

Guidance for Designing Operating Models for Externally Funded Research Centres

1.0 Definition of research centres

The University's Research Strategy Group have defined Platforms, Institutes, Centres and Groups in their [Governance of Research Structures paper](#).

Research centres are expected to:

- Have a coherent research agenda which transcends a particular research project.
- Have a clear and well-designed strategy in place for supporting excellence in the quality of research outputs – including mentoring and peer review of draft outputs and funding applications.
- Have a clear and well-designed strategy for promoting their research profile, engaging in knowledge exchange and achieving impact.
- Generate a regular stream of research funding, at a level appropriate for the field of enquiry.
- Have a coherent and realistic plan to securing external funding and recognition.
- Engage and support the career development of PGRs and early career researchers as well as more established members.

Research centre applications may include Professional Services (PS) staff. This document provides guidance on the considerations and decision-making to inform the operating model for a research centre. This is to ensure that the research centre has the appropriate resourcing with input from relevant Faculty Office and School Operations colleagues.

2.0 Process for agreeing PS operating models for a research centre

At application stage, the Research Development Manager (RDM) is to inform the Head of Faculty RBE and Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Manager for the following conversations to take place:

- Head of Faculty RBE, RDI Manager and RDM discuss the scale and ambition of the research centre, benchmark against existing best practice, and propose a PS operating model (see section 3.0 below).
- The Head of Faculty RBE and RDI Manager make a recommendation regarding the size and shape of the PS operating model to the Principle Investigator.
- The Head of Faculty RBE engages with the relevant Director of School Operations (copying in the Head of School) so the PS operating model and line management structures can be agreed.

In addition to these conversations, the following documents provide underpinning information:

- [[Guidance on costing externally funded PS roles on grant applications](#)]
- [[Guidance on Requesting Additional Financial Contribution](#)]
- [[Additional Financial Contribution application form](#)]

This process ensures:

- Delivery of the University and Faculty Research and Innovation Strategies.
- Full consideration of equality, diversity and inclusion, ensuring fair access and opportunity.
- Consistency across centres through the creation of a job family (including job titles and descriptions).
- The scale of the PS operating model is appropriate to the mission of the research centre, including the number and grading of roles and reporting structures.
- Integration with existing Faculty governance structures.
- Effective connection into existing business functions to provide a professional network and support for individual development needs.
- Opportunities for effective succession and workforce planning.

3.0 Considerations when designing PS operating models for research centres

The following aspects of a research centre will be taken into account when designing the PS operating model:

- **Size and shape:** the number and location of affiliated academic staff
- **Mission:** the scale of ambition and requirements to deliver on agreed objectives
- **Location:** a digital or physical presence/building
- **Facilities and infrastructure:** the provision of equipment and facilities and availability of technical support
- **Interdisciplinary reach:** focus on a small set of related disciplines within a single School/Department or larger interdisciplinary reach across several Schools/Departments and/or more than one faculty
- **External collaboration:** formal partnership with other universities and/or non-academic partners
- **Funding:** the scale of external funding secured and if this is primarily through a major award
- **Leadership and governance:** the composition of the management team, steering group and existence of an external advisory board

4.0 PS roles and specifications

A job family has been created for the PS roles that typically support research centres. The table below summarises the grade and titles of each role. It is expected that not all roles will fit into the categories outlined below and that some roles will need discussions beyond the Director of School Operations (see [Guidance on costing externally funded PS roles on grant applications](#)).

Job title (job description hyperlinked)	HERA details		
	Role code	Total points	Grade
Research Centre Manager	MAPBMH-FACOFF-SS	494	7
Research Centre Officer	MAPBMH-FACOFF-RR	434	6
Research Centre Coordinator	MAPBMH-FACOFF-QQ	335	5
Research Centre Administrator	MAPBMH-FACOFF-PP	271	4

Template job descriptions are linked above and should be adapted to meet the requirements of the research centre. The HERA scores for each role are provided. Final versions of the job descriptions should be submitted for final HERA review quoting the relevant profile.