

# TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

## POLICY OF SENATE

### RESEARCH CENTRES

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**Responsible Committee or Office:** Vice-President, Research and Innovation

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#### 1. Purpose

Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) is known for its interdisciplinary Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) Activities that cross department and Faculty boundaries. The University sees value in encouraging such strategic collaborations, the potential impact in bringing together a critical mass of researchers around a common theme, and facilitating the mutual benefits and visibility that researchers and the University may find in establishing Research Centres to support such work.

Scholarly, research and creative fields and the academic capacity of the institution evolve over time; therefore, Research Centres cannot be considered permanent fixtures and their continuation is dependent on performance and relevance, which must be reviewed on a regular basis.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the processes for the establishment, operation, review, renewal and discontinuation of Research Centres at TMU, including a framework for determining their governance, reporting and review obligations, with the goals of facilitating Research Centres' attainment of excellence and realization of their missions, ensuring transparency, accountability and coordination of effort within the University, and minimizing the liabilities of the Research Centres and the University.

#### 2. Application and Scope

This policy applies to all Research Centres at the University and those groups seeking to establish a Research Centre. While certain Research Centres may use cognate titles

such as “institute” or “hub”, such titles alone do not imply differences in structure or function and thus do not bring the entity outside the scope of this policy.

This policy does not apply to (i) entities whose function is primarily physical, administrative, or academic; (ii) zones or other incubator/accelerator programs; or (iii) sole faculty member labs or research teams.

### 3. Definitions

- 3.1 **Research Centre** is typically an interdisciplinary group of Toronto Metropolitan researchers who have been formally brought together under a common theme or area to create and disseminate knowledge associated with the theme or area. A Research Centre may undertake activities that are not specifically research focused including knowledge dissemination, policy, capacity building or education, but its primary purpose should be SRC Activity. The specific title of the Research Centre is not determinative in any regard as to its inclusion in this definition.
- 3.2 **Faculty Research Centre** is a research entity established and funded at the faculty-level that advances the strategic SRC priorities of the Faculty(s) and reports directly to the relevant Dean(s) through its governance framework.
- 3.3 **University Research Centre** is a research entity established and funded at the institutional-level that advances the strategic SRC priorities of the University and reports directly to the Vice-President, Research and Innovation through its governance framework.
- 3.4 **“SRC Activity”** means funded and non-funded creative, scholarly, and/or knowledge-generating activities, whether fundamental or applied, whose primary objective is discovery, problem-solving, or to achieve some desired result that can be specified to a significant extent but that cannot be produced with existing knowledge. SRC Activity is undertaken in the course of an individual’s role at the University, and is made, discovered or developed using the University facilities, support personnel, support services, equipment, materials or funds, or otherwise under the auspices of the University.

### 4. Values and Principles

- 4.1 Research Centres should build upon and reflect the existing and potential SRC strengths and priority areas within a Faculty or the University.

- 4.2 Research Centres are created and operated on the principles of mutual benefit and mutual obligation between the Research Centre and the Faculty/University.
- 4.3 Each Research Centre will have a clearly defined mission that supports the major strategic SRC objectives of the Faculty and/or University, and adds value to the Faculty and/or the University and/or the communities they serve.
- 4.4 The mission and activities of the Research Centre should not duplicate those accomplished by an existing department/school or Research Centre within the Faculty/University, and proposed new Research Centres should be reviewed in the context of other activities that are ongoing within the University to ensure that the University's overall effort in a given field of inquiry is strengthened.
- 4.5 Research Centres often, though not always, are inter-departmental or inter-Faculty in character, providing opportunities for new relationships within the Faculty, the University, or broader intellectual and other communities.
- 4.6 Each Research Centre should typically be directed by a tenured faculty member, except when justified in extraordinary circumstances.
- 4.7 A Research Centre's focus should be defined broadly enough to attract the intellectual and professional participation of a critical mass of faculty members, post-doctoral researchers, and graduate students and undergraduate students should be involved in a Research Centre's work and activities in significant and systematic ways.
- 4.8 A Research Centre should only be formed when several faculty members, at a minimum, plan to be dedicated to the work of the Research Centre, and the Research Centre's viability does not depend on the work of a single faculty member.
- 4.9 Research Centres bring value to the University and while they typically receive Faculty/University funding and support, a plan that ensures their fiscal viability is required.
- 4.10 Upon creation or renewal, the University (Dean(s) for Faculty or Vice-President, Research and Innovation for University) will document, in a transparent manner, the commitment for sustainable infrastructure and support that will be provided by the University to the Research Centre for a five year term.

- 4.11 The Research Centre, through its leadership, is accountable for the efficient and effective operations and progress of its mandate as agreed to upon its creation or renewal.
- 4.12 Research Centres must ensure and demonstrate the University's commitment to equity, diversity, inclusion and access.
- 4.13 Research Centres operate with academic independence, transparency and accountability, and are subject to all applicable University policies, procedures and guidelines.
- 4.14 Research Centres are created, supported, reviewed, and renewed or discontinued in a transparent manner.

## **5. Policy**

### **5.1 Research Centre Creation**

- 5.1.1 Research Centres are normally established for a five-year renewable term.
- 5.1.2 Participating researchers seeking to establish a Research Centre must prepare a proposal that outlines:
  - 5.1.2.1 The proposed Research Centre name;
  - 5.1.2.2 The Research Centre's proposed Terms of Reference, containing elements itemized in Appendix A;
  - 5.1.2.3 The potential importance of the SRC activities and a statement of how the Research Centre aligns with the Academic Plan, Strategic Research Plan and, in the case of a Faculty Research Centre, Faculty research priorities;
  - 5.1.2.4 Any unique and distinguishing features of the Research Centre, and any intersection of the proposed Research Centre with other Research Centres, programs or endeavors of the University;
  - 5.1.2.5 The anticipated impacts on the Faculty or the University including associated Administrative Units, Academic Departments and Schools and Academic Programs and the Library;
  - 5.1.2.6 The proposed scope of activities, outputs and evaluation metrics
  - 5.1.2.7 How the Research Centre will uphold the values and principles of equity, diversity, inclusion and access;
  - 5.1.2.8 A proposed budget including expenditures and sources of income, both internal and external;

- 5.1.2.9 Any physical requirements, including any specialized equipment, office and/or research space; and
  - 5.1.2.10 Proposed members and membership categories with CVs of the associated faculty and staff.
- 5.1.3 Proposals for Faculty Research Centres must first be submitted to and approved by the appropriate Dean(s) to move forward for consultation. Proposals for University Research Centres must first be submitted to and approved by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation to move forward for consultation.
- 5.1.4 To avoid duplication and overlap with existing University activities the new Research Centre's proponents should consult widely across the Faculty/University community on their proposal.
- 5.1.5 At a minimum, all proposals for new Research Centres must be posted on the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation website for a minimum of 14 days to allow for review and comments by any interested member of the Toronto Metropolitan community. The proponents should consider all such comments and feedback received as a result of the consultation process and make any necessary adjustments to their proposal as a result.
- 5.1.6 The relevant Dean(s), for Faculty Research Centres, or the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, for University Research Centres, submits the revised proposal and response to feedback to the Senate SRC Activity Committee.
- 5.1.7 Faculty Research Centres will go to Senate for information as part of the Senate SRC Activity Committee report. University Research Centres that are recommended by the Senate SRC Activity Committee will go to Senate as part of the regular agenda.
- 5.1.8 New Research Centres will have a probationary period for their first year of operation. At the end of the first year of operation, each new Research Centre will be reviewed with respect to the attainment of the milestones described in its plan for creation. The annual report will form the basis for the review. At that time, the Research Centre will be:
- 5.1.8.1 Removed from probation, with review and renewal due in four years; or
  - 5.1.8.2 Given a year's extension with the expectation of meeting a set of well-defined deliverables; or
  - 5.1.8.3 Reclassified; or

5.1.8.4 Discontinued.

## 5.2 Research Centre Operation

- 5.2.1 Once approved a Research Centre must operate in accordance with its approved terms of reference, budget, administrative structure and approved activity plan.
- 5.2.2 All Research Centres must provide to the Dean(s), in the case of a Faculty Research Centre, or the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, in the case of a University Research Centre, an annual report by June 30<sup>th</sup> of each year. The annual report will report on:
  - 5.2.2.1 The SRC Activities (current and anticipated);
  - 5.2.2.2 The degree to which the Research Centre has met the stated annual objectives and milestones;
  - 5.2.2.3 How the Research Centre is contributing to the SRC objectives established for the Faculty / University;
  - 5.2.2.4 Its financial statement for the previous year and its proposed budget for the following year; and
  - 5.2.2.5 The next year's activity plan with milestones.
- 5.2.3 The Research Centre must post at a minimum, an Executive Summary of the Annual Report to the Research Centre's website by September 1<sup>st</sup> of each year.
- 5.2.4 All Research Centres and Research Centre staff and affiliated researchers are subject to the existing policies and procedures of the University and are expected to work with the relevant units of the University including University Advancement, the Office of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, Campus Facilities and the Research Ethics Board with respect to any activities they may undertake.
- 5.2.5 Any modifications to a Research Centre terms of reference must be approved by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or Dean(s) as appropriate and documented in the Research Centre's next annual report.

## 5.3 Review and Renewal or Discontinuation

- 5.3.1 All Research Centres that pass the probationary period will be subject to a five year review.

- 5.3.2 The five-year review will be initiated by the Dean(s) for Faculty Research Centres and by the Vice-President, Research and Innovation for University Research Centres 12 months in advance of the expiry of the current term.
- 5.3.3 The process of review begins with a self-assessment report on the Research Centre provided by the Director to the Dean(s) or Vice-President, Research and Innovation as appropriate. On the basis of this report as well as a review of annual reports, the Dean(s) for Faculty Research Centres and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation for University Research Centres shall determine whether an independent review should be conducted by an appropriate peer group established by the Dean(s)/Vice-President, Research and Innovation.
- 5.3.4 Renewal decisions should be based on an assessment of:
- 5.3.4.1 Past performance as outlined in annual reports and feedback letters
  - 5.3.4.2 Financial sustainability;
  - 5.3.4.3 Continuing mandate and effectiveness of purpose, mission and objectives as outlined in the Research Centre's Terms of Reference;
  - 5.3.4.4 Impact/outcomes measured against the Research Centre's stated goals and plans. Specifically, the impact of a Research Centre must be demonstrated to enhance research over and above what would have been accomplished by individual faculty members;
  - 5.3.4.5 How well the Research Centre's current activities and future plans align with the strategic priorities of the Faculty and/or University; and
  - 5.3.4.6 Whether the designation as a Faculty and/or University Research Centre should continue and/or change as identified in the review.
- 5.3.5 In the event that a Research Centre's designation is assessed as requiring a change from a Faculty and/or University Research Centre, discussions must take place between the relevant Dean(s) and/or Vice-President, Research and Innovation and the relevant governance framework followed.
- 5.3.6 Upon the completion of the review the Dean(s)/Vice-President, Research and Innovation will communicate a written determination to renew or discontinue to the Research Centre. The Research Centre has 14 days to provide a written response to be considered by the Dean(s)/Vice-President, Research and Innovation.

5.3.7 The Dean(s)/Vice-President, Research and Innovation may place any conditions on the renewal including a probationary period which would necessitate a subsequent annual review as set out above. Renewal and discontinuation decisions will be communicated to Senate via the Senate SRC Activity Committee report.

5.3.8 At any point outside the review process a Research Centre may be discontinued in the event:

5.3.8.1 A majority of members of the Research Centre vote for discontinuation; and/or

5.3.8.2 A qualified Director has not been found within 18 months; and/or

5.3.8.3 The Research Centre has fulfilled its stated goals and has no plans for future activities; and/or

5.3.8.4 Lack of submission of annual reports for a period of two years; and/or

5.3.8.5 The Research Centre no longer meets the mandate articulated in its terms of reference or fulfills the requirements described in this policy.

5.3.9 In any case the University has the right to discontinue a Research Centre at any point due to financial exigency.

5.3.10 In the case where it has been determined that a Research Centre should be discontinued, the Dean(s) or Vice-President, Research and Innovation, in close consultation with the Research Centre Director, should initiate a discontinuation process. In any such process care should be taken regarding human resources, financial and contractual issues.

## 5.4 Identification

The designation of Centre, Institute or other wording that implies recognition as a Research Centre can only be used by an entity once it has fulfilled the approval process as set out in section 5.1 of this Policy.

## 6. Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 The Dean(s) for Faculty Research Centres or the Vice-President, Research and Innovation for University Research Centres has the responsibility to:

6.1.1 Oversee the governance and budgets of Research Centres;

6.1.2 Receive the annual report of each Research Centre and review its activities including its financial management and compliance with



- university policies, and respond to the annual report with feedback to the Research Centre's Director by August 31 of each year;
- 6.1.3 Establish a schedule and conduct a review of each Research Centre according to the terms set out in this policy;
- 6.1.4 Support the promotion of Research Centres, their activities, and accomplishments.
- 6.2 The Vice-President, Research and Innovation and Deans of Faculties may participate as members of Research Centres but should not act as Director of a Research Centre.
- 6.3 In circumstances where the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or Dean is a member of a University or Faculty-based Research Centre, a declaration of a conflict of interest will be made and the Provost will assign a delegate to act in the role of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation for University Research Centres and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation will assign a delegate for Faculty Research Centres.
- 6.4 It is the responsibility of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or designate to ensure compliance with and implementation of this policy.

## **7. Related Documents**

Policy 143: Policy on the Indirect Costs Associated with Scholarly, Research and Creative (SRC) Funding

## Appendix A: Terms of Reference Elements

A Research Centre will operate based on an approved terms of reference that articulates:

1. Centre mandate, mission and objectives.
2. Membership
  - 2.1 Categories such as member, ex-officio member, associate member, corporate member, student member.
  - 2.2 Eligibility for membership.
  - 2.3 Membership rights and responsibilities (e.g. voting, statement of affiliation).
  - 2.4 Term of membership.
  - 2.5 Procedures for the election and/or appointment of members.
3. Administrative structure
  - 3.1 A description of the proposed powers, duties, responsibilities, and term of the Director(s).
  - 3.2 A description of the proposed powers, duties, responsibilities, term, and general composition of the Management and/or Advisory Board:
    - 3.2.1 Whatever entity is proposed must include, for University-based Research Centres, one designate of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or, for Faculty-based Research Centres, one designate of the relevant Dean(s).
  - 3.3 A description of the proposed governance structure, including the relationship between the Director(s), the Management and/or Advisory Board, and the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or Dean(s) as appropriate.
  - 3.4 In the case of a Research Centre tied to multiple institutions and/or faculties, identification of a lead faculty to undertake the responsibilities outlined in the Policy.
  - 3.5 Specification of term limits, if desired, for the Director(s) and for Members of the Management and/or Advisory Board.
  - 3.6 A process for the selection of the Director(s) initially and for renewal or replacement at the end of the specified term.
  - 3.7 A process for filling vacancies:
    - 3.7.1 If a Director takes an approved leave or steps down before the end of the specified term.
    - 3.7.2 On the Management and/or Advisory Board.

3.8 A process for the Research Centre general operation including resources and sources of revenue (e.g. preparation, submission and implementation of an annual budget and work plan).

4. Closure

4.1 Notice of discontinuation.

4.2 Disposition of assets upon closure.

4.3 Allowance for costs related to closure to be included in the budget for the final year of operation.