

Policy on Research Organizations

Category: Research Policy

Approval: Senate and Board of Governors

Responsibility: Office of Research and Innovation

Date: June 15, 2018; revised March 28, 2025

1.0 Preamble

Research is central to Trent University's mission. Research Organizations are essential components of the University's research ecosystem, significantly advancing this mission and playing a crucial role in attracting and retaining leading researchers.

The purpose of this policy is to define research organizations at the University, the intended scope of their activities and their required governance and reporting structures. Research Organizations are differentiated based upon the scope of their research activities, sources of funding, and management structure.

This policy encompasses all Research Centres, Research Institutes, and similar organizations at Trent University that are not part of administrative or academic units. A list of approved Centres and Institutes is maintained by the Office of Research and Innovation. Further information can be found on the Office of Research and Innovation website.

2.0 Definitions

2.1 Research Institute: A Research Institute is a research organization that has been constituted by the Trent University Senate and shall be approved with respect to finances and facilities by the Board of Governors. Research Institutes are entities that may have significant financial and other implications for the University and may be responsible for the operation and oversight of core research infrastructure and facilities. They must be founded by a minimum of five Trent faculty members and must include at least one partner from outside of the University (e.g. private sector, public sector, government, other universities or colleges). External partnerships also need to be formalized and documented following relevant University policies and procedures. The establishment of a Research Institute requires a formal agreement with the University on intellectual property management, sharing of commercialization costs and revenues, and the disbursement of research overhead, as well as, a budget that includes capital costs, operating costs and the salaries of relevant staff.

Any proposal to create a Research Institute submitted to Senate and the Board of Governors for approval must include a pre-signing copy of the formal agreement that will be binding on the University and a business plan covering the life of that agreement. The Institute will have a formal administrative structure, with an Executive Board/Management Committee that includes the Vice President, Research and Innovation (or designate). The Director will be appointed according to the procedures outlined in Section 4 and further detailed in Appendix B. The Director of the Institute will be responsible for preparing an annual research report and an annual financial report for review by the Executive Board/Management Committee, before forwarding to the Vice President, Research and Innovation. All Research Institutes will be operationally and financially responsible to the University through the Vice President, Research and Innovation, and as such, they are required to submit to a review every eight years from the date of formal approval by Senate. Research Institutes are expected to have an active research outreach or knowledge mobilization strategy in place and the Executive Board/Management Committee should meet no less than two times per annum.

2.2 Research Centre: A Research Centre is a research organization that has been constituted by the Trent University Senate and shall be approved with respect to finances and facilities by the Board of Governors. Research Centres will have an established management structure, a Director, a process for the appointment of members, an operational plan, a budget, and may be allocated space on campus. Research Centres are to have a minimum of five Trent faculty members at the time of their founding and are encouraged to incorporate more. Research Centres are collaborative and typically non-departmental research ventures. They may involve some research participation in and/or funding from outside the University. All Research Centres are operationally and financially responsible to the University through the Vice President, Research and Innovation, and as such, are required to submit an annual report on their research and outreach activities, and their finances. In addition, they are required to submit to a review every eight years from the date of formal approval by Senate. Research Centers are expected to have an active research outreach or knowledge mobilization strategy in place and the Executive Board/Management Committee should meet no less than two times per annum.

2.3 Research Groups: Trent University recognizes that a number of more informal research organizations (e.g. research groups, research labs, and research collectives) also exist. Research Groups are not formally recognized by the Senate or the Board of Governors but must be recognized by the Office of Research and Innovation. Research Groups consist of a number of investigators, informally organized, with shared research objectives, and possibly, shared facilities and funds. They may be expected to form, grow, and dissolve on a relatively short time scale, although, in some cases, they can also be stable for a relatively long period of time.

3.0 Procedure for Creating a Research Organization

3.1 Proposals for Research Organizations are to be submitted to the Vice President, Research and Innovation, in accordance with the requirements found in Appendix A.

3.2 Proposals for Research Centres and Institutes

- 3.2.1 Preliminary proposals will be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee, plus any faculty or staff from administrative units (e.g. Deans, Human Resources, Purchasing, Finance, Facilities Management, Advancement) whose expertise might contribute to a thorough evaluation.
- 3.2.2 Following the review, a final proposal will be prepared by the proposing group that addresses any comments and concerns from the review process. In the case of a Research Institute, a business plan will be prepared that describes the expected revenues and expenditures of the Institute. The final proposal will be submitted to the Research Policy Committee, to be forwarded to Senate for consideration of the academic implications and to the Board of Governors for consideration of the financial implications of the proposal.

3.3 Proposals for Research Groups

- 3.3.1 Preliminary proposals will be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee, plus any faculty or staff from administrative units (e.g. Deans, Human Resources, Purchasing, Finance, Facilities Management, Advancement) whose expertise might contribute to a thorough evaluation.
- 3.3.2 Following the review, a final proposal will be prepared by the proposing group that addresses any comments and concerns from the review process. The final proposal will be submitted to the Vice President, Research and Innovation, for approval.

4.0 Governance

4.1 Research Institutes and Centres

- 4.1.1 Institutes and Centres are led by a Director, who is normally appointed for a five-year term. The Director reports to the Vice-President, Research and Innovation, in all aspects related to the Institute or Centre and its function, including appeals for funds, negotiations concerning contract research, and grants from funding organizations. It is the responsibility of the Director to ensure that the activities of the Research Institute or Centre are in line with Trent University Policy and Procedures. The Director will normally hold an academic appointment. The procedure for selecting a Director is outlined in Appendix B.
- 4.1.2 In the event that a suitable Director cannot be found the Vice President, Research and Innovation will act as an interim Director for up to one year. If a suitable Director cannot be found within this period, the Centre or the Institute should begin to follow the steps outlined in "Closure of a Research Organization" (Section 7).
- 4.1.3 The frequency of Executive Board/Management Committee meetings held by a Research Institute or Centre may vary on the needs of the research organization, but it is expected that the research organization will meet a minimum of two times per year. A copy of the minutes from this meeting are to be filed within the Office of Research and Innovation, in addition to being attached to the organization's annual report.

4.2 Research Groups

- 4.2.1 Due to the informal structure of Research Groups, they may establish governing structures as they deem appropriate.
- 4.2.2 Research Groups are expected to have a formal meeting of the membership a minimum of once per year. A copy of the minutes from this meeting are to be filed with the Office of Research and Innovation.

4.3 Research Organizations are expected to have a Governance document (constitution, terms of reference, etc.) that details the organizational structure and function as well as the operational plan. The roles and responsibilities of all interested parties should be outlined. The purpose of a Governance document is not to create an unnecessary and complex administrative structure, but rather to protect both the rights and obligations of the Research Organization and the University. A template for Governance documents can be found in Appendix C.

4.4 Management of Grants and Contracts will be handled by the Office of Research and Innovation.

5.0 Annual Reports

5.1 Research Institutes and Centres at Trent University will be expected to submit an Annual Report that contains the following documents:

- 5.1.1 A report summarizing the activities, income and expenditures of the past calendar/fiscal year;
- 5.1.2 A plan of activities for the forthcoming year, including anticipated income and expenses;
- 5.1.3 Any changes in research direction or administration that may necessitate; altering the constitution as originally approved by Senate;
- 5.1.4 A copy of the minutes from the meetings that took place during the year.

5.2 An Annual Report Template may be found in Appendix D.

6.0 Cyclical Review

6.1 One year prior to the term of operation of a Research Institute or Centre (terms of operation are typically eight years), there will be a review process to determine whether the Research Institute or Centre should be renewed, renegotiated, restructured or retired. The review will be conducted by the Research Policy Committee and the request for renewal will be evaluated according to the terms of reference used to evaluate original proposals.

6.2 On the outcome of the review recommendations for Research Institutes and Centres will be forwarded to Senate and the Board of Governors.

7.0 Reclassification of a Research Organization

7.1 In the case that a Research Organization is unable to meet the expectations of its current classification, but is still actively generating research and knowledge, they may opt to reclassify themselves in order to remain compliant with this policy. Alternatively, Research Organizations may wish to be reclassified in order to increase their current research capacity.

7.2 Research Institutes

- 7.2.1 Research Institutes that are looking to reclassify themselves as a Research Centre or Group are to submit a proposal for review to the Research Policy Committee explaining how it is non-compliant due to its current classification and how a reclassification will alleviate the compliance issue.
- 7.2.2 Following the review, the Director of the Research Institute will prepare a final proposal that will address any comments and concerns stemming from the review process. The final proposal will be submitted to the Research Policy Committee, to be forwarded to Senate for consideration of the academic implications and to the Board of Governors for consideration of the financial implications of the proposal in order to be reclassified as a Research Centre, or the Vice President, Research and Innovation, to be reclassified as a research Group.

7.3 Research Centres

- 7.3.1 Research Centres that are looking to reclassify themselves as a Research Institute
 - 7.3.1.1 The Director of the Research Centre will submit a preliminary proposal to be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee, plus any faculty or staff from administrative units (e.g. Deans, Human Resources, Purchasing, Finance, Facilities Management, Advancement) whose expertise might contribute to a thorough evaluation.
 - 7.3.1.2 Following the review, a final proposal will be prepared, by the Director of the Research Centre, that addresses any comments and concerns from the review process, in addition to a business plan that will be prepared that describes the expected revenues and expenditures of the Institute. The final proposal will be submitted to the Research Policy Committee, to be forwarded to Faculty Board for information and discussion and to Senate for consideration of the academic implications and to the Board of Governors for consideration of the financial implications of the proposal.
- 7.3.2 Research Centres that are looking to reclassify themselves as a Research Group
 - 7.3.2.1 The Director of the Research Centre will submit a preliminary proposal to be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee explaining how it is non-compliant due to its current classification and how a reclassification will alleviate the compliance issue.
 - 7.3.2.2 Following the review, the Director of the Research Centre will prepare a final proposal that will address any comments and concerns stemming from the review process. The final proposal will be submitted to the Research Policy Committee, to be forwarded to the Vice President, Research and Innovation, for approval.

7.4 Research Groups

- 7.4.1 Research Groups that wish to be reclassified as a Research Institute or Centre will submit a preliminary proposal, prepared by the Director of the Research Group, to be reviewed by the Research Policy Committee, plus any faculty or staff from administrative units (e.g. Deans, Human Resources, Purchasing, Finance, Facilities Management, Advancement) whose expertise might contribute to a thorough evaluation.
- 7.4.2 Following the review, a final proposal will be prepared by the proposing group that addresses any comments and concerns from the review process. In the case of a Research Institute, a business plan will be prepared that describes the expected revenues and expenditures of the Institute. The final proposal will be submitted to the Research Policy Committee, to be forwarded to Senate for consideration of the academic implications and to the Board of Governors for consideration of the financial implications of the proposal.

8.0 Closure of a Research Organization

- 8.1 The University reserves the right to close a Research Organization during its term of operation. Research Organizations may direct an appeal of the decision to close a Research Organization to the Office of the Provost.
- 8.2 In the event that a Research Organization is not recommended for renewal, or a suitable Director cannot be found, the following procedure is to be followed:
 - 8.2.1 One or more individuals at arm's length from the Research Organization will be selected by the Vice President, Research and Innovation, to review the assets, liabilities and ongoing obligations of the Organization and to make recommendations on the disposition of assets and liabilities. As part of this review, a financial statement is to be presented and approved by Trent University's Financial Services. An external auditor may be required depending on the complexity of the Research Organization's financial situation.
 - 8.2.2 Upon receiving the above mentioned reports and after consulting the Research Organization's sunset clause, the Vice President, Research and Innovation will implement the recommendations in accordance with Trent University's existing policies and procedures.
 - 8.2.3 The Research Policy Committee's annual report to Senate will include updates on the status of Senate and Board approved Research Organizations.

9.0 Contact Officer:

- 9.1 Vice President, Research and Innovation
- 9.2 Senior Director, Research and Innovation

10.0 Date for Next Review:

- 10.1 March 2028

11.0 Policies Superseded by this Policy

- 11.1 Trent University Policy on Research Organizations, May 2018

Appendix A: Requirements for Creating a Research Organization

Checklist of issues to be addressed when preparing proposals for new Centres or Institutes.

1. Purposes and Functions:

- a) What is the main purpose and functions of the proposed research organization?
- b) Will the research organization contribute to Trent University's Strategic Research Plan?
- c) Will the proposed research organization involve external partners, such as private sector companies, public sector agencies, nongovernmental organizations, or other educational institutions (e.g. universities or colleges)?
- d) Will Trent University contribute significant resources to the proposed organization, including finances, space and human resources?
- e) How will the organization perform its functions (i.e. research, training, and publications)?
- f) Will the organization cover a field of study already covered within an existing resources organization at Trent?
- g) Will the organization facilitate or expand the training of highly qualified personnel?
- h) In what ways might the organization enhance the reputation of the University and help attract faculty and students?

2. Membership:

- a) Will the membership be restricted to faculty and staff at Trent University? If not, what outside group will be represented, to what extent, and how will they be chosen?
- b) Will the organization draw members from several academic units? If so, from which units?
- c) Who will be eligible for membership and are there different classes of membership?
- d) How will members be appointed and will membership be continuing or renewable?

3. Management:

- a) Describe the proposed organizational framework, including a description of the duties and responsibilities of the Director and other officers. In the case of Research institutes, what will be the administrative relationship between the Director and the Executive Board/Management Committee?
- b) How will the Director and other officers be selected or appointed? Will there be a process in place to review the performance of the Director and/or officers?
- c) Does the organization have a plan for communicating with the academic and non-academic community?

4. Staffing, Physical Requirements and Liability:

- a) What are the immediate space requirements, as well as those in the medium/long term?
- b) What are the requirements for administrative and technical staff?
- c) What special demands might be made on the library, computing, communications, finance or other university services?
- d) What demands will be made on the university in terms of training (e.g. Health and Safety, Radiation Safety, WHMIS)?
- e) What are potential liability issues for the university related to establishment of the research organization (i.e. financial, safety, ethics)?

5. Financing and Support:

- a) What is the estimated total budget (and source of funds) of the Research Organization for the first year? First three-year period? And after 5 years of operation?

6. Commercialization of Research:

- a) Will there be opportunities within the research organization for commercialization of research?
- b) Potentially, how will Trent contribute to research commercialization?
- c) How will the revenues of commercialization be distributed among the members of the research organization and the University?

Appendix B: Procedure for Selection of a Director

1. Members of Research Centre or Research Institute
 - a) Following formal approval of a Research Centre or Institute, members will strike a Research Director Search Committee that will recommend a candidate for Director to the Vice President, Research and Innovation. Normally, the term of the Directorship will be for five years.
2. Vice President, Research and Innovation
 - a) The Vice President, Research and Innovation, will formally invite the candidate to take up the Directorship. Any negotiations regarding the conditions of appointment to the Directorship will be conducted between the candidate and the Vice President, Research and Innovation and the appropriate Dean.
3. Candidates
 - a) Following a satisfactory resolution of the conditions of appointment to the Directorship, the candidate will submit a written acceptance of the Directorship to the Vice President, Research and Innovation.
4. Research Director Search Committee of the Centre or Institute
 - a) At the end of the term of the Directorship, the Research Director Search Committee of the Centre or Institute may submit a request for renewal of the Directorship to the Vice President, Research and Innovation. Along with this request, the Research Director Search Committee must submit documentation in support the renewal of the incumbent to the Vice President, Research and Innovation.

Appendix C: Governance Document Template

1. Name
2. Objectives, as they may affect:
 - a) Society;
 - b) The University;
 - c) The disciplines involved;
 - d) The Students; and
 - e) The Academic Staff.
3. Membership:
 - a) Classes – such as member, ex-officio member, associate member, student member, etc.;
 - b) Eligibility for membership;
 - c) Voting rights;
 - d) Founding members; and
 - e) Procedures for the election or appointment of new members and removal of current members, as warranted.
4. Administrative Structure:
 - a) Administration of the Centre or Institute by a Director and a Board or Executive;
 - b) Process for selecting the Director initially and for recommending a Director for the following five years as part of procedures of each five-year review appointment of Director;
 - c) Process for appointing a new Director if a Director steps down before the end of their five-year term;
 - d) Processes for the election of the Executive Board/Management Committee;
 - e) Powers and Responsibilities of the Director;
 - f) Powers and function of the Executive Board/Management Committee; and
 - g) Amendment of the Governance Document.
5. Relationship to the University:
 - a) The Research Organization will be governed by the regulations of the Senate;
 - b) The Centre or Institute will maintain communication with the University, the procedures should be specified within the Governance Document and will submit reports at the prescribed intervals.
6. Closure:
 - a) Disposition of assets upon closure;
 - b) Allowance for costs related to the closure to be included in the budget for
 - c) the final year of operation
7. Intellectual Property:
 - a) Statement on any specific agreements that will be prepared in regard to intellectual property stemming from activities of the Research Organization;
 - b) Statement recognizing the requirement to follow the guidelines set out by Senate and TUFA Collective Agreement.

Appendix D: Annual Report Template

Summary Sheet

Name of Research Organization: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Report Year: _____

Director of Research Organization: _____

Will the Director continue next year? Yes No

If no, please name proposed new Director: _____

Alternative Research Organization Contact: _____

Comments: _____

Notes:

1. Add rows in the tables as necessary or append information where noted.
2. Indicate if financial values are based on fiscal or calendar year. Please ensure all values are reported by the same year type throughout the report.
Fiscal Year Calendar Year
3. Activities may be reported on a fiscal or calendar year basis and do not need to match the time frame utilized for financial reporting. The timeframe for reporting of activities must, however, be consistent throughout the report and from year to year.
Fiscal Year Calendar Year

Complete the table below for the past year. Use data from the "Income Statement from the Past Year" found later in this report (Research Organization funds only). Provide details only for Research Organization funding. Do not include research grants that do not provide funds to support the Research Organization.

Total Revenues	
Total Expenditures	
Balance Surplus/(Deficit)	

Complete the table below for the forthcoming year*. Use data from the "Anticipated Budget for Forthcoming Year" found later in this report (Research Organization funds only). Provide details only for Research Organization funding. Do not include research grants that do not provide funds to support the Research Organization.

Total Revenues	
Total Expenditures	
Balance Surplus/(Deficit)	

Complete the table below to indicate any anticipated research project funding that will generate funds for the Research Organization in the forthcoming year.

	Project Title or Theme	Anticipated Total Value (Annualized)	Anticipated Funding Generated to Support the Research Organization
Grants			
Contracts			
Other Funding Sources			

If you anticipate a **Deficit** in the forthcoming year, please indicate how you plan to address it.

For members of the Research Organization, indicate the following for the Past Calendar Year (append list of items to the end of the report). Do not double count those with two or more authors, or co-P.I.s who are members of the Centre.

Item	Quantity
Number of Centre Members	
Total Value of NSERC, CIHR, and SSHRC grants held by Organizations members that do not directly generate funds for the Organization, but do generate indirect costs of research for the University	
Number of conferences organized	
Number of lectures organized	
Number of external awards/honours	
Number of journal papers published	
Full conference papers published	
Books published	
Reports published	

Graduate students and post-doctoral fellows (HQP) associated with the Research Organization over the past calendar year. Do not double count co-supervised HQP.

	Number
Number of RAs Supervised	
Number of PDFs Supervised	
Number of PDFs Completed	
Number of PhD Students Supervised	
Number of PhD Students Graduated	
Number of Master Students Supervised	
Number of Master Students Graduated	
Other	

Significant Planned Activities for the Forthcoming Year (if you need more space, please append items to the end of the report).

Issues or Problems encountered over the past year (explain).

Financial Reporting

List all account codes under the Research Organization's purview. Provide details only for Research Organization funding (Do not include research grants).

Account Name	Account Number

Income Statement from the Past Year, Research Organization Funds only (Include other expense types as necessary). Provide details only for Research Organization funding (do not include research grants that do not provide funds to support the Organization).

	Item	Budgeted	Actual	Percentage Variance
Revenues				
Expenditures				
	Salaries and Benefits			
	Equipment and Computer			
	Supplies			
	Travel			
	Printing			
	Repairs and Maintenance			
	Professional Fees			
	Overhead			
	Miscellaneous			
	Total Expenditures			
Net Income				

Financial Variance Report

Please refer to the variances reported in the "Income Statement from the Past Year" and explain in the table below any variances greater than 20% (if you need more space, please append items to the end of the report).

	Item	%Variance	Explanation
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			

Anticipated Budget for the Forthcoming Year Research Organization Funds only (Include other expense types as necessary). Provide details only for Research Organization funding (Do not include research grants that do not provide funds to support the Research Organization)

	Item	Budgeted	Actual	Percentage Variance
Revenues				
Expenditures				
	Salaries and Benefits			
	Equipment and Computer			
	Supplies			
	Travel			
	Printing			
	Repairs and Maintenance			
	Professional Fees			
	Overhead			
	Miscellaneous			
	Total Expenditures			
Net Income				

Current Centre Activities

Staffing (List all non-academic staff including their title, appointment date and duration of contact)

Name	Title	Appointment Dates	Contract Duration

Faculty members actively involved in the Research Organization (List names and Primary Departments). All people listed must have agreed to be listed.

[illegible]

Non-Faculty members and staff actively involved in the Research Organization (e.g. community researchers, partners, staff members not employed by the Centre, etc.) All people listed must have agreed in writing to be listed.

Name	Department / Affiliation

List of research projects with funding attributed to the Research Organization

	Project Name	Principle Investigator	Total Funding	Funding Source	Start/End Dates
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					
5.					
6.					

Board or Executive Committee (List members, their institutional affiliation and length of term).
Provide a copy of minutes from all Board Meetings.

Name	Department / Affiliation

Dates of Board Meetings:

Signature of Director

Date
