



Trinity Research Centres

1. Context

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin, hereafter referred to as Trinity, has three levels of organisation to foster research within and beyond the primary academic unit of the School. These are Research Institutes, Research Centres and Research Groups. Trinity Research Centres (TRCs) emerge from the research strengths of one or more Schools and Research Institutes. They play a vital role in carrying out research and in developing Trinity's research strategy. They vary widely in size and add value to their School(s) or Research Institutes and to Trinity by generating critical mass in particular fields of research. They facilitate inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary collaboration on research within and beyond the University and enhance the profile of research fields to external stakeholders, including funding agencies.

The School or Institute in which the principal activities of a TRC occur takes primary financial and administrative responsibility for the TRC. Multidisciplinary collaboration with other Schools/Faculties/TRIs is particularly encouraged. Each TRC has its own governance structure, which is defined in consultation with its host School/TRI.

The status of TRC is awarded by the Research Committee, in response to application by the aspirant TRC and its host School/TRI, and is subject to regular review. Following recognition, TRCs appear on the College website and in the University Calendar. TRCs differ from Research Groupings in terms of their scale and scope. Groups are less formal entities and do not require specific governance arrangements or approval by the Research Committee. They are not visible on the College website or in the College Calendar.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to articulate the criteria for establishing a Trinity Research Centre, outline the process to propose the establishment of such a centre, summarise the reporting requirements, and the procedure for closing a centre that is no longer active.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all academic staff.



4. Principles

The key principle underpinning this policy is creating transparency in Trinity's processes. The policy is also based on the principle from the Research Charter to 'harness our collective expertise for the greater good.'¹

5. Policy

5.1 Criteria for a Trinity Research Centre

There are three criteria for a TRC: activity, viability and visibility. Proposals to establish a TRC must show how it will meet each criterion. Continued recognition will depend on evidence that it continues to do so.

Activity: A TRC is unique in its goals within Trinity and is based on more than a single project or a single researcher's work. It engages in a range of activities, including collaborative research projects, service, hosting conferences and seminar series, postgraduate programmes and publications, and other kinds of output, both conventional and new.

A TRC consists of a minimum of three members of the academic staff, one of whom is its Director. It has a clear structure of governance, determined in conjunction with the School/TRI to which it is accountable.

Viability: The establishment, sustainability and life-cycle of a TRC are determined by the interests of those who found it and who pursue its activities. A TRC is renewed for as long as it supports these activities and is wound up if and when they have been completed. The Director of a TRC provides an annual report on the activity and viability of the Centre (see section 5.3.1). Annual reports must be endorsed by any local Research Committee, signed off by the Head of the School/TRI that hosts the TRC and submitted to the Dean of Research. If a report is not submitted for two consecutive years, the Dean of Research has the authority to withdraw the status of a TRC.

Visibility: A TRC has the means to provide its own web page in the prescribed format on the College's web server within 12 months of recognition and to update and regularly maintain the web page thereafter. Its Director provides an annual report detailing the visibility of the Centre as detailed in section 5.3.1.

¹ <https://www.tcd.ie/research/about/charter/>



Centres are expected to archive relevant material on an ongoing basis. When a Centre closes provision should be made for relevant records to be archived by the College.

5.2 Governance of a Trinity Research Centre

A TRC must have a coherent research plan and structure for regulating its activities. It is up to the TRC to define its own governance structure, in agreement with the host School/TRI, and the Dean of Research. A TRC must have its own internal governance board/steering committee. The Director of the TRC and the Director(s) of Research of associated Schools/TRIs should be members of this committee along with other appropriate individuals. Some TRCs may also wish to have an external advisory board, which may be chaired by an external figure, and which can act as an oversight committee to advise and assist the Director in the running of the Centre. A Research Centre's governance document must set out procedures for the choosing of a new Director, and for changing the representation on the internal and (where necessary) external boards.

5.3 Oversight of Trinity Research Centres

5.3.1 Annual reporting.

The Director of a TRC must submit an annual report to the Dean of Research and the Head of the School/Institute that has primary administrative and financial responsibility for the Centre. The report must provide information on the activity, visibility and viability of the centre. The report must be endorsed by any relevant local Research Committee and signed by the Director of the Centre as well as the Head of the School/Institute.

The report should provide an opportunity for the Centre to reflect on its success in achieving its objectives and should contain examples of how the TRC has added value to its members and host unit.

Failure to submit a report will be reported to the appropriate Head of School/TRI and will mean that the TRC will not be given visibility at College level in the following academic year (in other words, will not be listed alongside the other Centres on the College website and other official documentation, and will not appear in the University Calendar).

If a Centre fails to submit an annual report for two consecutive years the Dean of Research has the authority to withdraw the status of a TRC. Annual reports, or an appropriate public summary, should appear on the Centre's own website.

Any substantial changes to the TRC (for example, a change of name, or a change of governance structure) must be proposed in writing to the Dean of Research for approval.



5.3.2 *Quality review.*

It is imperative that the quality of TRCs is ensured. Centres and their activities should be regularly discussed at the research and executive committees of the appropriate School(s)/TRI(s) and annual reports for each Centre (see 4.1 above) must be endorsed by any local research committee. Signing of the annual report by the Head of School/TRI confirms that the Centre is active and contributing to the mission of the unit. The Dean of Research will report on the activities of research centres in their Annual Report .

Trinity Research Centres are reviewed as part of the quality review processes for Schools and Institutes. External reviewers will be furnished with the criteria for TRC status described in this document and they will be requested to comment specifically on the activity and contribution of the Centre to the School/TRI. The results of the review will be reported to the Dean of Research. If the review of the Centre is unfavourable, the Dean of Research, in consultation with the relevant Head of School/TRI, has the authority to close the Centre.

Under certain circumstances Centres, particularly those with an external advisory board, may instigate their own external review. The circumstances and the procedures for such reviews should be agreed with the Head of School/TRI and the Dean of Research.

5.4 Procedures for the formation of a Trinity Research Centre

Proposals to form a Trinity Research Centre, containing the information listed below, should be submitted to the Dean of Research. The proposed Director of the TRC will then be invited to make a short presentation and answer any queries at a meeting of the College Research Committee which will decide whether or not to formally recognise the Centre.

Proposal to establish a Trinity Research Centre

Identification Information

- Name of Proposed Centre:
- Contact name:
- Email:
- Extension:
- Name of the School or Institute which will take primary administrative and financial responsibility:
- Name of the Head of School or Institute Director:

Staff

- Director (must be a full time staff member on a contract of more than 3 years or a formally recognised emeritus member of staff):



- List the principal researchers (to include at least 3 members of TCD academic staff, on at least a 3 year contract or contract of indefinite duration)
- Other associated researchers (internal, external, emeritus, postdoctoral staff, postgraduate students):

Information about the Proposed Centre

- State the aims and objectives of the Centre.
- Provide information regarding the different kinds of activity in which the Centre will be involved (include any relevant non-research activities, such as teaching, service provision, etc.)
- Clearly articulate how the Centre will bring added value to its members and host unit.
- Include details of the proposed governance structure for the TRC (section 3 above).
- Outline a process to wind down the TRC should its activities come to a conclusion.

Letter of Support

Applications for recognition as a TRC must first be approved by the relevant School/TRI research and executive committees. The Head of School/TRI must provide a letter of support confirming the unit will take primary financial and administrative support for the Centre, and that the Centre will be integrated within the research strategy of the School/TRI and will be supported in its activity.

6. Responsibility and Implementation

The Dean of Research has responsibility for monitoring the implementation of this policy. This includes facilitating proposals through the Research Committee, maintaining a current list of active TRCs, and overseeing annual reporting.

At School/Unit/Division level, the Head of School and Director of Research will have responsibility for ensuring that any TRC housed in their respective School/Unit/Division is in full compliance with the policy. This includes providing appropriate local supports, the submission of annual reports, and identifying any TRCs that are no longer active.

7. Related Documents

Directors of TRCs should consult the local strategy document for their School/Unit/Division to ensure activities and goals are aligned.

Due consideration should also be given to Trinity's Living Research Excellence Strategy.

8. Document/version Control for Revised Policies

8.1 Date of initial approval: 25 June 2014



- 8.2 Date revised policy approved: n/a
- 8.3 Date policy effective from: 25 June 2014
- 8.4 Date of next review: June 2026