Policy: Centres and Institutes

Purpose

To outline principles for the establishment, management and closure of Centres and Institutes at ANU.

Overview

ANU establishes Centres and Institutes in order to create significant critical mass of activity advancing research and teaching activities aligned with the University's strategic plan. Centres provide a readily identifiable face to external users, and the means to raise profile and visibility of activities. Research-focused Centres and Institutes are an important mechanism to enable cross-disciplinary research activities.

Scope

This Policy applies to all Centres and Institutes involving ANU. For historical reasons, nomenclature including “Units”, “Hubs”, “Networks” and “Initiatives” has been used in the University to refer to entities covered in this policy; the classification of some existing organisational structures as a Centre or as an Institute is also historical. Names of existing entities at ANU will not change as a result of the introduction of this policy.

Definitions

A Centre is a formal academic grouping focused on a specific issue or discipline area. An Institute is a formal multidisciplinary initiative relevant to the majority of ANU Colleges.

Centres and Institutes share the following characteristics:

- **Added value.** A Centre or Institute must aim to achieve outcomes and objectives that cannot be met through business-as-usual within Schools and ANU Colleges.

- **Critical mass.** A Centre or Institute (other than an Externally-led Centre) must have a core of ANU staff members, maintained by a register of active participants kept by the Centre.
- **Fixed term.** A Centre or Institute is approved to operate for no more than 5 years at a time before review and renewal.

- **Financially sustainable.** A Centre or Institute must have a sustainable funding model.

There are three distinct types of Centres/Institutes:

- **Internal ANU Centres and ANU Institutes.** Centres and Institutes are hosted within a School, and may or may not be classified as an Academic Organisational Unit based on criteria outlined in the Procedure.

  *Guidance:* The decision as to whether a Centre/Institute is provided an Academic Organisational Unit or not will be determined taking into account the scope, requirements, revenue streams and independence of the proposed Centre/Institute. AOUs are used for reporting in the Higher Education Student Collections and are used within ANU for internal reporting purposes.

- **Externally Funded Research Centres.** Centres (or Nodes of Centres) are externally supported by a fixed grant and managed according to rules of that scheme. Externally Funded Research Centres are hosted within a School for the purposes of the ANU organization structure. [Examples include NHMRC Centres of Research Excellence, ARC Centres of Excellence, Cooperative Research Centres]

- **Joint ANU–External Partner Centres.** Joint ANU–External Partner Centres are a significant collaborative effort between ANU and an external partner (University, Government agency, industry), that is not primarily funded by a competitive grant. These Centres are managed as an Internal Centre or Institute within ANU but contain formal governance and reporting frameworks in line with the requirements of both ANU and the external partner. [Examples include ANU–CSIRO Centre for Biodiversity Analysis]

Any new Centre or Institute with ‘National’ or ‘Australian’ in the title is nationally distinctive, or justify the name based on the activities and focus of the Centre.

Names of existing entities at ANU will not change as a direct result of the introduction of this policy.

**Policy statement**

**Financial Sustainability**

2. All Centres and Institutes require a sound financial plan for the initial term of the Centre or Institute, including a strategy to generate revenues, and are self-
sustaining in the long term. In the case of Externally Funded Research Centres, the financial plan and budget is largely specified by the funding agreement, supplemented by local area operational costs associated with the physical hosting of the Centre.

3. Operational funding tied to research, teaching and HDR activities of Centres and Institutes is distributed to Colleges as per standard ANU processes.

**Structure and Governance**

4. All Centres and Institutes are hosted within a School (the Host School) within one of the ANU Colleges.

5. Each Centre and Institute has a Director, reporting to the Head of the Host School.

6. Each Centre and Institute has a management and governance structure appropriate to provide oversight and independent advice on the Centre or Institute’s objectives and progress.

**Establishment, Review and Disestablishment**

7. All new and renewed Centres and Institutes are approved according to the Procedure.

8. All Centres and Institutes are regularly reviewed in line with the Procedure, to:
   a. Assess whether the Centre/Institute is meeting its objectives;
   b. Review the overall research performance, added value to ANU, and ongoing need for the Centre; and
   c. Recommend whether the Centre/Institute should be renewed for a further term.

9. A Centre or Institute is disestablished if it is no longer an appropriate mechanism to support university research and teaching strategic objectives.

10. All financial and personnel commitments of a Centre or Institute that is disestablished are the responsibility of the Host School and College.