

# TORONTO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY POLICY OF SENATE

## RESEARCH CENTRES

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### 1. Purpose

Toronto Metropolitan University 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 Centers to support such work.

Scholarly, research and creative fields and the academic capacity of the institution evolve over time; therefore, Research Centers 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 Centers at Toronto Metropolitan, including a framework for determining their governance, reporting and review obligations, with the goals of facilitating Research Centers' 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 Centers and the University.

### 2. Application and Scope

This policy applies to all Research Centers at the University and those groups seeking to establish a Research Centre. While certain Research Centers 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) centres whose function is primarily physical, administrative, or academic; (ii) zones or other incubator/accelerator programs; or (iii) sole faculty member labs or research groups.

### 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 at the faculty level that advances the specific strategic SRC priorities of the Faculty and reports to a Dean(s) through its governance framework.
- 3.3 **University Research Centre** is an institutional-level entity that advances the specific strategic SRC priorities of the University and reports directly to the Vice-President, Research and Innovation through its governance framework.

### 4. Values and Principles

- 4.1 Research Centers should build upon and reflect the existing and potential SRC strengths and priority areas within a Faculty or the University.
- 4.2 Research Centers 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 Centers 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 Centers 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 not be formed except in circumstances in which several faculty members, at least, plan to be seriously involved in 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 Centers bring value to the University and while they typically receive University funding and support, they should have a plan that ensures their fiscal viability.
- 4.10 Upon creation or renewal, the University (Dean(s) for Faculty and 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 Research Centers must demonstrate the University's commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.
- 4.12 Research Centers operate with academic independence, transparency and accountability, and are subject to all applicable University policies, procedures and guidelines.

- 4.13 Research Centers are created, supported, reviewed, and renewed or discontinued in a transparent manner.

## 5. Policy

### 5.1 Research Centre Creation

- 5.1.1 Research Centers 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 Centers, 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, and inclusion
  - 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.
  - 5.1.2.10 Proposed members and membership categories with CVs of the associated faculty and staff.

- 5.1.3 Proposals for Faculty Research Centers must first be submitted to and approved by the appropriate Dean(s) to move forward for consultation. Proposals for University Research Centers 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 Centers 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 Centers, or the Vice-President Research and Innovation, for University Research Centers, submits the revised proposal and response to feedback to the Senate SRC Activity Committee.
- 5.1.7 Faculty Research Centers will go to Senate for information as part of the Senate SRC Committee report. University Research Centers that are recommended by the Senate SRC Committee will go to Senate as part of the regular agenda.
- 5.1.8 New Research Centers 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 Centers 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
  - 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 Centers 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 Centers 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 Centers and by the Vice-President Research and Innovation for University Research Centers 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 Centers and the Vice-President Research and Innovation for University Research Centers 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 and continuing purpose
  - 5.3.4.3 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
  - 5.3.4.4 how well the Research Centre's current activities and future plans align with the strategic priorities of the Faculty and/or University.
- 5.3.5 Upon the completion of the review the Dean(s) / Vice-President Research and Innovation will communicate a written determination to renew or discontinue 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.
- 5.3.6 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.

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

5.3.7.1 A majority of members of the Research Centre vote for discontinuation.

5.3.7.2 A qualified Director has not been found within 18 months.

5.3.7.3 The Research Centre has fulfilled its stated goals and has no plans for future activities.

5.3.7.4 Lack of submission of annual reports for a period of two years.

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

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

5.3.9 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**

No research lab, group or other entity of the University that undertakes research activities should use the designation of Centre, Institute or other wording that implies recognition as a Research Centre by a Faculty of the University without having first fulfilled the approval process set out in this policy.

## **6. Roles and Responsibilities**

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

- 6.1.1 oversee the governance and budgets of Research Centers
  - 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 Centers, their activities, and accomplishments
- 6.2 The Vice-President Research and Innovation and Deans of Faculties may participate as members of Research Centers 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 Centers and the Vice-President Research and Innovation will assign a delegate for Faculty Research Centers.
- 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 Centers, one designate of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or, for Faculty-based Research Centers, 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 Specification of term limits, if desired, for the Director(s) and for Members of the Management and/or Advisory Board
  - 3.5 A process for the selection of the Director(s) initially and for renewal or replacement at the end of the specified term
  - 3.6 A process for filling vacancies
    - 3.6.1 if a Director takes an approved leave or steps down before the end of the specified term
    - 3.6.2 on the Management and/or Advisory Board
  - 3.7 A process for the Research Centre general operation (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.