

Centres and Institutes Procedure

UNSW Centres and Institutes (C&I) support the University's research, education and engagement capabilities by bringing together expertise across schools and faculties. This procedure sets out the types of C&I at UNSW, minimum operating requirements, and the processes for establishment, monitoring and closure.

1. UNSW Centres & Institutes

While C&Is may vary in scale and disciplinary focus, all must meet core institutional requirements to ensure consistency, accountability, and alignment with UNSW's strategic priorities.

UNSW C&Is must demonstrate:

- **Strategic Contribution:** deliver societal impact through research, teaching, and/or community engagement activities that cannot be readily accommodated within existing structures.
- **Collaborative Focus:** demonstrate significant external engagement and operate with a critical mass of UNSW staff.
- **Institutional Alignment:** be governed under UNSW structures and contribute to the University's strategic goals.
- **Operational Viability:** be appropriately resourced (personnel, space and budget), financially sustainable, and supported by infrastructure and systems. They must demonstrate performance against established metrics for success.

UNSW C&I are classified as follows:

1.1. UNSW Research Centres & Institutes (RC&I)

- 1.1.1. **UNSW Research Centres** bring together researchers around a defined research focus. Research Centres may be single- or interdisciplinary. They may also play a role in teaching, engagement with research end-users, and wider community activities.
- 1.1.2. **UNSW Research Institutes** are larger, longer-term, collaborative entities that support interdisciplinary research. They position UNSW as a leader in their field and maintain strong internal and external partnerships. Research Institutes are expected to contribute to teaching (including HDR supervision) and external engagement, including with research end-users.

1.2. UNSW Community Centres & Institutes (CC&I)

Community Centres and Institutes address societal challenges with a focus on outreach, community engagement and education, aligned with UNSW's strategic priorities.

1.3. Exclusions

External Centres and Institutes are established through external funding (e.g., ARC Centre of Excellence, philanthropic donation) and typically involve several organisations working towards a shared mission. Governance, reporting and operational requirements are defined by the relevant funding and legal agreements and are outside the scope of this procedure.

This procedure also does not apply to:

- a small number of administrative or service units that historically carry the name 'Centre' (e.g., Mark Wainwright Analytical Centre)
- independent Medical Research Institutes (MRI) that have an affiliation agreement with UNSW.

2. Baseline requirements and operating guidance

2.1. All UNSW C&I (RC&I and CC&I) must:

- be hosted within a single UNSW faculty (the presiding faculty)
- have secured operational funding and diversified income streams
- have agreed infrastructure support from participating schools or faculties
- have appropriate financial and administrative systems, including a dedicated cost centre, and
- use 'UNSW Centre' or 'UNSW Institute' in the formal name and in branding; only entities established under, and compliant with, this procedure may use the terms 'Centre' or 'Institute'.

2.2. Operating guidance

Detailed guidance on establishment, operation, monitoring, reporting and closure is set out in the [C&I Operating Instruction](#).

3. UNSW Research Centres & Institutes

3.1. Tier classification

UNSW classifies its RC&I into three tiers based on scope, scale and complexity.

Tier 1 RC&I:

- involve multiple faculties and are interdisciplinary in their research focus, and/or
- operate at scale (personnel, research income and / or infrastructure).

Tier 2 RC&I:

- are hosted within a single faculty, and
- have a targeted, faculty-aligned research scope.

Tier 3 RC&I:

- are hosted within a single school, and
- have a focussed, school-aligned research scope.

3.2. Establishment

Proposals for a new RC&I must demonstrate value beyond what can be achieved by individual researchers, schools, or faculties alone. Proposals must:

- clearly articulate the unique benefits and outcomes that justify the creation of a new RC&I
- outline the structure, governance, and duration (mandate) of the RC&I, appropriate to its scale, scope, and intended impact
- consider legal, financial, reputational and operational risks, and outline mitigation strategies
- demonstrate consultation and alignment with relevant faculties and central divisions.

3.3. Monitoring

Monitoring ensures RC&I remain aligned with UNSW's strategic priorities and deliver agreed outcomes throughout their mandate. Monitoring requirements are proportionate to tier.

Monitoring activities include:

- annual reporting by all RC&I on performance, governance, and financial status
- end-of-mandate review to determine renewal, extension, or closure.

3.4. Closure

RC&I may be closed following review, or during their mandate, if they no longer meet strategic, financial, or operational requirements, or where there is significant policy or reputational risk. Closure must be supported by an exit strategy addressing financial, legal, and staffing considerations.

4. Roles and responsibilities

4.1. Research Centres & Institutes

4.1.1. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise (DVCRE) is responsible for:

- assigning tier classifications for RC&I
- approving transfer applications from Tier 2 to Tier 1.

4.1.2. The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research (PVCR) is responsible for:

- overseeing this procedure
- approving UNSW's involvement in externally funded research centres and institutes
- approving the establishment of RC&I (all tiers),
- monitoring and closure of Tier 1 RC&I.

4.1.3. The Dean of the presiding faculty is responsible for:

- supporting establishment of RC&I
- monitoring and closure of Tier 2 RC&I
- closure of Tier 3 RC&I.

4.1.4. The Head of School is responsible for:

- monitoring Tier 3 RC&I.

4.1.5. RC&I Directors report to the Dean of their presiding faculty.

4.1.6. The RC&I Board provides strategic oversight for UNSW's internal RC&I. The [RC&I Board Terms of Reference](#) directs its activities, with the primary function to guide establishment, tier classification, funding and monitoring.

4.1.7. The Research Strategy Office (RSO) provides coordination and support for RC&I establishment, review and closure, including monitoring of Tier 1 RC&I. The RSO also maintains the C&I registry, website and supporting instructions, and provides additional support as required.

4.2. Community Centres & Institutes

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic Quality (DVCAQ) has responsibility for establishment, monitoring, and closure of:

- internal UNSW CC&I
- external Centres/Institutes whose primary activities are social engagement and/or educational.

4.3. Academic offerings

UNSW C&I may assist in the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching through arrangements with schools or faculties. However, UNSW C&I should not have sole responsibility for, or ownership of, academic offerings unless special dispensation is given by the DVCAQ.

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