allegation or report of fraud or corruption in accordance with the Fraud and Corruption Control Policy and Whistleblower Reporting (Improper Conduct) Procedure.

Status and Details

Status	Historic
Effective Date	15th January 2022
Review Date	15th January 2022
Approval Authority	Vice-Chancellor
Approval Date	20th December 2021
Expiry Date	30th July 2025
Responsible Executive	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890
Implementation Officer	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890
Enquiries Contact	Steve Rogers Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Community Connection +61 8 89466890

This policy document may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Printed copies, or parts thereof, are regarded as uncontrolled and should not be relied upon as the current version. It is the responsibility of staff printing this document to always refer to the Governance Document Library for the latest version.