



Policy Title	FRAMEWORK FOR THE OPERATIONS OF RESEARCH ENTITIES AT VUT				
Scope of Application	Executive Deans and persons appointed as Adjunct Appointees and Visiting Scholars				
Parties Consulted (Development)	Executive Deans, Academic Staff, HR and Finance				
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A Policy Owner	The DVC Research, Innovation, Commercialization and Internationalization				
Policy Implementer	Research Directorate				
<p>POLICY HISTORY (To be Completed by Policy Owner)</p> <p>Five (5) policies have been consolidated into this policy as the underpinning principle is to attract experienced researchers and lecturers to VUT to undertake teaching and research. The five policies include:</p> <p>(1) The Visiting Lecturer/Scholar Policy was first drafted in July 2016 and was not approved by Senate and Council. It is more of a guideline than a policy.</p> <p>(2) The Visiting Professors Policy was drafted in July 2015 and was also never approved by Senate and Council. It is more a guideline than a policy.</p> <p>(3) The Extraordinary Senior Lectureships & Professorships drafted in May 2010, but it was never approved by Senate and Council.</p>					
Policy Number	Resolution Number	Status	Implementation Date	Approving Authority	Next Review Date

<i>(Unique number assigned to each policy)</i>		<i>(New/Revised/No Status)</i>	<i>(Compulsory if 'New' or 'Revised')</i>		<i>(Date of which the committee approves revision proposal)</i>
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1. INTRODUCTION

Vaal University of Technology (VUT) has identified research entities (REs) as essential components of the academic, research, and service mission of the University. This document seeks to clarify the process to streamline and regularize the establishment, operations, evaluation, and review of such facilities across the University. These entities not only play an important role in enabling multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary research, but they also form a necessary part of the university academic and research programmes. Critically, all REs have the potential to strengthen programmes by offering service-learning opportunities, facilitating postgraduate programmes and enabling high levels of research productivity. Designed to be flexible units, their scope, mission, and size may vary considerably, but ultimately, they are expected to provide increased external visibility for the University through their outstanding research activities.

2. PURPOSE OF THE FRAMEWORK

This framework sets out the principles and processes for the effective operations of REs at VUT to ensure proper research ethics and integrity, effective resource mobilization, reporting and excellence that satisfies both local and international standards. The research agenda of all RE must be aligned with a VUT approved focus area or several focus areas as well as the mission, vision and strategic objectives of the University with its commitment of excellence in scholarship, the integration of research and teaching and the progressive development of the Vaal region and the country at large.

3. DEFINITIONS

3.1 Research Entities & Categories

Research Entities are all formal research facilities within the University. In ascending order, they include Research Units (RU), Research Centres (RC) and Research Institutes (RI). The RU will be the starting point for any RE, followed by RC and the RI being the highest level of any RE at VUT. Each RE should have a unique/flagship or specialized area of research. All REs will be aligned to the VUT's research agenda, the Vaal region development agenda and the South African Development Agenda through knowledge production and cutting-edge research.

A “**Research Unit (RU)**” may be defined as a research entity based in an academic department, that is centred on an individual, usually an early-career or mid-career researcher with a strong track record of research outputs and a team consisting of postgraduate students and research fellows. A leader of a RU should be able to attract external funding and must have an extensive list of networks outside VUT. The leader of the Research Unit will carry the title of **Principal Investigator (PI)** and may build a research team consisting of students, junior associates and postdoctoral fellows working on projects within his or her research programme.

Research Centre (RC) is a Faculty level research entity that is developed around an outstanding researcher who has achieved national and international recognition working within a defined area. The centre will also consist of other academic staff members working in multi-disciplinary research fields. Additionally, a research centre is a formally structured and high-level entity within VUT, established to advance scholarly activity primarily through collaborative research, research training, research dissemination, creative output generation and information

brokerage; networking, and service rendering. A RC must have scientific and technical merit with a strong project base that will allow researchers to undertake projects in an inter-disciplinary and transdisciplinary manner. RCs are expected to provide unique inquiry-based learning opportunities for postgraduate students and to be actively engaged in relevant academic forums and community outreach. The leader of the Research Centre will carry the title of **Head** and may build a research team consisting of postgraduate students, senior research associates from different faculties and department, postdoctoral fellows and extensive list of external collaborators working on projects within his or her research programme.

A **Research Institute (RI)** is a University level research entity, which signifies a long-term strategic commitment to a particular area of research where the University has its strength and recognition. The institute is established around a group of exceptional and talented researchers from different research units and academic departments within VUT. Due to its size and mandate, the institute must consist of several research groups headed by established researchers and its activities should include more than one faculty. Institutes are typically expected to collaborate broadly across regional, national, and international forums. They are also expected to be self-sustainable by using funding obtained through various grants, foundations, and funders. The leader of the Research Institute will carry the title of Director and may build a research team consisting of students, principal investigators, senior associates, researchers and postdoctoral fellows working on projects within a wide range of related research fields.

“**Research**” in this context includes those activities intended to produce one or more research outcomes, including the creation of knowledge, reorganisation and application of knowledge. Each university recognized RE is expected to undertake basic, applied research, problem solving research or any other research enquiry that is in line with the VUT Research policy. The research undertaken must contribute to knowledge and understanding in the field of study.

4. SCOPE

This framework applies to all staff, students and affiliates of the University engaged in research at or in collaboration with the University. This framework provides direction on the University’s position in respect of the establishment, conduct, review, and termination of formal REs established to further the conduct of collaborative research, both within and external to the University.

5. MEMBERSHIP OF RESEARCH ENTITIES

Membership: The membership of VUT RE must comprise faculty members and postgraduate students from the University, as well as research partners (including postdoctoral fellows and visiting researchers from other universities and industries) and community members from other institutions or organisations.

6. ESTABLISHING RESEARCH ENTITY

The creation of any RE at VUT must begin with a proposal that is submitted by an individual or a department to the Faculty Research and Innovation Committee (FRIC) for review and consideration. The outcome is submitted

to the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SRIC) for recommendation to MANCOM and Senex for approval.

The proposal should include information on:

(a) the title of the proposed research entity.

(b) the identity of the proposed leader and his or her curriculum vitae.

(c) the motivation for the establishment of such an entity. The motivation must cover the training programme for PGs, strategic importance of the RE to the university, how the proposed RE aligns with VUT Strategic Plan, plans to mobilize external grants and reasons why VUT needs to provide funding support for the RE, Programme for Postdocs and plans for collaborations and strategic partnerships.

(d) the names and contact details of at least four persons external to the University who are eminent in the field(s) and who would be able to offer an informed appraisal of the proposal.

(e) Curriculum vitae of core researchers and summarised details of associated research workers, both inside and outside the University.

(f) proposed organogram illustrating the relations and functions between persons within the RE.

(g) a statement of the relationship between the research entity and the research plans/strategies of the host Department and Faculty and the proposed performance indicators for the subsequent evaluation of the research entity.

(h) infrastructure requirements and how they are to be met.

(i) finance: estimates of income and expenditure for the first three years of operation, indicating funding sources, known or prospective.

(j) the envisaged limiting factors and risks and ways to tackle them.

(k) structure/plan for delivering on the expected research outputs from the university.

Once approved by SRIC, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC): Research; Innovation, Commercialization and Internationalization (RICI) will submit a review report on the proposed RE to the Management Committee (MANCOM). MANCOM must evaluate the financial and HR implications linked to the proposed RE and recommend it for further approval by Senate. An approved RE should establish the legal structures for effective management and governance as its first order of business.. All Research Entities are expected to register with the appropriate national body for recognition and legal status. REs are expected to secure their own funding (either from the University or other sources) to maintain their viability. These funds may come from grants and contracts; charitable gifts; internal awards, and/or internal sources.

7. RESEARCH OUTPUTS

RE should be output driven. Research Outputs from any RE is defined as the number of publications with at least one author affiliated with the respective entity; the number of postgraduate students' registration and graduation; the number of patents and innovation registered; number of conference presentations; and other research outputs¹ and uptake activities.

7.1 Research Units

Established RU is expected to:

- have produced at least a research output of 5 research units in a period of 3 years after approval.
- host at least three (3) externally funded postdoctoral research fellows each year;
- supervise at least five (5) postgraduate students within an academic year;
- a record of generating sufficient external resources for its research and postgraduate programme each year. Depending on the research type, the RE will be expected register at least one (1) patent², designs³ new invention (including prototypes, invention disclosures amongst others) or 1 DHET Creative Output within 5 years

7.2 Research Centres

RC is expected to:

- have produced at least a research output of 10 research units in a period of 3 years after approval.
- host at least five (5) externally funded postdoctoral research fellows;
- supervise at least ten (10) postgraduate students within an academic year;
- have a record of generating sufficient external resources for its research and postgraduate programme
- Depending on the research type, the RE will be expected register at least one (1) patent, designs new invention (including prototypes, invention disclosures amongst others) and 1 DHET Creative Output within 5 years.

7.3 Research Institutes

RI is expected to:

- have produced at least a research output of 20 research units in a period of 3 years after approval.
- have (5) research groups affiliated to it
- host at least ten (10) externally funded postdoctoral research fellows each year;
- supervise at least twenty (20) postgraduate students within an academic year;

¹ Any outputs that meet the definition of research and are not otherwise categorised in these guidelines. Examples include: Factsheet, Clinical Guidelines, Published geological and/or geomorphological maps, and explanatory texts

² Published Patent Cooperation Treaty (PCT) filings or one of the published granted patents arising from an initial patent filing, Copyrights and Trademarks.

³ Attributable design standards or other standards, codes of practice, or design guidelines

- have a record of generating sufficient external resources for its research and postgraduate programme for a 5 year period.
- Depending on the research type, the RE will be expected register at least one (1) patent , designs new invention(including prototypes, invention disclosures amongst others) and 1 DHET Creative Output within 5 years

8. REVIEW OF RESEARCH ENTITIES

8.1 Research Units

RU will undergo periodical formal review to ensure viability and the need for continuation based on efficacy and measurable outputs. The review period should be consistent for all units and shall be every 3 years, unless MANCOM approves a deviation.

8.2 Research Centres and Research Institutes

RC and RI will undergo periodically formal review to ensure viability and the need for continuation based on efficacy and measurable outputs. The review period should be consistent for all entities and shall be every 5 years, unless MANCOM approves a deviation.

All review processes must be managed by the Research Directorate in conjunction with the Quality Promotions Unit (QPU) and an external review or evaluation expert will conduct the review ideally to be coordinated by the DVC: RIC. The review will cover key performance metrics (including outcome and outputs. A final review report will be submitted to the DVC: RIC for consideration by MANCOM.

MANCOM is expected to scrutinize the report and submit recommendations regarding continuation or termination of the research entity to the Senate.

9. REPORTING

Annual reports of each RE will be submitted no later than sixty (60) days after the end of each fiscal year and will document activities and achievements of the previous year including any external funding; partnerships; collaborations and key research outputs. The reports will be submitted first to the Advisory Committee of the RE for approval before onward submission to the DVC: RIC.

10. TERMINATION OF RE

An RE may be terminated based on the outcome and recommendations of the review process. In any case, consideration should be given to the termination or transfer of any contractual obligations; the employment status of any employees; the transfer of any capital equipment or space, and the transfer or reassignment of any funds, including transactional accounts.

The termination of a RE requires a Letter of Notification sent from Senate through the DVC: RIC for dissemination to the RE.

An RE shall be dismantled after a review of its activities after 10 years. It will be terminated if activities and personnel at the RE do not meet the initial mission and purpose for its establishment.

11. ELEVATION OF ENTITIES FROM ONE LEVEL TO THE OTHER

Any RE will be considered for promotion after a review and if it meets, the criteria set out in Framework for the higher level.

12. PERSONNEL

Each RE will have an approved management structure. Each RE should have a leader who manages

the entity, particularly its finances and staffing. The leader of the RE also manages the daily operations, including administrative review of expenditures and lead all research activities. Research entities should have not less than 10 personnel (including administration, research and postgraduate students) any time.

Faculty members associated with an RE will retain all rights and privileges of their affiliated academic department. Postgraduate students who undertake research within the RE will be part of the membership of the faculty. A faculty member's research, teaching, and service contributions to an RE should also be considered in their quest for promotion and tenure.

13. GOVERNANCE

The governance of each RE shall be described in the initial proposal and form part of the responsibilities of the leader working closely with Advisory Committee (AC) and Steering Committee for effective management; accountability, and to ensure best practices. The Advisory Committee will offer advice to the leader of the RE on management and technical issues. The AC will comprise of Researchers from other faculties or RE within the university, administrator, researchers from industries, researcher from a non-competitive external institution. The ToR of the AC will be set out in their offer letters. The AC will meet twice in a year. The appropriate centre governance representative, the DVC: Research, Innovation, Commercialization and Internationalization shall approve the Advisory Committee members.

The leader of the RE will be accountable to the Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee should also be established to oversee all projects implemented at the RE; and their meetings could be held twice yearly.

The Research Directorate will be responsible for the maintenance of an institutional database of all active research entities and their status as determined by the DVC: RICl and Mancom.

14. ACCOUNTABILITY

To ensure that all REs and their respective members receive credit for activities, research credits and associated postgraduate student credit hours should be directly assigned and reported as belonging to the academic units of the faculty members and students associated with the RE.

REs are to inform the Directorate of Research on any awards or funding received from any source through the Head. Research projects will be credited as a project only if it is so designated on the proposal submission.

All REs should have a monitoring and evaluation framework to guide them through project implementation and report writing.

