

POLICY ON THE ESTABLISHMENT, MANAGEMENT, REPORTING AND REVIEW OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND CENTERS

(Endorsed by CORI on 6 January 2017; approved by UAC on 1 February 2017)

1. PREAMBLE

In the University's formative years, research institutes and centers were set up primarily to pursue mission-oriented research projects, with emphasis to build up our research capacity in focused areas, thus contributing to the fulfilment of our institutional mission "to assist in the economic and social development of Hong Kong".

Over the years many research institutes and centers have been set up, forming an important infrastructure underlying our research enterprise. In recent years, however, driven partly by rapid advances in science and technology, researchers have found an increasing need to collaborate across disciplines in their quest for new knowledge and research breakthroughs.

Our research institutes and centers have been evolving to meet these modern-day challenges/needs; to provide an integrated platform to support interdisciplinary and collaborative research efforts, serving as a nucleus for large scale and frontier research projects.

This document presents a consolidated and streamlined policy for the governance and management of research institutes and centers. It aims to guide research units in line with the University's strategic directions and operation guidelines and defines the reporting relationships and expectations of research institutes and centers. The governance of the HKUST Jockey Club Institute for Advanced Study (IAS), Institute for Public Policy (IPP), Fok Ying Tung Research Institute (FYTRI) at Nansha, Shenzhen Research Institute (SRI) and HKUST LED-FPD Technology R&D Center at Foshan are not covered under this Policy. The latter three research units, located on the Mainland, will report its status and progress to CORI via the Mainland Committee.

This Policy supersedes existing policies (below) governing research institutes/centers.

- Research Institutes: Organization and Reporting Relationships
(approved by UAC on 5 March 1996, and updated on 9 February 1998)
- Procedures for the Establishment and Review of Research Centers
(approved by UAC on 15 March 1999)
- The Establishment, Organization, Reporting and Review of Research Centers and Institutes
(approved by UAC on 21 February 2006, updates approved by UAC on 14 September 2006)

2. ROLE OF RESEARCH INSTITUTES/CENTERS

HKUST encourages faculty collaboration to spearhead and explore research challenges. Faculty members may organize themselves as a group, or laboratory, or any similar name, except research institute, research center and laboratories bearing the HKUST name, for which a formal application and approval process is required, as described in this policy.

The reasons for establishing such research units are similar, namely to:

- promote and enhance research collaboration, facilitate interdisciplinary and/or strengthen exploratory research among colleagues within the same department and/or between departments/schools;
- establish and develop a critical mass of research capability in a defined area of study, involving multiple faculty to increase impact;
- enhance the ability to secure external funding, in particular large scale research grants;
- increase visibility of the research at University, both locally and internationally;
- facilitate linkage between research and education; and
- enhance interaction with governmental and/or private sectors.

Research Institutes are typically large undertakings established at the institutional level, and are normally in line with the University's strategic development. They encompass a broad base of disciplines extending beyond the boundaries of traditional programs, departments, or schools, are expected to generate substantial external funding from multiple sources, and involve substantive, multi-investigator collaborations by faculty from different disciplines. Research institutes are expected to engage in education initiatives in collaboration with regular academic departments, as well as in community outreach.

Research institutes are characterized by organizational stability, with strong support from University and School(s), dedicated administrative staff and infrastructure, as well as evidence of long term sustainability. They may also establish new or host existing research centers and laboratories under it to enhance its research focus and foster a more synergistic and coherent research direction.

Research Centers / Laboratories bearing the HKUST name are usually research units established for a specific research focus. These research units must demonstrate the potential to create and foster synergy and enhance collaboration within the theme/topic. They are expected to be self-funded or sponsored by collaborating organizations, and may be defined by the duration or financial commitment of a particular project.

Research institutes and centers are platforms to support interdisciplinary and collaborative research efforts, involve multiple faculty, and have achievements greater than the sum of individual efforts. From past experience, research units can significantly benefit group-based research, providing platforms to become centers of excellence e.g. Areas of Excellence or Partner State Key Laboratories, or evolve from research centers into research institutes, delivering high impact research projects.

All research institutes and research centers are responsible to the VPRD. The VPRD will regularly discuss with the relevant Dean(s) on the performance, management and development of individual institute/center, as well as the review of its achievements and impact.

3. ESTABLISHMENT

A proposal for the establishment of a research institute or research center¹ will be considered by the University in a two-stage process, as follows.

3.1 Stage I (Probationary)

The proposal to establish a research institute/center should first be discussed with the relevant Head(s) of Department (HODs) and Dean(s), and then with VPRD. If all agree that the proposal is a reasonable and timely initiative, a formal written application² should be submitted to the VPRD, for the consideration of CORI (use Application Template).

The formal application should address:

- proposed name of research institute/center (in English and Chinese);
- rationale for establishing the research institute/center; provide reasons this activity cannot be housed within the existing academic structure; and the impact of this activity towards the University's goals and objectives;
- mission, goals and objectives;
- faculty participants;
- proposed research activities and programs, including education and knowledge transfer (KT), as appropriate;
- expected benefits and accomplishments to be achieved in 5 years, and impact to faculty participants' home department(s), School(s), and the University;
- deliverables to be achieved within 2 years;
- management and organization structure;
- names of proposed Director and Associate Director; and
- detailed budget including anticipated funding sources, resource requirements from University (if any), and funding alternatives in the event the anticipated funding sources do not materialize.

CORI may approve establishment of the research institute/center with probationary status for a period of two years.

3.2 Stage II (Full Recognition by University)

Before the end of the probationary period, the Director of a research institute/center must submit an application for full recognition to the VPRD, if the research unit seeks recognition by the University (use Self Evaluation Template). The application should address the requirements listed in the template, providing a basis for the evaluation of the research institute/center, and include the Plan for the next phase.

¹ Research institutes/centers may also be established with external funding and be designated as such by an external funding body or donor. All such proposals should be sent to the Research Office (Research Administration) for review and submission in the usual manner. Early coordination with the Development and Alumni Office (DAO) and/or the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) is expected.

² If the research center is to be established under or transferred to a research institute, the application should be submitted to the VPRD, following procedures prescribed above for research centers. Similarly, such research centers should follow the respective procedures prescribed for the management, reporting and review of research centers in this Policy.

The review of the application will be conducted by the VPRD, in consultation with the relevant Dean(s). The VPRD may also convene a review committee, involving internal and external members, as appropriate. The application together with the review recommendations will be presented for the consideration of CORI.

CORI has the authority to approve the full recognition by University of research centers and laboratories bearing the University's name. In the case of research institute, CORI will make a recommendation to UAC, for endorsement.

If no application for full recognition is submitted, the research institute/center will be presumed inactive and its recognition withdrawn.

4. MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATION

All research institutes/centers are expected to have an effective management structure, comprising at least the following, unless special circumstances dictate otherwise.

Research Institute	Research Center
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Director and an Associate Director • an internal Executive Committee • an external Advisory Committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a Director and an Associate Director • an internal Executive Committee

The research institute/center may also set up other sub-committees or ad-hoc committees as it deems appropriate to support the management of the institute/center, e.g. scientific committee, project management or review sub-committee.

4.1 Appointment of Director

The Director and Associate Director of a research institute/center are to be appointed by the VPRD in consultation with the Provost, and with recommendation from the relevant Dean(s). He/she should be a full time faculty at HKUST. For appointment as research institute director, the faculty has to be with a rank of Associate Professor or above.

4.2 Reporting Line of Director

The Director of a research institute/center provides the intellectual leadership and is also responsible for the overall performance and management of the institute/center, including planning and development, organization operation, management of activities and programs. The Director is responsible to the VPRD. This reporting arrangement pertains only to the functions of the institute/center. As an employee of the University, the Director reports to the Head of the unit to which his/her appointment belongs.

4.3 Executive Committee

Each research institute/center is expected to have an Executive Committee, to assist the Director to discharge his/her responsibilities. The Committee will be chaired by the Director, and includes the Associate Director and normally up to 4 faculty who are engaged in the institute/center's research activities. The composition of the Committee, and any change thereof, is to be approved by the VPRD.

4.4 Advisory Committee

Each research institute is expected to have an Advisory Committee to provide external advice to the Director and Executive Committee on the strategic priorities and long term development for the Institute, as well as to assist in attracting human, physical and/or financial resources.

The composition and nature of the Advisory Committee may vary depending on the individual Institute's needs. In general, there should be at least two external members, to be appointed by the VPRD in consultation with the Director, and at least two HKUST members, including the Dean and Director of the Institute. The composition of the Committee, and any change thereof, is to be approved by the VPRD. The Chair of the Committee is to be appointed by the VPRD.

5. REPORTING AND REVIEW

Research institutes/centers are expected to adhere to good general practices and governance.

5.1 Annual Reporting

The Director is expected to submit two documents by 31 August of each year to the VPRD. It should include:

- *Annual Report* – summarizing the activities and achievements for the period 1 July – 30 June, as well as plans for the following year [use Annual Report Template]; and
- *Fact Sheet* – an update of the institute/center, providing information on mission, objectives, areas of focus, management, organization, contacts, etc. [use Fact Sheet Template]

The VPRD will review the annual submissions, in consultation with the relevant Dean(s). The VPRD will also submit a report on research institutes/centers to the UAC annually, for information.

Research institutes/centers who do not submit the annual report and fact sheet may be deemed inactive.

5.2 Review

Periodic reviews of research institutes/centers are necessary to evaluate its effectiveness against the goals and objectives, and that the circumstances/reasons that led to its creation still exist.

For each review, the Director is required to submit a report (use Self Evaluation Template) to the VPRD describing the institute/center's achievements, providing a basis for the evaluation of the research institute/center, as well as the Plan for the next phase.

The review will be conducted by the VPRD, in consultation with the relevant Dean(s). The VPRD may also convene a review committee, involving internal and external members, as appropriate. The review shall recommend the continuation of the research institute/center, or adjustments to its organization/management/ operations, or sunset/closure if deemed to be inactive or unsatisfactory, for the consideration of CORI.

Research institutes shall be reviewed at the end of its probationary period, then 3 years after it received full recognition from the university, and every 5 years thereafter, while research centers shall be reviewed at the end of its probationary period, then 5 years after it received full recognition from the university, and every 5 years thereafter.

5.3 Criteria and Procedures to Sunset a Research Institute/Center

A research institute/center may be sunset (closed) if one or more of the following situations exists:

- the mission has been fully accomplished and no further need exists
- performance in attempting to fulfill its mission is judged to be unsatisfactory, e.g. failure to achieve agreed deliverables
- insufficient expertise to continue the research institute/center's work
- inability to achieve an acceptable level of external support
- failure to submit the Annual Report or the Self Evaluation, in a timely manner
- deemed inactive, e.g. no application for full recognition by the University upon completion of probationary period

CORI has the authority to sunset a research center, while in the case of research institutes, CORI will make a recommendation for the endorsement of the UAC.

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