

Policy Name:	Centres & Institutes		
Policy No:	NU-RES-2011.05	Approval Authority:	Senate
Volume:		Responsible Executive:	Provost and Vice-President, Academic
Chapter:		Responsible Office:	Office of Research & Innovation
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Policy Statement

This policy defines and outlines the establishment, operation and management of research centres and institutes at Nipissing University. Centres and institutes serve as hubs for research, academic, industry, and community collaboration, while enhancing the university's overall mission and contribution to the advancement of knowledge and innovation.

Reason for Policy

Centres and institutes focus and sustain activities in specific research areas and encourage intra-, inter-, multi-, and transdisciplinary collaboration within the University and with external partners. These entities are responsive to changing circumstances and opportunities, create synergies and community engagement, and provide opportunities for mentoring and the development of expertise.

Centres and institutes provide for the strengthening, coordination, facilitation, or execution of research initiatives that are not readily undertaken within the University's faculty structure and build upon the expertise, competence, and research interests that exist within the University. They provide a way of formalizing an identity that reflects existing research collaborations and supports development of new opportunities and external funding.

Policy Applies to

- Research entities that have applied for and received the status of Nipissing University
- centre or institute and research entities that plan to apply for this status.
- This policy does not apply to centres and institutes on campus whose function is primarily administrative or physical; nor does it apply to research labs, unless the faculty members within the lab have applied for the status of centre or institute.

Who Should Read this Policy

- Deans, Directors, and Chairs
- Faculty members
- Staff of faculty offices, the Office of Research & Innovation, Finance, and Human Resources

Contacts

Office of Research & Innovation: research@nipissingu.ca

Office of the Provost & Vice-President, Academic: pvpa@nipissingu.ca

Definitions

Note about the definitions: The terms below refer to formal categories of research entities that may be established through this policy. Approved centres and institutes may choose, however, to use a different term in their entity's name (e.g., consortium). Likewise, registered research groups may choose to use a different term in their name, with the exception of the protected terms 'centre' and 'institute.'

Research group: A research group is a collective of researchers formed for the purpose of achieving shared research objectives. The lifespan of research groups is typically linked to a defined research program. Establishing a research group does **not** require the formal application and approval process outlined in this policy; however, research groups that wish to be formally recognized as such and listed on Nipissing's Research & Innovation webpage can request this by providing a short description, a membership list, and a contact person's information, to be updated annually, to the Office of Research & Innovation.

Research centre: A research centre is an organization created to undertake research activities within one or more Faculties. The research activities complement and enhance the work of multiple faculty members and may include external partners (e.g., government, community, industry) and faculty from other post-secondary institutions. Centres have a specific thematic focus and provide a platform for collaborations that foster connections among different academic disciplines and faculty departments.

Research institute: A research institute is an organization created to undertake research activities involving more than one Faculty *and* external partners, as well as faculty from other post-secondary institutions. Research institutes address areas of strategic research importance to the University. They are often engaged in high-impact research responding to real-world challenges and they have a well-established track record of successful collaboration and external funding.

The Policy

1. Establishment and Closure

Centres and institutes will be established following the *Centres & Institutes Procedure* and evaluated based on the criteria in Appendix A.

- 1.1. **Establishment:** The authority to establish centres or institutes resides with Senate, except in cases where there are financial implications for the University. In those cases, the authority to establish centres and institutes resides with the Board of Governors. The Associate Vice-President, Research, Innovation & Graduate Studies (AVP RIGS) will report any academic implications of new centres or institutes to Senate. The Provost and Vice-President, Academic (PVPA) will seek Board approval for those with material implications. Research centres or institutes are established in five-year terms, which may be extended upon application during the end-of-term review process.
- 1.2. **Annual and end-of-term reporting:** The Director of the centre or institute will report annually to the AVP RIGS through SRC. To ensure that all research carried out by research centres and institutes is consistent with the goals of the University and enhances the general reputation of the University, the AVP RIGS shall also review all centres and institutes at the end of their terms, unless the centre or institute requests reclassification. The content of the report, review, and reclassification processes are described in the *Centres & Institutes Procedure*.
- 1.3. **Closure:** A centre or institute may be closed as a result of the review process detailed in the *Centres & Institutes Procedure* or at the written request of the Director. The University also reserves the right to close a centre or institute at any time during its approved term for financial exigency, violation of university and/or research policies (e.g., Responsible Conduct of Research), failure to convene the governing board over a two-year period, or failure to submit annual reports two years in a row.

2. Structure and Scope

- 2.1. **Relationship with the University:** Centres and institutes are operationally and financially responsible to the University through the AVP RIGS. As such, they must conform to University policies and procedures. A centre or institute is entitled to identify itself as a part of Nipissing University and to use the University's name and address in the conduct of its activities, subject to corporate branding criteria.
 - 2.2. **Formal structure:** All research centres and institutes must have terms of reference that define the mandate of the research entity and describes its organization, governance, management, and membership. This organization must include a governing committee or board that provides guidance and oversight of the conduct and management of its affairs. The governing board of centres may consist entirely of members from within the University, but that of institutes must include representation from members who are external to NU. A lead/principal researcher (director) will have administrative responsibility for the centre or institute, including its overall management, budget, and reporting requirements and will normally be a NU faculty member. Assuming a leadership role within a centre or institute (i.e., lead researcher, principal researcher, director) does not automatically afford the individual additional compensation or workload release; all workload assignments must conform to the collective agreement.
 - 2.3. **Funding:** Centres and institutes are expected to secure funding from external sources and develop financial self-sufficiency through external cost recovery during their first five years of operation. Entities may be supported by one or more grants held by one or more of the members. Exceptions to that normal expectation require the approval of the Provost. University contributions may be provided to centres or institutes in the form of operating funds and/or in-kind support in compliance with University policies and procedures.
 - 2.4. **Academic responsibilities:** Academic programs shall not be housed in a centre or institute, although academic programs within faculties may be associated with a centre or institute.
3. **University Centre or Institute Partnerships:** In addition to Nipissing University centres or institutes, the University may participate with centres or institutes that are part of a multi-institutional consortium or exist under a corporate structure. On occasion, research centres or institutes may involve formal partnerships with other universities and/or institutions. Involvement in such partnerships is subject to formal agreement guided by the intent of conditions in this policy and signed by the PVPA and, when applicable, the Vice-President, Finance and Administration (VPFA).
 4. **Transition for Existing Entities:** The research centres and institutes that exist at the date this policy is approved are continued herein and are subject to the terms of this policy. A listing of university and faculty centres or institutes subject to revision is provided in Appendix B and is intended as information to accompany this policy.

Forms and Tools

- Procedure:** Centres & Institutes (on page 6)
- Proposal Template:** nipissingu.ca/media/centre_institute_template
- Budget Template:** nipissingu.ca/media/centre_institute_budget
- Group Registration:** [NU Research Group Registration](#)

Appendix A: Criteria for Centres, Institutes, and Groups

The criteria table below may be useful for determining which level of collaboration researchers may wish to pursue. The classifications may be approached progressively. For example, an informal research group is a good starting place for researchers forming new collaborations. After some time of successful collaboration, the group may decide to apply for centre status. Well-established centres that have grown in scope and incorporated external partners may then wish to apply for institute status.

The rating scale indicates the degree to which each criterion must be met in order for SRC to recommend formation of the research entity. The footnotes link to Tri-Agency policies and guidelines applicable to the criteria; when addressing the criteria, applicants should consider the principles of these documents and align their approaches with them.

Table 1: Criteria for Centres, Institutes, and Groups			
Criteria	Group	Centre	Institute
Objectives: Clearly identified goals and objectives	Required	Required	Required
Alignment with SRP: ¹ Objectives are aligned with NU's Strategic Research Plan, the University Strategic Plan, and the Academic and Operational Plan	Optional	Recommended	Required
Scope: Includes multiple projects; broader than collaboration on a specific, limited project	Recommended	Required	Required
Interdisciplinarity: Brings together scholars from different disciplines and/or areas of specialization within a particular discipline	Optional	Recommended	Required
Inter-faculty collaboration: Brings together scholars from different faculties	Optional	Recommended	Required
Inter-institution collaboration: Facilitates co-operation with scholars at other universities and/or institutions	Optional	Optional	Required
Quality/Research excellence: ² Maintains high levels of research, scholarly, and/or creative outputs	Required	Required	Required
Administrative structure: Has a formal structure, including a director and governing board/committee	Optional	Required	Required
Funding: Has acquired external funding to operate on a cost-recovery basis	Optional	Required	Required
HQP engagement: ³ Mentorship of student (undergraduate, graduate) and postdoctoral researchers within research activities	Recommended	Required	Required
Knowledge mobilization: ⁴ Engagement in knowledge mobilization activities within and beyond academia, which may include various dissemination strategies, community engagement, data management, and assessment of research impact	Required	Required	Required

¹ NU's [Strategic Research Plan](#); [Pathways: Our Commitments to Water, Land, and People](#); [Academic & Operational Plan](#)

² NSERC's [Guidelines on the assessment of contributions to research, training and mentoring](#); SSHRC's alignment with the [San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment \(DORA\)](#); and [DORA at CIHR](#)

³ [Tri-Agency Research Training Strategy](#); SSHRC's [Guidelines for Effective Research Training](#)

⁴ SSHRC's [Guidelines for Effective Knowledge Mobilization](#); CIHR's [Guide to Knowledge Translation Planning at CIHR: Integrated and End-of-Grant Approaches](#)

Appendix B: Current Research Entities

The research entities below are current as of December 2024.

Research Centres:

Centre	End-of-Term Review Schedule
Centre for Interdisciplinary Collaboration in the Arts and Sciences (CICAS)	January 2026
Integrative Watershed Research Centre (IWRC)	January 2026
Centre for the Study of State Violence	January 2026

Research Institutes: N/A

Research Groups: N/A

Procedure:	Centres & Institutes		
Related Policy:	NU-RES-2011.05	Responsible Office:	Office of Research & Innovation
Effective date:	December 2024	Revisions:	

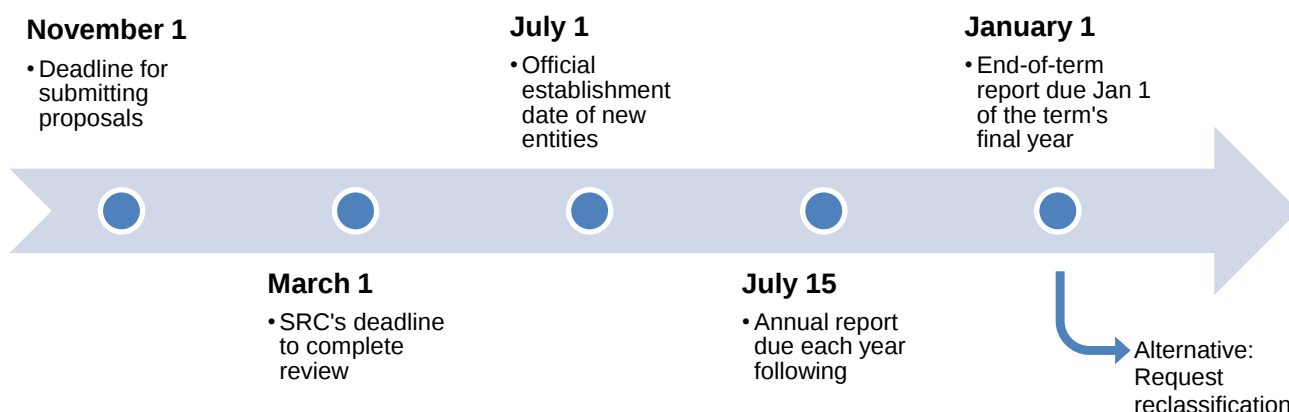


Figure 1. Process Overview & Timeline

APPLICATION

1. **Proposal submission:** A proposal to create a research centre or institute will be submitted to the Office of Research & Innovation prior to the deadline of **November 1**. The proposal should use the *Template – Centre Institute Proposal* or cover all sections listed in that template. Additional information about some of the criteria is provided below, to aid applicants and reviewers:
 - 1.1. **Terms of Reference:** All research centres and institutes must have approved terms of reference that define the mandate of the research entity and describe its organization, governance, management, and membership. The terms of reference must be publicly available. The terms of reference of a research centre or institute should be reflective of the goals of the centre or institute and respect the diversity of research approaches, knowledge systems, and member experiences of those included within the scope of the centre or institute. At the time of proposal submission, terms of reference may be in draft form. Adopted terms of reference must be included in the annual report, for review and approval by SRC.
 - 1.2. **Governing committee or board:** While the organizational and administrative structures of centres or institutes vary as a function of their objectives, size and funding arrangements, each centre or institute shall have a governing committee or board that provides guidance and oversight of the conduct and management of its affairs. The specific terms of reference of such governing committees or boards may vary from one centre or institute to another; however, the general purpose of the governing committee or board is to provide advice on the activities and programs of the centre or institute, to mitigate risk, and to be responsible for financial management. Centres have governing committees that consist of members from within the University. Institutes have a governing board that must contain representation from members who are external to NU. All governing boards must meet the requirements of the centre or institute's funder and be aligned with Nipissing University policies (e.g., conflict of interest). If the governing committee is not convened over a period of two years, the centre or institute will be closed as per section 1.3 of the Policy.
 - 1.3. **Leadership:** Each research centre or institute will have a lead/principal researcher (director) who has administrative responsibility for the centre or institute, including its overall management,

budget, and reporting requirements. Directors will exercise general supervision over the operation of the centre or institute, with specific responsibilities varying with the size of the centre or institute, as well as with the complexities of its policies and operations. The director will normally be an in-scope faculty member (tenure-track or tenured) at Nipissing University. The director is normally appointed for a three- to five-year term and can be renewed for subsequent terms based on the terms of reference for the centre or institute. The role of director/lead researcher is distinct from the role of director described in Article 42 of the collective agreement. Assuming a leadership role within a centre or institute (i.e., Lead Researcher, Principal Researcher, Director) does not automatically afford the individual additional compensation or workload release; all workload assignments must conform to the collective agreement.

- 1.4. Membership:** Membership in a centre or institute is supplemental to a member's academic home. Members may be appointed to a research entity in accordance with the needs of the centre or institute. A centre or institute's membership may also include research fellows, research or professional associates, adjunct professors (when external to the University), and external partners. When inviting members, the entity's leadership should be cognizant of [provincial](#) and [federal](#) research security requirements and the potential impacts international affiliations may have on grant eligibility.

2. Application Review and Establishment:

- 2.1. Preliminary Review:** The AVP RIGS, relevant Faculty Deans, Director of Facilities, and VPFA will review with a view to programmatic, workload, space, and financial implications for the institution and provide a written recommendation to SRC.
- 2.2. SRC's Review:** SRC will review the proposal and the recommendation from the individuals listed above, using the review criteria identified in Appendix A of the *Centres & Institutes policy*. If the application is found to meet the review criteria, SRC will recommend to the Academic Senate that the research entity be created.
- 2.3. Establishment:**
 - 2.3.1. For centres or institutes without institutional infrastructure and/or financial obligations, Academic Senate can provide final approval and creation of the centre or institute.
 - 2.3.2. For centres or institutes with infrastructure and/or financial obligations for the university, the Senate will make their recommendation to the Board of Governor's for final approval and creation of the centre or institute.
 - 2.3.3. Establishment of centres and institutes will take effect July 1.
 - 2.3.4. The approval of a centre or Institute does not constitute approval of a related request for physical space or virtual space (e.g., a website). Allocation of physical and virtual space is subject to the availability of university resources and terms of applicable policies (e.g., [Office Space Policy](#)).
- 2.4. Branding and Promotion:**
 - 2.4.1. The Marketing department should be consulted and/or involved in the creation of any logos, branding, websites or marketing assets related to Centres and Institutes.
 - 2.4.2. The Office of Research & Innovation will promote all established centres and institutes on Nipissing's website. The profile will include a link to each research entity's webpage, so long as the centre/institute updates their webpage at least annually.

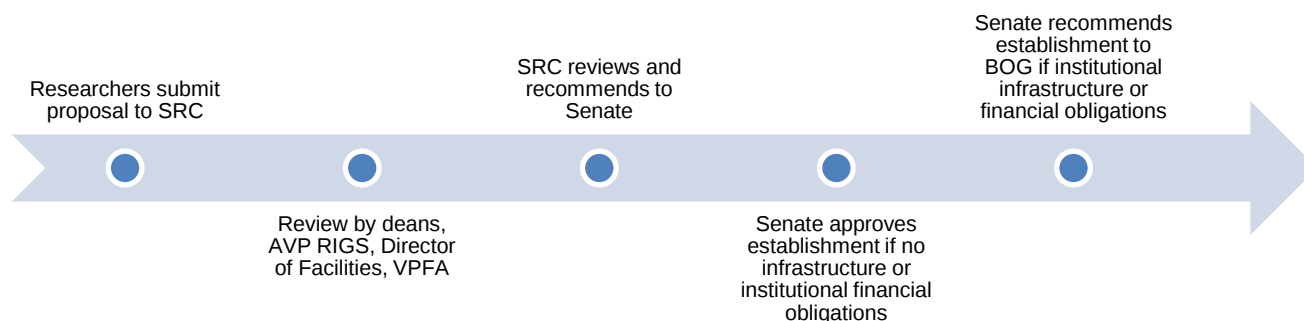


Figure 2. Application Review Process

REPORTING & REVIEW

3. **Annual Reporting:** The director must submit an annual report to the AVP RIGS through SRC by July 15th each year. The report must detail the activities of the research entity and its personnel, including:
 - scholarly and research accomplishments,
 - graduate and/or undergraduate training,
 - other research-related activities (e.g. conferences, workshops, seminars),
 - a detailed financial statement, and
 - whether the centre or institute is on track to achieve its five-year goals, as outlined in the proposal or renewal application.
- 3.1. **AVP's Review:** The AVP RIGS will review the report and assess the Centre/Institute's accomplishments in relation to the goals identified in the proposal.
 - 3.1.1. The AVP RIGS will share a copy of the assessment with the director and a copy of the assessment and the Centre/Institute's annual report with the relevant faculty Dean. This review is distinct from the director's personal annual report. The director may choose to include the centre/institute's annual report in a personal annual report.
- 3.2. **Summary Report:** After reviewing all annual reports, the AVP RIGS will provide a summary report to SRC on all centres and institutes.
4. **End-of-Term Review:** The AVP RIGS shall review all research centres and institutes at the end of their term. The review process will take the following form:
 - 4.1. **Notice of review:** Notice of review will be communicated to the Director of the research entity by the Office of Research & Innovation at least twelve (12) months prior to the end of the current term. In response, the Director shall submit a report to the AVP RIGS through SRC by January 1 of the year the term ends.
 - 4.2. **Report contents:** The report must contain the following:
 - A description of how and why the institute has achieved or revised its original objectives,
 - A detailed listing of its accomplishments,
 - A current membership list,
 - A detailed financial statement that identifies all past and projected sources of revenue and annual operating costs,
 - The requested period of extension,
 - A plan identifying future directions and development strategies for the proposed term, and
 - Letters or references indicating support for the requested extension.

4.3. Review: SRC will review the entity using the same criteria for establishing a Centre or Institute, alongside any specific expectations agreed to at the time of establishment. Some examples of relevant metrics include publications (number and quality) and evidence of successful knowledge mobilization, societal impact, and contribution to Nipissing's strategic research priorities. Broad and diverse contributions will be considered in this evaluation, in line with the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), as endorsed by [NSERC](#), [SSHRC](#), and [CIHR](#). On the basis of the above report, the AVP RIGS, through SRC, may recommend prior to June 30th of the year the term ends that:

- the centre or institute continue for another defined term;
- the centre or institute request reclassification;
- the centre or institute be terminated, with any legal agreements that affect the status of the institute taken into consideration in the recommendation; or
- a full review of the institute be conducted by a sub-committee.

5. Full reviews

5.1. Review Committee: If a full review is required, the AVP RIGS will, at least six months before the end of the term of the entity, appoint an independent Review Committee that shall normally include:

- a senior researcher with administrative experience and no direct involvement with the institute who will act as the Chair;
- the director of another centre or institute;
- a researcher not affiliated with the institute but knowledgeable in the field of activity;
- the Vice-Chair of the SRC or delegate; and
- other members as deemed appropriate.

5.2. Review Process: The Review Committee shall develop its own process for conducting the review, but the primary focus shall be to assess the extent to which the institute has fulfilled its objectives; the appropriateness of its future goals; and its financial viability. The review should include meetings with the Director and members; discussions with non-members from related departments and fields; and assessments from external reviewers.

5.2.1. Written Report: Within three (3) months of being established, the Review Committee must provide a written report to the AVP RIGS, with a copy to the Director of the entity under review. The Director may submit a written response to the report to the AVP RIGS.

5.2.2. Final Recommendation: The AVP RIGS, in consultation with SRC, shall consider the report before making a recommendation on the future of the institute. The AVP RIGS may recommend to the Senate or Board of Governors (depending on which body approved the entity) that:

- the centre or institute continue with review in three (3) or five (5) years;
- the centre or institute continue with review in one (1) year; or
- termination, with any legal agreements that affect the status of the institute taken into consideration in the recommendation.

The Senate or Board of Governors is responsible for approving the recommendation from the AVP RIGS.

6. Transitional Review of Existing Centres: Existing centres that have not been reviewed since their establishment will have a one-year grace period before undergoing an end-of-term review. As such, the Director must submit an annual report (as described above) by July 15, 2025, and an end-of-term report by January 1, 2026, following the end-of-term review process above.

RECLASSIFICATION & CLOSURE

7. Reclassification

- 7.1. Reclassification Upwards:** For a centre to request institute status or a group to request centre status, the research entity must submit a new proposal, following the application process on the first page of this procedures document.
- 7.2. Reclassification Downwards:** To request reclassification from institute to centre or centre to group, the research entity must submit a proposal for review to SRC explaining how it is non-compliant due to its current classification and how a reclassification will alleviate the compliance issue.

7.2.1. Following the review, the director will prepare a final proposal that will address any comments and concerns identified during the review process. To be reclassified as research centre, the final proposal will be submitted to SRC, to be forwarded to:

- Senate, for consideration of the academic implications, and
- the Board of Governors (if approved by the Board of Governors), for consideration of the financial implications of the proposal.

To be reclassified as a research group, the final proposal would be submitted to the AVP RIGS.

- 8. Early Closure:** If a centre or institute requests closure within its approved term or if the institution chooses to close it on account of financial exigency, violation of university and research policies, or failure to maintain the requirements of its given status, the following process will be followed:

- 8.1. Assessment:** The AVP RIGS will select one or more individuals at arm's length from the centre or institute to review the assets, liabilities and ongoing obligations of the entity and to make recommendations on the disposition of assets and liabilities.

8.1.1. As part of this review, a financial statement is to be presented to and approved by Nipissing's Finance Office. An external auditor may be required depending on the complexity of the research entity's financial situation.

- 8.2. Closure:** Upon receiving these reports and after consulting the research entity's sunset clause, the AVP RIGS will implement the recommendations of the review, in accordance with Nipissing's existing policies and procedures. This will include recommending to the Senate or Board of Governors (depending on which body approved the entity) that the entity be closed.