Framework to define College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes

Section 1 - Background and Scope

(1) The University of Newcastle (University) has an ambitious research, education and engagement agenda which seeks to foster excellence in teaching and research to bring about discoveries that will impact our world for the better. In the Looking Ahead Strategic Plan 2025-2030, these goals are articulated under the Research with Impact pillar.

(2) To support how the University engages with the broader community and regions and organises business activities to deliver the Strategic Plan, our research, commercial, philanthropic and associated non-award teaching functions may be organised into University-supported clusters. These clusters may be represented as 'College Units', 'Research Centres', 'Academies', or 'Institutes'. This document seeks to define the different arrangements and how they integrate with existing organisational and administrative structures.

(3) The formation of College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes is also a mechanism to support staff to achieve outcomes aligned to the Looking Ahead Strategic Plan. The objectives and measures used to determine the success of College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes should be developed and approved with strategic, financial and staff career objectives in mind.

(4) This Framework applies to all University funded cluster arrangements, including College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes.

(5) This Framework does not apply to the administrative requirements for Centres that are established through Joint Party arrangements with external stakeholders or nationally competitive external funding, for example:

a. externally funded Commonwealth funded Centres, Australian Research Council (ARC) Centres of Excellence (COE's), ARC Training Centres, National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Centres for Research Excellence (CRE's) and Commonwealth Collaborative Research Centres (CRC's);
b. Joint Party arrangements: Hunter Medical Research Institute (HMRI) or Central Coast Research Institute (CCRI) referred to as External Institutes.

Section 2 - Definitions

(6) In the context of this document the following definition applies:

a. Business Unit – a distinct organisational unit included in the University organisation structure (see University Organisational Chart).

Section 3 - Administrative Definitions

(7) There is a myriad of legacy cluster groups across the University. Furthermore, the public facing title of a cluster needs to respond not only to the University administrative structures but also to the needs of internal and external

stakeholders. Therefore, achieving consistency via a naming convention for the public positioning and externally facing title of the cluster is not an objective of this Framework.

(8) However, to facilitate application of the University policy, procedures and the Delegation of Authority Framework each cluster group will have a designated administrative definition that is determined at the time of establishment.

(9) To enable reporting of the cluster and the portfolio of clusters to the appropriate governance committees, each University cluster will have an identified purpose at the time of designation which will be either:

a. research and engagement activities; or
b. research and engagement activities and delivery of education programs.

(10) As the public facing title may not be consistent with the administrative definition it is expected that the Business Case, Reporting and other relevant deliverables will reference the cluster as follows:

a. Public facing title, engagement purpose, administrative designation, of the University of Newcastle.

For example:
The Network of Hydrogen Facilitators, a research centre of the University of Newcastle.

Administrative Designations

(11) The administrative designations are:

College Unit	A College Unit is a label applied to a group of Academic staff hosted by a College(s) to indicate collaboration, possibly across discipline areas and other business units, where creating financial return is not a goal of the cluster.
Research Centre	A Research Centre is an umbrella name applied to a group of research and engagement activities that are joined by a theme and aligned to the University's Strategic Priorities that may cross discipline areas and Colleges. The administrative title of Research Centre is used to identify an intent to generate financial return from the activities to sustain the identified activities. A Research Centre is not a separate business unit in the University organisational structure.
Academy	An Academy is an umbrella name applied to a group of research and engagement activities and delivery of education programs that are joined by a theme and aligned to the University's strategic priorities. Academies must be multidisciplinary by design and involve all three University Colleges. The administrative title of Academy is used to identify an intent to generate financial return from the activities to sustain the identified activities. An Academy is not a separate business unit in the University organisational structure and is not allocated direct funding. No establishment of budgets, cost collectors or financial operations exists for any Academy.

Institute	An Institute is a strategic vehicle at scale to conduct research and related business activities, reflect expertise, generate new business and grow impact and reputation. Institutes are used to consolidate large scale activities under a theme aligned to the University's strategic priorities for the purpose of promoting external stakeholder support and academic collaboration. The administrative title Institute signifies an intent to generate financial returns greater than needed to sustain existing activities and to apply that surplus to invest in expanding University research activities. An Institute requires separate support structures such as administrative and technical resources to maximise benefits to the University. There will be a finite number of Institutes. An Institute may be strategically established or evolve from a Research Centre or group of Research Centres once a sufficient critical mass of activity and financial return is generated to justify the increased investment by the University in a separate business unit. An Institute is a separate business unit in the University organisational structure.

Section 4 - Operating Structures

(12) College Units, Research Centres, Academies and Institutes are differentiated through the following attributes. Activities within all clusters are subject to the policies and procedures of the University.

	Attribute	College Unit	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
1	Administrative descriptors (Research / Education included in title as appropriate)	Lab / network / hub / cluster	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
2	Creation of a University business unit	No	No	No	Yes
3	Approval by Council under Matters Reserved for Council R20	No	No	No	Yes
4	Approval by Council under Matters Reserved for Council R46	See Clause 13 refer to the Commercial Activities Policy.			
5	Limitations of numbers	No	No – but must align with strategic initiatives of the University.	No – but must align with strategic initiatives of the University, are multidisciplinary, and involve all three University Colleges.	Yes – 4
6	Roles will be granted delegated authority in accordance with the existing sub-delegation of the Vice-Chancellor's operational authority and the Delegation of Authority Framework. Roles within the cluster will not be granted any additional delegation.				A Director of an Institute may be granted delegation of authority as a specific holder, subject to approval by the Vice-Chancellor.

	Attribute	College Unit	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
7	Separate unit Director underwritten by operating funds	No	No	No	Yes
8	Title of Leader and Delegations	Existing title with addendum Lead of XX Unit	Existing title with addendum Director of XX Research Centre. The substantive, existing title drives alignment with the University Delegations Register i.e. Directors of Centres are not appointed to the position group of “Directors” in the Delegations Register.	Existing title with addendum Director of XX Academy. The substantive existing title drives alignment with the University Delegations Register i.e.: Directors of Academies are not appointed to the position group of “Directors” in the Delegations Register.	Director of Institute. Directors of Institutes are appointed to the position group of “Directors” within the Delegations Register as they are a Head of a Business Unit.
9	Executive Leadership Team (ELT) Representative	College Pro Vice-Chancellor (CPVC)(s)	College Pro Vice-Chancellor (CPVC) (s)	College Pro Vice-Chancellor (CPVC) (s)	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (DVCRI)
10	Staffing – refer Appendix 3 for further guidance re staffing.	Academic and support staff are employed by a College. Effort applied in line with College workload models.	Academic and support staff are employed by a College. Buy out from specific initiatives of the Centre may occur in line with workload models.	Academic and support staff are employed by the College(s). Buy out from specific initiatives of the Academy may occur in line with workload models.	Some Institution professional and technical staff may be employed by the Research and Innovation Division in the Institute, subject to approval by the DVCRI, and availability of funding and performance KPIs, and on a time-limited basis. Academic staff are employed by a College.

	Attribute	College Unit	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
11	Membership	Academics within a School / Discipline and associated collaborators from across the University.	Academics engaged in work directly linked to the thematic intent of the Centre.	Academics engaged in work directly linked to the thematic intent of the Academy.	Principal Researchers with research only workload where salary cost is fully met by external income and/or allocated from strategic funds in the start-up phase or for new strategic initiatives. The latter will have a sunset clause. Academics engaged in work directly linked to the thematic intent of the Institute, via research, engagement and/or teaching workload allocations. Any impacts on core academic workload and activities (e.g. teaching, service) must be covered from Institute revenue or other applicable income paid to the relevant School to ensure quality and quantum of core functions are maintained. Special membership as approved and funded by DVCRI, Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic & Global) (SDVCAG), or Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global (PVCG) to support their respective strategic strategies.
12	Financial objective	As set by the College(s) within operating funds.	Cost neutral or better after any financial allocation by the University is repaid.	Cost neutral or better after any financial allocation by the University is repaid.	To generate quantifiable financial returns to the University to meet the costs of the Institute's activities and surplus funds to be reinvested in future strategic activities.
13	Primary sources of funding	As provided at the discretion of the CPVC(s).	Funding provided through research grants, projects, training and consulting revenues etc in year. Contributions from Staff Support Accounts.	Funding provided through research grants, projects, training and consulting revenues etc in year. Contributions from Staff Support Accounts.	Funding provided through research grants, projects, training and consulting revenues etc in year. Contributions from Staff Support Accounts.

	Attribute	College Unit	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
14	Potential sources of supplementary funds subject to relevant CPVC(s)/DVCRI, SDVCAG, DVCG approval.	N/A	As provided from funds under the control of the College's on approval from the CPVC(s). Ad hoc strategic investment from the University.	As provided from funds under the control of the College's on approval from the CPVC(S). Ad hoc strategic investment from the University.	Research Support Program (RSP) allocation where approved in the budgeting and forecasting process from existing allocations by the College or Research and Innovation Division. Operating funds through the operating budget of R&I Division. Adhoc strategic investment from the University.
15	Budget	Included in the relevant School budget.	Included in the relevant College budgets.	Included in the relevant College(s) budgets.	Included in the Research and Innovation Division budget.
16	Distribution of RSP	From RSP distributed to the College at the discretion of the CPVC(s).	From RSP distributed to the College at the discretion of the CPVC(s).	From RSP distributed to the College(s) at the discretion of the CPVC(s).	From University RSP allocation as approved by the DVCRI.
17	Retention of funds	A College unit does not accumulate funds for roll forward into future years.	A Research Centre does not accumulate funds for roll forward into future years. A Project and Consultancy Procedure and use these in support of the Research Centre activities.	An Academy does not accumulate funds for roll forward into future years. Academics associated with an Academy may accumulate funds in accordance with the Project and Consultancy Procedure and use these in support of the Academy activities.	An Institute may accumulate and roll forward funds subject to having a plan for application of the funds approved by the Director of Institute, the DVCRI and in consultation with the CFO.
18	Cost collector	None	None	None	Separate cost collector.
19	Distribution of retained funds at end of life	None	At the end of the life of the Research Centre any retained funds are transferred to the University's retained earnings, except where the Research Centre transitions into an Institute where the funds are transferred to the Institute retained funds.	At the end of the life of the Academy, any retained funds are transferred to the University's retained earnings, except where the Academy transitions into an Institute where the funds are transferred to the Institutes retained funds.	At the end of the life of the Institute any retained funds are transferred to the University's retained earnings.

	Attribute	College Unit	Research Centre	Academy	Institute
20	Reporting by leader (Refer Appendix 2)	Annual review of performance for the relevant CPVC(s). Activities within the Unit/Group are reported as per business as usual items in relevant annual returns and reports	Annual review of performance by relevant CPVC(s) and reported to Executive Leadership Team (ELT) and other governance committees as appropriate based on the purpose and work of the Centre.	Annual review of performance by the relevant CPVC(s) and reported to ELT and other governance committees as appropriate based on the purpose and work of the Academy.	Annual report of performance by DVCRI for ELT and Council after endorsement by Research Committee and Academic Senate as appropriate. Includes an assessment of performance against agreed key performance indicator(s).
22	Logo & website	No Logo. Webpage on University website	No Logo. Webpage on University Institutes and Centres website	No Logo. Webpage on University Institutes and Centres website.	Logo and webpage on University Institutes and Centres website. Must co-reference the University and its logo in all publicity and collateral.

(13) Where activities undertaken in the College Unit, Research Centre, Academy or Institute meet the definition of a commercial activity (in accordance with the Commercial Activities Policy), the activity is subject to approval in accordance with the relevant delegations and is subject to compliance with the relevant and related procedures to the Commercial Activities Policy.

Section 5 - Attribution

(14) All academic output in the form of research, consultancy and project is attributed to the collaborators in accordance with the relevant publication and citation frameworks.

(15) The employing college of the collaborators will be the primary business unit to recognise attribution of academic outputs.

(16) The supporting Institute, where relevant, will be the secondary business unit to recognise attribution of academic outputs.

(17) Outputs cannot be double counted for the purpose of external reporting. For example, this work is attributed to academic(s), Institute, the University of Newcastle.

Section 6 - Approval Process

(18) The approval process applies for new clusters and when a cluster seeks to transition to the next level e.g. from a College Unit to a Research Centre and a Research Centre or an Academy to an Institute.

Unit / Group

(19) The requesting academic staff member/s prepare an information brief (refer template in Appendix One) for endorsement by the Head of School or Director with input from the CPVC and DVCRI, SDVCAG or DVCG or their chosen delegate as appropriate to the nature of activities the unit is proposing to undertake.

(20) The CPVC is then required to approve the application to create a unit.

Research Centre or Academy

(21) The requesting academic staff member/s prepare an information brief (refer template in Appendix One). The brief must outline the thematic purpose of either a Research Centre or Academy, and include as a minimum:

a. Research Centre:
    i. alignment to University strategy;
    ii. expected benefits of research;
    iii. internal and external stakeholders;
    iv. risk assessment including specific management of reputational risks (see Risk Management Framework);
    v. initial investment requests and confirmation that no ongoing investment is sought from the University; and
    vi. KPIs and other performance measures associated with the expected benefits must be identified.
b. Academy:
    i. alignment to University strategy;
    ii. expected benefits of research and education;
    iii. internal and external stakeholders;
    iv. risk assessment including specific management of reputational risks (see Risk Management Framework);
    v. initial investment requests and confirmation that no ongoing investment is sought from the University;
    vi. demonstrate involvement with all three University Colleges; and
    vii. KPIs and other performance measures associated with the expected benefits must be identified.

(22) The academic staff member must seek endorsement for the concept from the CPVC and one or more of the DVCRI, SDVCAG or DVCG depending on the nature or work and relationships proposed for the Research Centre or Academy, before commencing a business case for any initial investment sought.

(23) If there is a request for one off investment that cannot be met with funds under the control of the existing School or College, then a business case to support a request for strategic investment must also be prepared (refer template in Appendix Two).

(24) A request for strategic investment or transfer of existing funds e.g., philanthropic funds, re-purpose of existing strategic funds etc will require Executive approval in accordance with financial delegations than a request for a Research Centre or Academy without. The strategic investment request cannot be for continuing staff or fixed term staff across multiple financial years – this only occurs for an Institute.

(25) The brief and investment request where applicable need to be endorsed by the relevant Heads of School and the CPVC(s).

(26) If there is a request for strategic investment the brief must be provided to the CFO with the business case for endorsement, so that advice can be provided to the approving DVC / Vice-Chancellor.

(27) The brief and request for strategic investment where applicable is then provided to the CPVC, DVCRI / Vice-Chancellor for approval or otherwise.

Institute

(28) Where the activity of proposed Institute may solely constitute a commercial activity, the Commercial Activities Policy and its relevant and associated procedures must be complied with, rather than the process outlined below.

(29) The requesting academic staff member/s prepare an information brief (refer template in Appendix One). This brief must outline the thematic purpose of the College Unit, Research Centre, Academy or Institute, internal and external stakeholders, alignment to the University Strategy, expected benefits to teaching and research, risks and resourcing. KPIs and other performance measures associated with the expected benefits must be identified.

(30) The academic is advised to seek endorsement for the concept from the CPVC/s and DVCRI and SDVCAG or as appropriate to the intended research and teaching related activities of the Institute, and through Council before commencing a detailed business case.

(31) Noting that the Institute will establish a separate business unit and seek ongoing support from the University a full business case must be prepared with the application.

(32) All Institutes will be subject to approval by the University Council therefore a cover paper must be prepared, and the request included in the appropriate Council paper cycle which will go to ELT, Finance and Infrastructure Committee and the University Council.

(33) The brief, business case and cover paper need to be endorsed by the relevant CPVC's.

(34) The brief, business case and cover paper need to be reviewed and endorsed by the DVCRI and / or SDVCAG (where teaching activities form part of the intended activities of the Institute), also the CFO, Legal Counsel and Risk and Governance.

(35) The completed documents with associated endorsement then are submitted to the University secretariat for inclusion in review by the Vice-Chancellor and inclusion in the ELT and subsequent committee agendas.

(36) If the proposal is approved by the University Council, then work can commence on establishing the institute within the various University administrative structures and systems.

Section 7 - Review

(37) At a minimum of every three years the Leader of each Research Centre, Academy or Institute must submit a request for continuation or decommissioning (as appropriate). The request will be considered by the CPVC initially and may also be considered by the DVCRI, SDVCAG and / or DVCG as appropriate to the work and objectives of the Research Centre or Academy.

(38) The Research Committee, Academic Senate and ELT will be provided with a complete inventory of all Research Centres, Academies and Institutes on an annual basis prepared by each College and collated by Financial Services. Refer Appendix Two Part B for the required format of this report.

(39) A CPVC can initiate a sustainability review by an appropriate member of the CPVC office as often as annually for College Units, Research Centres or Academies. This review may lead to dissolution of the arrangement if performance objectives are not being achieved.

(40) The DVCRI can initiate a sustainability review as often as annually for Institutes. This review may lead to dissolution of the arrangement if performance objectives are not being achieved. Such a change would be subject to the Enterprise Agreement processes pertaining to structural change due to being a separate business unit in the University structure and would require University Council approval.

Section 8 - Appendices

(41) College Unit, Research Centre, Academic or Institute - Application Template

(42) College Unit, Research Centre, Academic, or Institute - Reporting Requirements

(43) College Unit, Research Centre, Academic or Institute - Staffing Cost Guidance

Status and Details

Status	Current
Effective Date	31st August 2026
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Responsible Executive	Michael Di Rienzo Chief Financial Officer
Enquiries Contact	Michael Di Rienzo Chief Financial Officer --- Financial Services

Glossary Terms and Definitions

"University" - The University of Newcastle, a body corporate established under sections 4 and 5 of the University of Newcastle Act 1989.

"Risk" - Effect of uncertainty on objectives. Note: An effect is a deviation from the expected, whether it is positive and/or negative.

"Risk assessment" - The overall process of risk identification, risk analysis, and risk evaluation.

"Academic staff" - A person employed as an academic staff member or appointed as an academic honorary appointee (including adjunct, clinical conjoint, visiting, honorary and conjoint appointments), but does not include persons who are employed solely as teachers or professional staff.

"Research" - As defined in the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research, or any replacing Code or document.

"School" - An organisational unit forming part of a College or Division, responsible for offering a particular course.

"Staff" - Means a person who was at the relevant time employed by the University and includes professional and academic staff of the University, by contract or ongoing, as well as conjoint staff but does not include visitors to the University.

"College" - An organisational unit established within the University by the Council.

"Delegate" - (noun) refers to a person occupying a position that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority, or a committee or body that has been granted or sub-delegated a delegation of authority.

"Delegated authority" - refers to the specific description of the authority that is delegated or sub-delegated to a holder.