

PROCEDURE TITLE	PROCEDURES FOR RESEARCH UNITS
Executive Sponsor	Vice-President (Research and Innovation)
Initial Approval Date	December 14, 2023
Date of Last Review	n/a
Related Documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policy on Research Entities - Procedures for Core Facilities - Administrative Handbook for Core Facilities

1. Purpose and Scope

- 1.1** In support of the *Policy on Research Entities* (“Policy”), the *Procedures for Research Units* (“Procedures”) set out protocols with regard to the establishment, governance, leadership, membership and/or usership, resource allocation, reporting, review and termination of University Research Units.
- 1.2** The Procedures are to be read in conjunction with the Policy. All items identified in these Procedures will have the meaning given to them in the Policy.
- 1.3** Research Units are generally categorized as "research centre" or “research institute" depending on the nature and context of the Research Unit in question. However, in these Procedures, the term Research Unit is used throughout this document and will be understood to include all entities that meet the description herein, whether identified as a research centre or research institute.
- 1.4** Research Units are expected to have a life cycle extending beyond the term of a single grant and are established with long-term research objectives. Certain provincial or federal programs may fund multi-institutional entities using similar nomenclature such as research centre, which do not fall within the scope of the Policy and these Procedures unless a proposal has been submitted for its establishment as a Research Unit. In such cases, only the McGill portion of these multi-institutional entities will be covered by the Policy and these Procedures.

2. Definition

- 2.1** As established by the Policy, Research Units are approved by University governance bodies and are established to bring together relevant researchers and increase focus on a specific area or topic. They enhance research and training activities through clearly defined objectives while providing a structure to support their activities that complements the academic goals of Faculties. They foster partnerships both nationally and internationally with academic and industry stakeholders and may promote interdisciplinary research and knowledge translation. Research Units are expected to have and sustain external funding to support their activities and serve as vehicles for fund-raising campaigns of the University and other strategic initiatives. They are initiated by researchers within a single Faculty or multiple Faculties, in which case a Lead Faculty is selected to ensure accountability.

2.2 Research Units must:

- focus on research topics, whether fundamental or applied, where McGill researchers have demonstrated strength relative to peer groups in Canada and internationally,
- group a critical mass of McGill faculty members (e.g., 10+), building on complementary strengths,
- designate a Director with oversight of the research program and administrative responsibility for the Research Unit,
- have a designated Lead Faculty,
- maintain an appropriate level of research funding over time through a possible number of funding sources,
- demonstrate a sustainable annual budget for operations relative to size and scope.

3. Faculty Guidelines

In line with the Policy, each Faculty must develop guidelines to implement processes for the establishment, operation, review, and termination of Research Units. These guidelines will be adapted to the scope, needs and particularities of each Faculty.

4. Establishment

4.1 All faculty members interested in creating a new Research Unit will have a pre-planning meeting with the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation), who will ensure other stakeholders, such as the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice-President (Academic), are consulted as needed. The key stakeholders will be brought into a pre-planning meeting to allow for a more seamless process of approvals and for a discussion around required templates and documents.

4.2 Faculty members interested in creating a new Research Unit have two options:

- 4.2.1** If they do not yet meet the full criteria outlined in Section 2.2, they may first seek provisional status as explained in Section 4.3 or
- 4.2.2** If they already meet the full criteria outlined in Section 2.2, they may seek full governance recognition without going through provisional status according to Section 4.4.

4.3 Provisional Status

- 4.3.1** Provisional status will be granted at the discretion of the Lead Faculty Dean upon receipt, at any time, of a short proposal (2-3 pages) that outlines details such as: Research Unit mission and objectives, research program and training, Faculties involved and membership, fit with the Faculty's or Faculties' strategic plan, governance model, secured and anticipated funding, and a financial plan.
- 4.3.2** Provisional status will be granted for up to 36 months (non-renewable), by the Lead Faculty Dean, and other Faculty Deans involved as applicable, who will inform the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).

- 4.3.3** A group of faculty members who obtained provisional status of a Research Unit must then seek approval and prepare a proposal in consultation with and under the guidance of the Lead Faculty and other Faculties involved, before the 36-month provisional time period.

4.4 Full Governance Recognition

- 4.4.1** To guide prospective new Research Units, the Lead Faculty will provide a proposal template with required headings and instructions. A generic proposal template to support Faculties will be available through the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).
- 4.4.2** In addition, letters of support from all involved Faculty Deans that outline resource allocations for space and operations must be appended to the proposal.
- 4.4.3** All proposals must be submitted to all Faculties involved for approval. Following approval, the Lead Faculty will submit the proposal and all supporting documents to the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation). Proposals can be submitted at any time during the year.
- 4.4.4** The Proposal will be reviewed by the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) according to the criteria in Section 2.2 and to:
- ensure suitability and fit with the purpose and scope of the Policy and the present Procedures,
 - determine the representation of the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) in the governance of the Research Unit,
 - check Faculty commitments of resources and space,
 - validate a sustainable financial plan,
 - ensure that the performance metrics proposed to assess progress and impact against the Unit's stated research objectives are appropriate.
- 4.4.5** The Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) will present all new Research Unit proposals to the Research Advisory Council once a year for assessment and approval.
- 4.4.6** Once approved by the Research Advisory Council, proposals will be submitted to the Academic Policy Committee, the Senate, and the Board of Governors for approval.

5. Governance

- 5.1** A Research Unit will be under the purview of the Lead Faculty Dean.
- 5.2** For Research Units associated with more than one Faculty, the Deans will decide, in consultation with the Vice-President (Research and Innovation), which Faculty shall be the designated Lead Faculty. The Deans may agree that the designated Lead Faculty may be changed or alternated at any time.
- 5.3** Each Research Unit must have a governance body, named and adapted to its size and scope, that provides strategic direction, management guidance, and ensures accountability of the activities of the Research Unit.

- 5.4** The Lead Faculty Dean is responsible for forming, chairing and appointing members to the governance body, which shall be composed at a minimum of: the Lead Faculty Dean or delegate as Chair, Deans or delegates from each of the Faculties involved, the Director, two Regular Members of the Research Unit, and at least one member from every other membership category in section 7.1 as applicable.
- 5.5** The Vice-President (Research and Innovation) or delegate will serve as a member of a Research Unit's governance body.
- 5.6** The governance body must meet annually at the invitation of the Lead Faculty Dean to review activities and membership, assess progress and performance, approve the annual report, the annual budget for operations, and provide guidance for any issues that may arise.
- 5.7** Research Units must have a website with information about their mission statement, research objectives, membership and research activities.
- 5.8** As per Section 4.7 of the Policy, all Research Units must follow all applicable University policies and procedures. In addition, they must have written by-laws that align with the Policy, Procedures and their Lead Faculty's guidelines for matters such as:
- the mandate of all the Unit's relevant governance bodies,
 - nominations and appointments to the Unit's governance bodies,
 - appointment and length of service of Director, and if relevant, the Associate Director,
 - management and operations,
 - resources,
 - classification and terms of members,
 - financial matters such as budget and allocation of funding,
 - reporting and review,
 - termination process.
- 5.9** Research Unit governance documents will be included as part of the institutional approval process for full governance recognition as outlined in Section 4.4. Subsequent modifications will be submitted to the Research Unit's governance body for approval.

6. Leadership

- 6.1** Research Units will be led by a Director, who is appointed by, reports to, and is accountable to the Lead Faculty Dean, for a fixed term of 4 years, renewable.
- 6.2** The Director must hold a tenure-track/tenured academic faculty appointment at McGill University. Any terms and conditions of employment related to this mandate such as, but not limited to, a stipend or teaching release, is determined at the discretion of the Lead Faculty Dean. It is recommended that such terms and conditions are confirmed in writing in a letter to the Director.
- 6.3** The search for a Director may involve external recruitment and will follow all established University policies, procedures, and protocols.

6.4 The Director is responsible for the overall direction of the Research Unit and is accountable for its operations and financial management to the Research Unit's governance body as described in Section 5.3 under the purview of Lead Faculty Dean.

6.5 Research Units may also have Associate Directors, if deemed relevant, and shall follow the same protocols under sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3.

7. Membership

7.1 Research Units will adhere to the following classification of membership:

- Regular Member is a McGill academic faculty member who conducts most of their research within the scope of the Faculty Research Unit.
- Associate Member is a McGill academic faculty member who collaborates with Regular Members of the Faculty Research Unit.
- Affiliate Member* is an external member (non-McGill) from other institutions, whether academic or non-academic.
- Trainee Member is a McGill undergraduate student, graduate student, postdoctoral fellow, postdoctoral scholar or postdoctoral researcher.

*As per section 1.3, if the Research Unit is a multi-institutional entity, only the McGill portion will adhere to these membership categories. As such, affiliate members that are external to McGill may also be considered as regular members within the overall scope of the multi-institutional entity.

7.2 A Research Unit will submit an updated list of its membership to the governance body annually as part of their annual report.

7.3 Membership in a Research Unit will be for a stated term as determined by its by-laws, as indicated in section 5.8.

7.4 All Research Units will make their membership publicly available, for example via their website.

8. Resource Allocation

8.1 The Lead Faculty Dean will determine the level of Faculty financial support and space allocation to the Research Unit. If applicable, Deans of other Faculties involved will determine their level of contribution.

8.2 Research Units must maintain an appropriate level of sponsored research funding and revenues for collaborative research activities.

8.3 Research Units must have a budget for operations that covers costs associated with support staff salaries and other operational expenses, relative to size and scope. The operating budget must be tracked and reported separately from the research budget.

9. Reporting

- 9.1** Research Units will submit an annual report (May 1 to April 30 of previous year) to their governance body to ensure the scientific and financial accountability of their activities and progress of their mission.
- 9.2** While the overall format of annual reports is at the discretion of the Lead Faculty, the annual report must contain an appendix with information related to the Research Unit's finances and performance metrics which is submitted to the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) in July each year. The appendix will be available through the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).

10. Review

- 10.1** The Lead Faculty is responsible for conducting all reviews of Research Units that fall within its purview and will have specific protocols in place in terms of frequency of and process for review, in accordance with Section 3. The Lead Faculty may choose to collaborate with the Office of Academic Reviews within the Office of the Provost and Executive Vice-President (Academic) pursuant to the *Regulations on Academic Reviews*.
- 10.2** Research Units will receive their designation for six-year terms.
- 10.3** New Research Units will undergo a mid-term review in the third year to allow for an assessment of the Unit's research mission, objectives, priorities, activities and achievements, progress on its performance metrics, capacity to leverage external funding and to allow for a comparison to equivalent units in peer institutions, with a view to improving quality and maintaining research excellence, followed by a review in the sixth year to assess progress.
- 10.4** After the initial six-year term, reviews of Research Units will take place every six years to ensure progress of the Research Unit's research objectives and to offer guidance to the Research Unit in the development of any new goals and objectives.
- 10.5** Review assessments and any recommendations will be submitted by the Lead Faculty to the Research Unit's governance body, which will determine a course of action to address any points raised during the review. A copy of the report and recommendations will be submitted to the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).
- 10.6** To facilitate Faculty planning for reviews, the Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) will maintain a schedule for the review of all Research Units and will communicate with Faculties which Research Units are scheduled for review.
- 10.7** The Office of the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) will provide an update on the status of all Research Units to the Senate and Board of Governors annually.

11. Termination

The Vice-President (Research and Innovation) has the ultimate authority to terminate the activities of a Research Unit. Termination may take on one of the following forms:

11.1 Voluntary Closure

- 11.1.1** A Research Unit's governance body may recommend to the Lead Faculty Dean to close a Research Unit voluntarily.
- 11.1.2** The Director will inform the Lead Faculty Dean in writing, who shall make a recommendation to the Vice-President (Research and Innovation).
- 11.1.3** The Vice-President (Research and Innovation) will provide written confirmation of the closure to the Director in writing, with a copy to the Lead Faculty Dean and Deans of other Faculties involved, as applicable.

11.2 Following Review

- 11.2.1** The Lead Faculty Dean may make a recommendation to the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) to terminate the activities of a Research Unit following review.
- 11.2.2** The decision to terminate a Research Unit will be communicated in writing by the Vice-President (Research and Innovation) to the Director, with a copy to the Lead Faculty Dean.

11.3 Non-compliance

- 11.3.1** The Vice-President (Research and Innovation), following consultation with the relevant Faculty Dean(s), reserves the right to terminate a Research Unit at any time due to institutional risks such as those involving financial exigencies, non-compliance with regulations, or any other serious concerns, with due consideration to human resources, policies, contractual obligations, and employment standards.
- 11.4** A reasonable phase-out period from the termination end date may be granted to conclude affairs with due consideration to human resources, policies, contractual obligations, and employment standards.